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An Emotion Niche for the Cultural Evolution of Social Practices

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Human life takes place in the stream of cultural practices – music, worship, weddings, YouTube, novels, pet keeping, social movement marches, and so on. To understand why any particular cultural practice exists, we need to know

- why people invent the practice;
- why others notice and remember the practice;
- why people seek to participate in and re-enact the practice;
- why people want to tell others about the practice;
- why people want to recruit others to join in the practice; and
- how the practice cumulatively changes to become more effective
at reproducing itself in each of these ways.

These processes of reproduction of variant cultural practices comprise cultural evolution as different practices reproduce themselves more than others. Music, for example, culturally evolves: it is a set of practices that replicate to varying degrees in a given human population, with some forms spreading and supplanting others that reproduce less successfully. The cultural evolution of musical practices consists of different rates of composing, performing, listening to, attracting adherents, and copying different kinds of music.

Why do you listen to some kinds of music more than others, purchase certain pieces and recommend them to others, or attend certain concerts and invite others to come with you, while ignoring others? Perhaps the most important factor, I suggest, is the

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emotion that the music evokes in you. Music that gives you a warm feeling in the heart, wonderful goosebumps, joyful tears, and a lump in the throat is music that you want to listen to over and over, tell others about and play for them. If you're a musician, you want to compose and perform music that evokes that emotion. The greater the number of people in whom the music evokes that emotion and the stronger their emotional response to the music, the more the music is perpetuated, spreads to other communities, is valued and copied, and is perfected so as to evoke the emotion more strongly in more people. No person, community, or network can compose, perform, listen to, and copy all the music that exists: most pieces of music are ignored and forgotten, while only a few pieces and genres are taken up. So the prevalent practices of one time and place are supplanted by musical variants that are taken up at higher rates. That's the cultural evolution of music, a typical practice whose survival and reproduction depend on an emotion.

This chapter first defines culture and cultural evolution, then offers a preliminary sketch of the ecological concept of niche and how it can be applied to shed light on cultural evolution. The chapter then describes the kama muta emotion that my colleagues and I have characterized (Schubert et al 2017, Zickfeld et al 2018, Fiske 2019). Then the chapter more fully presents the ecological concept of niche and shows how kama muta can be conceptualized as the psychological niche in which a great many practices culturally evolve. After that, we consider just how music, for example, evokes kama and hence thrives in the niche that the emotion provides. It goes on to theorize how, reciprocally, the psychological proclivity to experience kama muta likely evolved biologically as a genetically encoded adaptation to the cultural practices that it evokes. That is, how human fitness depends in part on the proclivity to feel kama muta in response to a suite of cultural practices. The chapter concludes with consideration of where we can do with this concept of an emotional niche for cultural practices.

Some Cultural Practices that Evolved in the Kama Muta Niche

As I will define it, culture consists of those aspects of life that people have, want, do, or use by virtue of participating in a specific community or network. Culture thus includes beliefs, desires, implicit knowledge, capacities and technologies, habits, activities, institutions, modified landscapes and infrastructure, buildings and artifacts that we take up from our predecessors and peers. For simplicity of exposition, I call all of these things together 'practices'. People take up variants of these cultural practices at

different rates, depending on the features of the variants. Thus there is temporal change in the proportions of the variant practices in the cultural mix, so eventually some replace others. The surviving variants generate further variations, which people take up at differing rates, leading to the extinction of most practices and their replacement by variant practices more frequently taken up. That is cultural evolution (for key approaches to the construct of cultural evolution, see Sperber, 1985; Henrich & McElreath 2003; Mesoudi, Whiten, & Laland 2006; Boyer, 2007; Henrich, Boyd, & Richerson 2008; Richerson & Christiansen, 2013; and Mesoudi, 2016).

There are many selective forces that make some practices more likely to be taken up than others, but one of the most important kinds of selective forces is human psychology. Human psychology substantially affects what variants people most frequently notice, remember, tell others about, find appealing, seek to use or participate in, re-create, copy and tinker with. This chapter considers one remarkable psychological selective force in cultural evolution, a specific emotion, kama muta. More than just a selective force in cultural evolution, kama muta is an entire niche for an ensemble of cultural practices. A niche in cultural evolution is an assemblage of selective forces that a practice or an ensemble of practices depends on. That is, the niche is the assemblage that enables, and shapes, the survival and reproduction of a cultural practice in a particular manner, together with the constraints imposed by that assemblage. To my knowledge, no one has previously applied the ecological concept of niche developed by Grinnell (1917) to cultural evolution, but it is illuminating to do so.

We can also make use of further developments in the ecological theory of the niche. A niche is not only the assemblage of resources and constraints actually utilized in a particular manner, it also comprises *the effects of this utilization* on the environment. In biological ecology, this concept of utilization of an assemblage of resources and constraints in a particular manner, affecting the environment in particular respects, is due to Elton (1927). This niche construct recognizes the fact that a species changes the environment that it occupies: earthworms digest dead vegetation to produce leaf mould (Darwin 1881), large browsing mammals help to create and maintain grasslands (Axelrod 1985). Likewise, cultural practices change the environment they occupy. For example, most musical practices foster communal sharing bonds among performers and among listeners, while some musical practices spread romanticism.

Organisms are not merely passive utilizers of resources, passive subjects of constraints, and incidental producers of byproducts. Organisms often actively shape their environment, making modifications to the environment that facilitate their survival

and reproduction. Their descendants commonly inherit and gradually adapt to this advantageous niche. Beavers build dams to create ponds for themselves, termites build mounds to protect themselves and ventilate their nests, pine trees drop needles that make the soil too acidic for most competing species of trees. This active shaping of the environment to suit an organism is called 'niche construction' (Odling-Smee et al 2013). Similarly, cultural practices often reorganize the resources they utilize and reconfigure the constraints they face, fashioning a niche that favors them. In particular, cultural practices may create new forms of social organization and new technologies that make people take up the practices more readily and more frequently, and transmit them with greater fidelity. For example, music has constructed for itself a niche comprising musical instruments, musical notation, technologies of recording and disseminating, concerts, fan clubs, music-sharing sites, and award ceremonies that attract attention to music. There is an extensive literature on gene – culture co-evolution (the canonical works are Boyd & Richerson, 1988, 2005; Richerson & Boyd, 2008; Durham, 1991; Lumsden & Wilson, 2005). But so far as I know, the concepts of niche, and niche construction in particular, have not previously been utilized in the conceptualization of gene–culture co-evolution.

Beyond music, let's consider some more cultural practices and identify the psychological niche they occupy. Imagine that you're gathered with family and friends at your older sister's wedding in a church, the couple have just said their vows, placed rings on each other's fingers, kissed, and now you watch them walking back down the aisle together, hand in hand. Would you feel something? Would you likely tell others about that feeling and what evoked it? Would that feeling, and the later memory of it, affect your plans for your own wedding? Or imagine that you are worshipping in a Pentecostal or other charismatic church, or in a Mormon temple, or perceiving an apparition of the Virgin Mary, or worshipping with a Sufi saint, or approaching the Kaaba in Mecca (e.g., Luhrmann, 2004; Oaks, 1997; Hermkens, Jansen, & Notermans, 2009; Ibrahim, 2011; all of these are described at length, with many additional sources, in Fiske, 2020a). If you've experienced any of these practices, did they make you want to come back and participate again? Did they make you want to bring others along to join you the next time?

Have you ever had an emotional experience in worship that made you *believe* in the church's doctrine? I've read the absorbing *Jataka* tales of the limitless self-sacrificial loving kindness of the Buddha in his past lives (Dhammarama & Bareau, 1963). Though I'm not Buddhist, I find that these stories evoke an emotion in me that makes

me just *have* to retell the stories to anyone who will listen. On top of this, the emotion that the stores evoke makes Buddhism more appealing to me, and somehow feel more valid.

If you were engaged in any of these practices you would likely feel kama muta, an emotion sometimes labeled in English *baptism in the Holy Spirit, burning in the bosom*, or, in other contexts, *being moved or touched, nostalgia*, or a *heart-warming* experience (Fiske 2020a; Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt, 2017b; Seibt et al, 2017). You might, in fact, feel literal warmth in your chest, have moist eyes or tears, have a lump in your throat, or get goose bumps (Schubert et al, 2017; Zickfeld et al, 2018). This wonderful feeling would be memorable, and make you want to come back to participate again. The emotion would likely stimulate you to tell others about the practice and recruit them to join you in it, in part because experiencing kama muta *with* others amplifies it, and in part because you would want to give this wonderful feeling to others. Experiencing kama muta would tend to reinforce your commitment to the congregation and your identification with it. It would tend to convince you of the reality of the divinity you connected with, assure you of the divinity's love for you, and help guarantee your devotion to that divinity. Then too, people observing you or hearing you tell about your experience would likely recognize the kama muta you experienced; this would tend to evoke kama muta in them, in turn, but in any case would attract the observers to your worship service, for example, so they could experience it themselves. Likewise, reinforced by their shared kama muta experiences, the congregation would develop solidarity, loyalty, mutual support and care that would further attract converts for whom belonging to such a group is appealing. This would make the congregations that engage in such practices more stable, more likely to endure, and hence tend to sustain these worship practices – they would be constructing their niche.

In the aggregate and over the long run, all of these psychological and social processes make kama muta-evoking worship practices perdure, and diffuse to other communities. In ecological evolutionary terms, the kama muta emotion is a psychosocial niche to which worship practices culturally adapt; the more they evoke kama muta, the more prevalent they become and the longer they last. Indeed, this appears to be a major cause of the survival, spread and prevalence of most of the world religions, supplanting religions that evoke little or no kama muta.

Yet none of this is specific to worship – cultural evolution in the kama muta niche also occurs in politics and social movements, war, sports, marketing, social media, theater, television and cinema, dance, music, poetry, novels, sculpture, painting, photography, in

family rituals, in interactions with pets, and in nature (Seibt et al 2017, Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt 2017a, Peterson et al 2019, Pierre 2019, Ji et al 2019, Seibt et al 2019, Steinnes et al 2019, Fiske 2020a, Peterson & Martin 2021, Janicke-Bowles 2021). The modern lore of romantic love is centered on kama muta, as is the mythology of heroes. Myriad cultural practices grow in the kama muta niche and continue to perfect their adaptation to it. The cultural practices that depend on this niche are also supported by disseminative technologies such as writing, printing, audio recording, film, electronic media and communications, and the Internet. But the reverse is equally true: to a significant degree these technologies themselves developed, utilized, and diffused because they facilitated kama muta experiences. That is, these practices built technological additions to the kama muta niche, constructing a niche that greatly favored the practices.

So to understand a myriad of salient and pervasive cultural practices, we need to understand kama muta. In each culture there are unique intriguing features of the practices that occupy the kama muta niche. Yet what is striking is the cross-cultural pattern of convergent evolution to fit this niche. Beyond what this reveals about kama muta as such, these processes elucidate the nature of emotions, culture, cultural evolution, and how culture and psychology complement each other to generate integrated practices and institutions (Fiske 2000). The processes of adaptation to this emotional niche and the construction of this niche to make it better support the practices also shed light on a hitherto unrecognized mechanism of group formation, growth and perpetuation, while pointing to one process by which new groups may bud off from existing groups.

The idea of cultural evolution has been well developed in comparison and contrast to organic evolution (Sperber, 1985; Henrich & McElreath 2003; Mesoudi, Whiten, & Laland 2006; Boyer, 2007; Henrich, Boyd, & Richerson 2008; Richerson & Christiansen, 2013; Mesoudi, 2016). Moreover, researchers have theorized how cultural and organic evolution shape each other (Boyd & Richerson, 1988, 2005; Richerson & Boyd, 2008; Durham, 1991; Lumsden & Wilson, 2005). For example, it is clear that the human language capacity is a set of organic adaptations, without which human language could not have culturally evolved. Conversely, without culturally evolved languages, organic adaptations for language would have no benefits for biological fitness, and so could not have evolved. The two co-evolved. The niche theory of kama muta-inducing practices is a theory of co-evolution, but to my knowledge it is the first such theory about an *emotion* niche to be well elaborated in conjunction

with an extensive ethnological account comparing and contrasting the practices that flourish in the niche.

What Kama Muta Is

Kama muta is an emotion that is

- evoked by a sudden intensification of a communal sharing relationship;
- momentary (brief);
- subjectively positive in seven respects:
 - people report that it is a good, pleasant, positive experience,
 - people seek to re-experience it, and may work hard to do so,
 - people like to remember the experience, and that memory often re-evokes it,
 - people like to recount the experience to others,
 - people like to give it to ('share' with) others, especially those to whom they are attached,
 - people like to experience it *with* others, especially those to whom they are attached, and so recruit others to experience it with themselves,
 - people who expertly evoke it are praised and admired.
- when sufficiently intense, it is often (though not invariably) characterized by some of the following sensations and signs:
 - a warm or other pleasant feeling in the left center of the chest,
 - tears or moist eyes,
 - being choked up (having a lump in the throat or difficulty speaking clearly),
 - goosebumps or chills,
 - feeling buoyant (light),
 - feeling exhilarated, energetic, alert, engaged,
 - making an exclamation such as *Awww!*
 - putting one or both palms on the upper left chest;
- it generates motives to devote and commit to communal sharing, including generalized kindness and compassion;

- if a language has a specific, distinct lexeme for kama muta in a given context, that lexeme may literally mean 'passively displaced' (e.g., *moved*), 'passively contacted' (e.g., *touched*), 'slightly hot' or 'passively heated to a moderate degree' (e.g., *warm feeling*), or some combination of the above with regard to the 'heart' (e.g., *heart warming*, *burning in the bosom*, *touched my heart*); this tendency is true across language families, but is by no means the basis for all of the lexemes naming the emotion in all languages.

Communal sharing is one of the four fundamental structures of social life posited by relational models theory (Fiske, 1991, 1992; Fiske & Haslam, 2005). It is a relationship in which the participants treat each other as socially equivalent with respect to the aspect(s) of the interaction that they are coordinating. Roughly speaking, communal sharing is 'love' in the broadest sense, including romantic and familial love, bonds among teammates and members of a platoon, or members of a group who identify with each other, as well as other forms of affection of any intensity. It involves treating each other's needs and suffering as one's own, and taking collective responsibility for each other. The sudden intensification of a communal sharing relationship evoking kama muta may occur, for example, in a reunion or reconciliation, at a birth, a marriage proposal or wedding, when one feels welcomed or receives – or observes – a notable kindness, when participating in a social movement (Pierre, 2109), in a patriotic ritual, watching a movie or video, reading poetry, or when feeling one with nature (Petersen et al 2019; Petersen & Martin, 2021). Intensification need be the result of any action; it may consist of a sudden memory; one's heart going out to a cute or needy being (Steinnes et al., 2019); or when, after separation or loss, one feels the love that makes one miss someone who is gone (for many instances of all of these, see Fiske, 2020a).

The communal sharing relationship that suddenly intensifies to evoke kama muta can be between a person and another person, group, or entity such as an animal, deity, deceased person, team, imagined community, nation, or nature (Schubert et al 2017, Pierre 2019, Peterson et al 2019; Petersen & Martin 2021). Intriguingly, people also often feel kama muta when they observe, read or hear about the sudden intensification of communal sharing between two other persons or beings. Thus kama muta is often evoked by narratives and performances (Fiske et al 2019; Janicke-Bowles et al 2021), social media images and videos (Schubert et al, 2017; Seibt et al 2017; Zickfeld, et al 2018) and imagined pairings such as those of *shipping* (imputing romantic relationships to fictional characters). An unexpected kindness or expression of compassion often

evokes kama muta (Blomster Lyshol et al 2020), as does seeing or cuddling with a cute baby or animal (Steinnes et al 2019).

Depending on the language, the context, and the speaker, people may have no specific label for kama muta, or they may use a variety of context-specific lexemes, none of which corresponds one-to-one with the emotion. Whatever label people use, their label may extend to other emotions, and always leaves out instances of kama muta evoked in other contexts (Fiske, 2020b). Like any other emotion, kama muta can lead to other emotions (e.g., embarrassment), and it may co-occur simultaneously with many other emotions, moods, and attitudes (e.g., sadness of loss, awe at greatness, sexual arousal). Sequential or simultaneous occurrence inevitably makes subjective vernacular labels ambiguous (Fiske, 2020b).

When kama muta is mild and fleeting, people occasionally fail to notice it, or notice it but soon forget it, especially if they can't label it. Ordinarily, however, it is subjectively salient and people like bring it to mind and like to tell others about it.

Because kama muta engenders devotion and commitment to communal sharing relationships, it reinforces the dyads and groups in which it occurs (for example, see Brown 2013, Pierre 2017). Presumably the fitness advantages of belonging to such tightly bonded dyads and groups resulted in natural selection for the propensity for this emotion. Indeed, the probable phylogenetic root of the propensity for kama muta is maternal bonding, evolved in a few species to pair bonding with paternal bonding.

We began with an example of how kama muta is the niche for the cultural evolution of some widespread religious practices (for many more, see Fiske, 2020a). Now let's consider how the niche that this emotion provides for political practices and social movements. Great oratory often evokes strong kama muta, and is indeed crafted to do so. This can have profound effects for good, but also for evil. In the 1930s, Adolph Hitler's speeches elicited kama muta that gave the Nazis a strong, enabling identity that overcame the deep anomie of Germany at the time (Fishman 1964). During World War II, Winston Churchill's radio talks generated highly motivating patriotic kama muta that reinvigorated and sustained the patriotic resolve of Britons (Churchill 1940). Later the stirring speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr., and then Jesse Jackson, awoke the collective, purposeful pride that powered the civil rights movement, inspiring the patient, persistent courage of millions (Shamir et al 1994). Beyond oratory, it seems that hundreds of millions in the US and around the world felt kama muta viewing the televised scenes and reading the newspaper accounts of dauntless non-violent

resistance by the civil rights activists sacrificing their bodies for the cause. Furthermore, for participants in rallies and marches of the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam-War movement, the women's rights and LGBT movements, the sense of 'we-ness', the feeling of being united as brothers and sisters proudly gathered to make a statement, evokes kama muta that generates devotion and commitment to those movements (Pierre, 2019). And the taproot of all these movements is Mahatma Gandhi's persistent self-sacrifice, including prolonged fasting, on behalf of the people of the Indian subcontinent.

These mobilizations probably would not have been so effective, or perhaps not even occurred at all, had they not utilized the psychosocial niche provided by kama muta. Experiencing kama muta – often without being able to put a name to it – motivates the listener or participant to come back for more, to tell others and bring them to join in, to support and care for others in the movement. The collective effervescence gives them a sense of the self as part of something much greater (Durkheim, 1912).

The Five Principal Routes by which Kama Muta Fosters the Practices that Evoke It

Like other practices in the kama muta niche, the emotion evoked by demonstrations, protests, and marches in turn supports the practices that produce it by six principal routes.

First, relatively few cultural practices are directly based on – much less generated by – explicitly articulable beliefs or concepts (Bourdieu, 1977). For example, many local religions involve very little theology, and their practitioners, as well as most practitioners of the world religions – may have no significant theory of worship. Much of religious practice is sustained by the kama muta practices it evokes.

Second, beliefs and concepts often do play some role in supporting and shaping some practices in religion and other domains. To the extent that they do, kama muta may reinforce the practices if experiencing the emotion convinces people that the supporting ideas are true. This is especially notable when people have kama muta experiences in loving union with a deity: the intensity of the emotion induces conviction in the reality of the deity and its love for the person experiencing kama muta in loving union with it. People think, for example, 'How can Jesus not be real, how can His love not be true, if I felt that amazing feeling of His love!?' Likewise, experiencing kama muta is likely to

cement commitment to the ideology of social movements and political parties (Pierre 2017, Seibt et al 2019). In general, the experience of kama muta persuades people of the truth of the teachings and stories linked to the kama muta-evoking practices. It makes them deeply meaningful and hence motivating, while the resulting certitude also fosters purpose: people think, 'this is the truth, so I must engage in this practice, adhere to these teachings, spread the stories, and testify to their truth.' This keeps the person engaged in the kama muta-evoking practice and commits them to engage others, preaching, proselytizing, and testifying.

Third, the persistence of a social group created or solidified by the kama muta-evoking practices that it performs, and the copies of itself that the group spawns, maintain the habitat for the kama muta-evoking practices (for political parties, see Seibt et al 2019). That is, the social groups fostered by shared kama muta experiences provide the habitat for the cultural reproduction of the practices. These groups consist of members' identification with the group, devotion and commitment to the group, and close cooperation mediated by their communal sharing relationship. When the kama muta creates or strengthens a group that performs the practices that evoke the emotion, it has created the niche that in thrives in.

Fourth, people enjoy remembering their kama muta experiences and reporting them to others. Recalling and retelling re-evokes kama muta, which re-motivates subsequent engagement in the practices that evoked it, facilitated by the expectation of experiencing it again. This results in the persistence and spread of the practices. The communicative spread may involve oral and written language (including poetry, fiction, theater, cinema, blogs and podcasts), visual arts, and other media (Ji et al 2019; Janicke-Bowles et al 2021).

Fifth, kama muta often operates recursively: observing or hearing of Azami experiencing kama muta evokes kama muta in Binta and Nur, whose exhibition kama muta or recounting the experience evokes kama muta in Sidwaya, Poko, Ju, Dhara, etc., and so on in a potentially exponential spread. This recursion is common to all sorts of kama muta-evoking practices, and notably pervasive in contemporary social media, where much 'sharing' consists of passing kama muta on to others. Furthermore, when Azami experiences kama muta, the perception of which evokes kama muta in Binta, then when Binta recounts this to Exta, Exta not only perceives Azami's kama muta, but also sees Binta's kama muta, getting a double whammy. This recursive exponential spread is greatly facilitated by ever-improving technologies of recording and communication: it is

now very easy to show people what you feel and show them what made you feel that way.

In conjunction with these four processes is a sixth, related to the double whammy of the fifth process. This sixth mechanism is the enhancement of kama muta when people experience it together. This is one of the motivations for sharing social media and telling others about one's own kama muta: it is stronger when it is felt together with others. It is also one factor in people's desire to tell others about their own kama muta experiences and share stories and videos of third parties' kama muta. It is a motivation to write a perform music, poetry, novels, theater, cinema, and so on. Moreover, it motivates people to bring others along with them to participate with them in kama muta-evoking practices. By literally bringing people together it also reinforces the social groups and networks that engage in kama muta-evoking practices.

In these and the other ways discussed at the beginning of the chapter, kama muta provides a remarkably productive niche for cultural practices that evoke it – the more a practice evokes kama muta, the more the practice survives and reproduces. This niche supports life-cycle rituals such as weddings, anniversary and birthday celebrations, funerals and commemorative services, as well as the photography and video recording of these and other key moments. In personal communications, print and digital media, many stories are reported because they are *moving* – they evoke kama muta (Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt 2017a). Greeting cards and the cut flower industry thrive in this niche, as do memorials of war and disaster, along with spontaneous shrines and vigils for the deaths of public figures and victims of terrorism. So do sports victory pile-on celebrations and award ceremonies in sports, cinema, and music.

Back to Music

Kama muta results from the sudden intensification on a communal sharing relationship. So, to occupy the kama muta niche, a practice must abruptly make people feel 'one' with each other, or with some encompassing whole. It must rapidly dissolve the boundary around the individual self. That is, the practice must, at certain moments, all of a sudden 'connect' people so that they feel part of something, so they merge into something beyond their individuality. Having this happen gradually does not evoke kama muta; it must be quick.

The emotion does not last long, but a person can feel it again and again; one doesn't feel it any less strongly after previously feeling it a number of times. Because there are

innumerably ways that a sense of equivalence can swiftly emerge, there are innumerable practices in the kama muta niche. The most entrenched, enduring, pervasive practices in this niche evoke kama muta in more than one way – and they create and refine social conditions that favor experiencing it and conveying to others that one feels it. Let's take music again as an example of a practice that is adapted, and continues to adapt, to the kama muta niche this way. There are quite a number of psychosocial paths by which music evokes kama muta.

Similarity to crying: Singing and instrumental music may sound like crying, and hence evoke the innate kama muta response to crying (Panksepp 1995, Nelson 2005:207–209). Indeed weeping, lamenting, and music may be culturally perfected to construct supernormal stimuli that evoke kama muta more strongly and reliably than most 'ordinary,' 'naïve' weeping.

Identifying with hardship: The lyrical narrative or the body, face, and musical features of a performance may display desire, love, betrayal, loss, disappointment, hardship and suffering that the listener identifies with. In poetry readings, the sudden recognition that 'oh, I have had that same experience' evokes kama muta, especially when the experience was formative for the listener's identity.

Compassion: Plaintive mournful weeping, songs, and music index vulnerability, need, and, in particular, index a desire for communal sharing in the face of separation, obstacles, or loss. In lyrics, body, and face, the singer may even enact a personal appeal for sympathy and care. The listener's heart goes out to the singer, so they want to console and solicitously comfort the singer as they would a crying child or weeping family member.

Touched by trust: People are moved by another person trustingly revealing their intimate pains, humiliation, despair, or desperate desires. Such personal revelations make the listener feel responsible for comforting and taking care of the person who has made herself vulnerably dependent.

Falling in love: The listener may be acutely infatuated with a cute or beautiful singer with an enthralling voice.

Feeling loved: When she seems to be addressing him personally, each listener may imagine that the singer loves him. Conversely, the singer or musician may feel the audience's adoration in their attentiveness, absorption, rapt raves, singing along, swaying or clapping with the music, cheers, applause, or pushing toward the stage.

Third person kama muta: Sometimes a central motive for creating and performing art is to communicate kama muta experiences; the creator wants to relive her kama muta experience with others, evoking compassionate caring kama muta in the audience and, often, in herself again, so that they all experience it together. We know that narratives of struggling to be

(re)united evoke kama muta (Hogan 2003, Booker 2004, Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt 2017a). Lyrics often tell such stories.²

Nostalgia: A piece of music may remind the listener of an event in which she listened to (or played or sang) the piece with a person whom the listener loves, or loved, or with whom she suddenly feels in love again. Or music may instantly evoke nostalgic memories of home or some other place one belonged. This memory is often conscious, but need not be – it can be classically conditioned.

Patriotism: Similarly, because of the contexts in which a listener has heard, sung, or played an anthem, hearing or singing an anthem may foster a sense of belonging to a nation, a cause or social movement, a military service, a school or team.

Joint production: Communal sharing suddenly intensifies when musicians or singers feel perfectly in sync, collectively constructing an harmonious sound that transcends their individual parts, transforming their individual parts into an interdependent, co-constructed whole, and hence bringing their previously separate selves into an encompassing ‘we’. This is sudden intensification of a chorus, orchestra, or band’s communal sharing.

Synchrony: Conversely, music may stimulate or enable synchronous rhythmic movement, so that the performers or audience sway, tap or clap together, march or dance as one. Moreover, music has often accompanied and coordinated work that must be synchronized, such as rowing a ship, hauling on a ship’s halyard, or pushing on the capstan bars to raise an anchor. Also, work may be invigorated by rhythmic singing or simple percussion which energize laborers, apparently by making them feel part of a larger whole.

Sharing kama muta: Like kama muta in other experiences, the perception of each other’s musical kama muta may evoke further secondary kama muta: being in the same emotional state tends to unify the audience in another level of communal sharing. A live audience visibly and audibly exhibiting their shared experience of kama muta together affords this recursive kama muta. This quickening of secondary communal sharing is especially strong at the sudden appearance of the singer or band, or the start of a song. “At several points looking around at the rest of the crowd and feeling so connected to all of them [I felt kama muta]. We were all dancing nearly in synch with each other, jumping around to the beat, cheering, hugging, smiling, and all having this really moving experience together of connecting to an artist we loved in a live setting” (Jennifer Pierre, a student studying kama muta, reporting on her experience at a Skrillex concert). This is the deeply felt joy of “communal listening” (Mark 2012:184, quoting music critic David Stabler). Several informants have reported this, and also, conversely, how their own kama muta is undermined by even one other audience member patently displaying that they are not experiencing kama muta.

² It may be that third person kama muta works entirely or partially through the perceiver’s identification with the protagonists; we don’t really know yet.

Merging with the music itself: Singers, instrumentalists, and listeners sometimes report moments of what subjectively seems to be merging with the music itself. There are a great many reports of the phenomenological experience of dissolution of the individual self into transcendently enveloping music (Frishkopf, 2001; Gabrielsson, 2010; Racy, 2010).

What we can take away from this brief consideration of music is that it evokes kama muta in multiple ways, while affording opportunities for others to see that it is evocative and to easily join it. At the same time, music constructs the kama muta niche by fostering social groups and networks in which kama muta-inducing music thrives, along with facultative institutions and technologies.

What Else Is Involved?

Beyond music, religion, politics and social movements, there are innumerable kama muta practices in war, sports, marketing, social media, theater, television and cinema, dance, poetry, narratives and novels, sculpture, painting, photography, in family rituals, and in nature, as well as the lore of romantic love and the mythology of heroism (Fiske, 2020a). They are all intriguing. But let us move on to some general issues

It is interesting to consider how the cultural practices that flourish in the kama muta niche are symbiotic, parasitic, or in competition with each other, and with practices that utilize other psychosocial niches. Also a complete account of these kama muta-evoking practices needs to identify the other psychological, social, and cultural factors that affect their survival and reproduction. Many of these are constructed by kama muta practices, but other factors are not. I have already mentioned that writing, photography, audio recording, film and video, along with technologies of storing, copying and communicating them (such as printing, radio, television, computers, and the Internet), tremendously extend the life of kama muta-evoking practices and spread them ever more widely. Electronic audio amplification, minarets, and architectural acoustics extend the reach of voices, music, and calls to prayer that evoke kama muta. Hormones and drugs are also a factor; MDMA, in particular, causes, facilitates, and heightens kama muta.

It is also intriguing to consider how other emotions, moods, motives, and evaluations promote or retard kama muta responses to various practices. For example, being in a state of fear for a loved one's safety magnifies the potential for communal sharing to increase suddenly if the loved one returns safely. Feeling fear for one's own safety affords kama muta if others reach out to provide care and protection. Feeling lonely affords kama muta if one is welcomed or someone offers friendship. Likewise, feeling

shame and fear of being exposed affords the opportunity to feel kama muta if others come out and say that they have had the same shame- and fear-inducing experiences. This is a design feature of practices such as Alcoholics Anonymous, group therapy for eating disorders, and autobiographical poetry readings (Fiske, 2020a). On the other hand, being ashamed of feeling kama muta, or embarrassed at being seen to feel it, may dampen the experience and perhaps eventually reduce one's susceptibility to it.

Do other emotions or mood dispositions provide additional niches for cultural practices? This is a difficult question to answer because, I believe, we do not have a valid taxonomy of emotions – or even know whether 'emotion' itself is a valid category (Fiske 2020b). However, we can provisionally reflect on some possible emotional niches. An emotion we often denote in English as *mirth* or *amusement* is the niche for the cultural evolution of modern comedy and comics, as well as satire and joke-telling through the ages. Something that one might denominate 'moral outrage' is the niche for modern court and penal systems, and myriad premodern vengeance and punitive practices. Something approximated by the English words *shame* and *embarrassment* provides a niche for clothing in warm seasons when it would otherwise serve little purpose, as well as architectural privacy features and practices related to defecation, urination, sex, and perhaps actions to reduce unpleasant body odors. Emotion researchers do not consider sexual arousal to be an 'emotion', but it is surely some sort of affect, and it provides a niche in which a great many practices thrive around the world and throughout history. Pain is a niche for analgesics and anesthetics, physiotherapy, and allied practices. Yet none of these affective niches seem to harbor so many or so diverse yet universal cultural practices as kama muta. No other affect appears to have such extraordinarily generative and synergistic features.³

³ One might jump in to say that 'happiness' is the prolific niche for a vast multitude of cultural practices, but the English word *happiness* surely does not denote a unitary, monolithic emotion. There are myriad sorts of 'positive' emotions that are each positive about quite distinct psychological and social dynamics. And the phenomenological quality of different sorts of happiness differ. '*Happiness*' is perhaps the most egregious instance of a vernacular lexeme fallaciously used as a scientific construct (Fiske, 2020b). Moreover, English speakers also use the lexeme *happiness* to denote, claim, or exhort to numerous enduring moods, attitudes, statuses and states of life that have little resemblance to transitory 'emotions' in the narrow sense. Until this is sorted out, we cannot make headway identifying the cultural practices that thrive in the particular niches that each of these diverse 'positive' emotions respectively provides.

The Psychological Capacity for Kama Muta Evolved to Depend on the Cultural Practices that Evoke and Depend upon It

The thesis of this chapter is that a great many cultural practices depend on the kama muta niche – this niche is a primary reason that people engage in these practices, and if this emotion did not exist, these practices likely would not exist, at least in the forms that they actually do take. Over time these practices presumably have culturally evolved to evoke kama muta more reliably and more intensely, replacing less evocative practices that less frequently survived or diffused.

The converse is also partly true, or at least was true on average over the long run: without certain of these practices, the psychosocial disposition to kama muta would not exist. Communal sharing relationships greatly enhance human fitness, providing mutual support, pooling of risks, and the beneficial joint use of resources and knowledge, among other benefits. Kama muta experiences arising from the intensification of communal sharing reinforce and sustain those relationships. But a person is not born knowing with whom communal sharing relationships of what sort will be advantageous for coordinating what kinds of activities; she must rely on cultural cues that index what communal sharing relationships exist in her community, and which ones she belongs to or may fruitfully form. She must attend to cues to the relative fitness values of the various potential communal sharing relationships she could participate in, and hence how she should prioritize her efforts to form and support each relationship (Fiske 2000). The genetically-based emotional proclivity to kama muta must have evolved because it enhanced fitness, which could only be the case if, taken all together over many generations, the cultural practices that evoked kama muta typically enhanced adaptively valuable communal sharing relationships. That is, the kama muta evoked by all cultural practices in all communities in the population, on the whole, must have strengthened fitness-beneficial relationships, resulting in the success of the kama muta proclivity phenotype.

This does not imply that any particular kama muta-evoking practice is beneficial to biological fitness, just that the sum effect of all cultural practices together has been beneficial, over many generations. It does not imply that this sum is beneficial today, or is beneficial at any other particular moment in any particular community. Indeed, many kama muta-evoking practices today surely contribute nothing to fitness: kama muta responses to such things as Pixar movies, cute kitten videos, or Taylor Swift songs surely do not make you more like to survive, and probably do little or nothing to increase

your reproductive success. A person *decreases* his fitness if he feels such wonderful kama muta in response to religious practices or texts that he is motivated to devote his life to a deity by leading the life of a celibate priest or monk.

Cultural practices may interact with the psychological proclivity to kama muta in three ways. In ecological terms, cultural practices that evoke kama muta may be *mutualistic*, that is, beneficial to the spread of the practice and to the fitness of the person (such as kama muta seeing the first ultrasound of your baby). They may be *commensalistic*, that is, beneficial only to the spread of the practice, but not to genetic fitness (such as kitten videos). Or they may be *parasitic*, that is, beneficial to the spread of the practice but detrimental to the biological fitness of the persons with the disposition to experience kama muta (e.g., kama muta that motivates a celibate life). But if the sum of the biological fitness effects of all kama muta-evoking cultural practices becomes negative, natural selection will slowly replace the kama muta-susceptibility phenotype with non-susceptible phenotypes. Cultural evolution occurs orders of magnitude faster than genetic evolution, so it is not necessarily the case that the psychological proclivity to experience kama muta in response to the aggregate of contemporary cultural practices is biologically adaptive at this moment in history. But it must have been biologically adaptive in the context of the evocative cultural practices that were pervasive over the last few thousand years.

However it is that kama muta practices affect biological fitness, it is clear that a great many prevalent cultural practices occupy the niche provided by the kama muta emotion. And those kama muta-inducing practices have in turn shaped their cultural-evolutionary niche by fostering the development of technologies and social activities favorable to the spread of the kama muta-inducing practices. To understand music, religion, the arts, narratives, oratory, recording and dissemination practices, marketing, politics and social movements, social media and kitten videos, we need to see how they depend on the niche constituted by kama muta.

Where Do We Go from Here?

To correctly characterize the kama muta niche, to learn just how cultural practices evolve to adapt to that niche, and to discern how the cultural practices that occupy the niche reconstruct the emotion to their advantage, we need to do historical and long-term prospective studies specifically designed to elucidate the processes: need to observe how practices and emotions change and interact over time. Precisely how does the

reproduction of evocative practices depend on their capacity to attract attention, be remembered, be persuasive, elicit the desire to tell others, motivate people to recruit others, evoke needs to re-enact evocative practices and perfect them? What is the nature of competition among practices occupying an emotion niche, and when do practices partition the niche or construct auxiliary niches of their own in which they can avoid competing with practices occupying the original niche?

To further inform us about the adaptation of cultural practices to the kama muta niche, we also need to search for cases of convergent evolution. For example, do religions independently evolve in similar ways to more strongly and reliably evoke kama muta? Do narrative genres independently converge on the same devices to make stories maximally evocative (see Hogan 2003; Booker 2004; Fiske, Schubert, & Sebit 2017a)? In the contemporary world, ubiquitous channels of intercommunication make it hard to discern whether any two practices are converging on the same means to evoke kama muta independently of each other. But it may be possible to find contemporary cases and to uncover historical ones.

As I indicated earlier, in conjunction with such investigations it will be interesting to see what other emotions (and other affects) provide fertile niches for cultural practices – provided we can correctly delineate and distinguish among human emotions. When confronted with astounding human performances, magnificent constructions, or majestic natural phenomena, people experience an emotion that English speakers sometimes label *awe*, though *awe* is also used to label other emotions, including kama muta. This sort of ‘awe’ is also positive in various senses, memorable, and inspires people to tell others about it. It also supports authority ranking relations: the gigantic pyramids, temples, palaces, and statues that rulers build evoke ‘awe’ that reinforces the ‘superiority’ of the rulers. So ‘awe’ seems to be a niche for spectacular cultural practices.

To my knowledge no previous work has mapped the full panoply of cultural practices that depend on one emotion, nor have many previous culture evolution researchers developed the notion of emotion niches, as such. Here I hope that I have indicated the potential merits of treating an emotional proclivity as a niche for the cultural evolution of practices. In particular, illuminating cultural evolution by borrowing the concepts of niche and niche construction, we enhance our understanding of why humans engage in many aspects of religion, the arts, fiction, social media, iPods, marketing, and so on. This approach sheds light on emotions, culture, cultural evolution, and on intriguing ways in which culture and psychology complement each other to generate practices and

institutions. This approach also illuminates a hitherto neglected emotion mechanism of group formation, growth and perpetuation. I look forward to historical, ethnographic, ethnological, interview, behavior sampling, survey, diary, experimental, and physiological research that digs deeper into this.

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