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**The Dialogical Processes of Vernacular Mediation:  
New Media and the Karay-a Ethnic Group of the Philippines**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Adelaide in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Media

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June 2013

## Abstract

This thesis examines the extent to which vernacular mediation, or the ongoing, sociohistorically situated, and discursive communicative acts through new media technologies, enables the cultural participation and emancipation of marginal groups. It investigates how the ethnolinguistic group Karay-a appropriated the Internet and digital music and video production technologies to reinvent their stereotyped identities, develop collectivity, and work towards the goal of bringing socioeconomic emancipation to their homeland of Antique in Western Philippines. By following a cultural studies approach to examine three cases of vernacular mediation, this thesis aims to explore how the dialogical interaction of new media technologies, audience or individual agency, institutional logics, and asymmetries in power enable and shape a specific emancipatory aim without foreclosing their future potentials.

Through an analysis of the musical subgenre Original Kinaray-a Music (OKM), the online community kinaray-a.com, and the digital short film *Handum* produced by the marginal group, this thesis argues that vernacular mediation practices have the potential to facilitate cultural participation by enabling expressions and meanings to be reshaped and shared. The sharing of meanings adds to the social and cultural capitals of marginal individuals and enables them to forge social ties. These ties can lead to collective mobilization. However, the extent to which these actions challenge prevailing power structures and bring social emancipation depends too on the amount of capitals they possess vis a vis those who hold power in their milieu, the involvement of the majority, and the ability to innovate and adapt to their present needs.

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## **Declaration of Original Authorship**

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**MARIANE MEDINA UMALI**

## **Acknowledgement**

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of the generous persons that I have been blessed to meet. Thanks to my supervisors Peter and Mike for patiently guiding and encouraging me through all the stages of this research. Thanks for your insights during our meetings, and also for enabling me to have work experience that I could use to build an academic career. The knowledge I gained from all these will be treasured and enriched. Many thanks too to the Adelaide Graduate Centre for providing me the Adelaide Scholarships International and the travelling scholarship for my fieldwork.

Thanks to all my research participants, especially to the Karay-a people for generously sharing your experiences, culture, and homeland. You did not only welcome a stranger but also made her feel at home as much as you could. Thanks especially to Nelson and Mai Arriola, for treating me like a family member, letting me see the natural beauty of Antique, and for always making sure that I was safe and had everything I needed. For Fridy Panaguiron, thanks for sharing your experiences and helping me meet the many resource persons for this research. Thanks also for inviting me to your family's celebrations, particularly during the holidays when I was far from my own. To Manie Magbanua, Stephen Checa, Tonz Gay, Sammy and Lerio Rubido, Dante Beriong, Katz Amerilla, Nonong Ejida, Alex de los Santos, and Glen Mas, thanks so much for helping me out during my fieldwork.

Thanks to the friends who encouraged me all the way: Janet and Floc, Amy and Joel, Ivey and Francis, Cathy and Larry, Cris and Von, and Letty – my deepest



appreciation for the many times you provided those much needed breaks and checking up on me once in a while. I am also grateful for the constant support of my mother Lily; sisters Rorie, Lyna, and Poi; brothers Dundee and Boyet; and in-laws Nona, Cesar, Sarah, and Afe.

My deepest appreciation to my two angels: my loving husband **Beng** and our sweet **Bea**. Thanks for supporting, pushing, and believing in me all the way. This is our accomplishment. Lastly, thanks to our loving **Father** who is my source of strength.