



## ABSTRACT

### Finding Home: Envisioning Church Ministry to Left-Behind Families of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)

The Philippines since the turn of the century has seen the number of its citizens, who have left to find employment abroad, more than double to over two million. The social cost involved with the departure of spouses and parents have been studied by many including academics, sociologists, and psychologists. Given the relatively large size of the average Filipino family, the ramifications of divided families multiply beyond the realm of mere geography and can extend from the nuclear unit to the rest of society.

This dissertation examines how the evangelical Protestant church in the Philippines is able to minister to the needs of member OFW families relevant to the departure and prolonged absence of spouses and parents who are part of the Filipino labor migration phenomenon.

Two primary research questions serve as the foci of this study:

Research Question 1: What issues confront the transnational Filipino church member family ruptured by separation from an OFW spouse/parent and how do they respond to these issues?

Research Question 2: How does the church respond to the issues that confront the transnational Filipino church member family ruptured by separation from an OFW spouse/parent?

The initial two chapters deal with background information. The first chapter presents the theological, theoretical, and research frameworks utilized. It also gives the Statement of the Problem, Purpose Statement, and Research Questions. The second chapter discusses various key factors that contributed to the country's state as a current supplier of labor, both skilled and unskilled, to the rest of the world.

The third chapter provides overviews for the churches and OFW families who took part in the study. The sample consisted of 11 church leaders and 24 acting heads of OFW families. The fourth chapter deals with findings from interviews with the acting heads of OFW families, plus selected stories told by individual interviewees. These cases and the rest of the interview results reveal the issues they deal with most as OFW families. The fifth chapter covers the responses of the church leaders to the needs of the OFW families under their care. The final chapter gives recommendations regarding the role of OFW ministry in the church.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

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## CONTENTS

List of Figures .....	viii
List of Tables.....	x
List of Appendices .....	xi
Acknowledgements .....	xii
Chapter 1: Background to the Problem .....	1
Introduction .....	1
The Story of an OFW Family .....	1
Finding Home .....	4
Overseas Filipinos.....	5
Globalization, Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Glocalization .....	8
Globalization.....	8
Diaspora .....	9
Transnationalism.....	13
Glocalization.....	14
Statement of the Problem.....	14
Purpose Statement.....	15
Research Questions.....	16
Theological Framework .....	18
Research Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis .....	21
Delimitations.....	25

Theoretical Framework .....	25
Review of Relevant Literature .....	27
Ethical Considerations .....	31
Chapter 2: The Filipino Diaspora .....	32
Introduction: The Philippine Experience .....	32
Historical Aspect.....	33
Political Aspect .....	40
Economic Aspect .....	47
Migrant Labor Exportation as Government Policy.....	60
Demographic Aspect.....	63
The Filipino Family Experience .....	70
Faith .....	75
Chapter 3: Churches and Their OFW Families.....	83
Introduction.....	83
Overview of Churches in the Study .....	83
Church A.....	84
Church B .....	85
Church C .....	86
Church D.....	87
Summary .....	88
Overview of the OFWs .....	89



The Left-Behind Families .....	92
The Acting Heads of Family .....	92
The Children Left Behind .....	94
Summary .....	97
Chapter 4: Family Findings: Research Survey Interviews .....	98
Case Studies .....	98
Althea .....	98
Angeline .....	99
Christine .....	100
Erica .....	101
Grace .....	102
Jasmine .....	102
John Paul .....	103
Joshua .....	105
Joy .....	106
Kimberly .....	106
Kyla .....	107
Mariel .....	108
Mary .....	108
Michael .....	109
Michelle .....	110
Nicole .....	110

Dominant Themes Among OFW Families .....	111
Separation, the Left-Behind Spouse, and the Marital Relationship.....	111
Resultant Emotions.....	112
Coping Mechanisms .....	115
Single Parenting .....	117
Communication and the OFW Family.....	121
Separation and the Left-Behind Children .....	123
OFW Remittances and the Family .....	126
Left-Behind OFW Families’ Suggestions for the Church .....	128
Summary .....	132

Chapter 5: Survey Responses from Pastors and Staff on Church Programs for OFW Families.....	133
Introduction.....	133
Description of Individual Church Results.....	134
Church A.....	134
Church B .....	135
Ministry To OFW Families .....	137
Ministry By OFW Families .....	138
Church C .....	139
Church D.....	140
Major OFW Issues from the Perspective of Church Leaders .....	141
Comparison of Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspectives of OFW Families and Church Leaders .....	142

OFW Family Issues and Time.....	143
Findings.....	145
OFWs, the Church, and the Future .....	149
Summary .....	151
Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	152
Introduction.....	152
Correlation Between OFW Family Needs and Church Ministries Provided .....	152
A Shared Vision by Churches for OFW Ministry .....	155
Practical Recommendations for Reconciling Needs and Ministries Offered .....	158
Casting a Vision for OFW Ministries in the Church .....	162
Understanding the Challenges of Transnational OFW Ministries.....	163
For Further Follow-up.....	166
Raising New Questions.....	168
Status of Left-Behind OFW Families .....	169
Conclusion .....	172
References Cited .....	187

## Figures

Figure		Page
1	Data Collection Methods .....	22
2	Field Research Process Flow Chart .....	23
3	Population of the Philippines .....	51
4	Average Annual Population Growth Rate .....	52
5	Household Population by Age and Gender .....	53
6	Unemployment Rate of Household Population 15 Years and Older .....	54
7	Total Number of OFWs .....	55
8	Overseas Filipinos' Remittances to the Philippines .....	56
9	2012 Primary Sources of Remittances to the Philippines .....	58
10	Gross Domestic Product of the Philippines .....	59
11	Remittances as Percentage of Gross Domestic Product .....	60
12	Deployed Overseas Filipino Workers .....	62
13	Number of OFWs by Gender .....	65
14	OFW Deployment—New Hires .....	66
15	Statue of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and Andres de Urdaneta in the Walled City of Intramuros in Manila, the Philippines .....	76
16	World Distribution of OFWs Represented by Families in the Study .....	91
17	OFW Families Classified by Years Separated from OFW .....	91
18	Distribution of Children, by Age and Residence, of OFW Families in the Study .....	95
19	Distribution by Age of Children and Adult Children Left Behind by OFW Parents .....	95

20	Distribution by Gender of Children and Adult Children Left Behind by OFW Parents .....	96
21	Distribution by Residence of Children and Adult Children Left Behind by OFW Parents .....	96
22	Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspective of OFW Families .....	115
23	Coping Mechanisms by Left-Behind Families .....	117
24	Popularity of Different Means of Communication Among OFW Families .....	122
25	Aspects of the Church Ranked First as “the Best Part that You Like Most About Attending Church” .....	129
26	Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspective of Church Leaders .....	142
27	Comparison of Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspectives of OFW Families and Church Leaders .....	143
28	Major OFW Family Issues Correlated with Years of Separation from the OFW .....	144
29	Local Church with Local Perspective of OFW Ministry.....	156
30	Local Church with Transnational Perspective of OFW Ministry.....	157

## Tables

Table		Page
1	Poverty Incidence Among Families and Population .....	54
2	Breakdown of OFWs by Gender .....	65
3	Distribution by Gender of OFWs Represented by Families in the Study .....	89
4	Distribution by Age of OFWs Represented by Families in the Study .....	90
5	Occupations of the OFWs Represented by Families in the Study .....	90
6	Distribution by Gender of Acting Heads of Families in the Study .....	93
7	Distribution by Age of Acting Heads of Families in the Study .....	93
8	Civil Status of Acting Heads of Families in the Study .....	94
9	Occupations of Acting Heads of Families in the Study .....	94

## Appendices

Appendix	Page
A Assent Form .....	174
B Survey Questions: Interview Protocol for Acting Heads of OFW Families .....	175
C Survey Questions: Interview Protocol for Pastors or Church Workers Directly Involved in Ministry to OFW Families .....	181
D The Church's Challenge: A Ministry of Healing for the Family .....	185
E OFW Care Model .....	186

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# **Finding Home: Envisioning Church Ministry to Left-Behind Families of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Background to the Problem**

#### **Introduction**

The last few decades of the 20th century saw the emergence of a distinct phenomenon in the Philippines. A combination of factors, both internal and external, combined to lead the country into emphasizing the exportation of labor migrants to the rest of the world. This chapter begins with the story of a family with a wife/mother forced by circumstances to become an Overseas Filipino Worker. Their tale serves as a starting point for the study, its background, what problem it seeks to address, the research design, and ethical considerations.

#### **The Story of an OFW Family**

Carlos and Clara Cruz are in their late 30s and have been married for 15 years. Clara has been working as a beautician in Dubai for almost a year and a half. They have three children: Felipe (13 years old), Esperanza (12), and Caridad (5). The couple

previously had marital problems due to Carlos' substance abuse problems which led to frequent disagreements and, at one point, a short separation. At the end of the month when he lived apart from the family, Carlos asked his wife for a chance to save their marriage, and Clara took him back.

The reconciliation worked due in no small part to Carlos turning away from his vices and, in his words, "going back to God." He says that he has a strong faith in God, although he is puzzled as to why God has "given him a hard time when he follows all of His commandments." In doing so, he sees himself as a latter day Job. At times Carlos quotes the Bible and utters, for example, that "no one can enter the Kingdom without being true to Him."

Life has always been hard for them. Carlos worked sporadically for an architect who did not have a regular stream of clients. Clara was the only one with steady employment, but even then her earnings were never enough to cover the family's expenses and debts. Still, she surprised her husband when she decided to work overseas. Now that Clara is gone, the family has discovered that their standard of living has not changed for the better. Carlos reports that he and the children "feel sad when his wife is unable to send money from abroad." Her increased earnings are offset by the higher cost of living overseas and debt payments to the placement agency.

Nonetheless, Carlos still views his wife's departure as having a silver lining: "I am at peace because she's far away and we rarely speak to one another." What is undeniable however is the adverse effect of their mother's absence on the children. The eldest, Felipe, sought to escape from loneliness by losing himself in the world of video games. His addiction to video games caused him to drop out of school. The middle child,

Esperanza, found solace by focusing on material things, such as shoes, clothes, and cell phones. She kept asking her mother for money to go shopping, and Clara, seeing material goods as expressions of love for her daughter, sacrificed to be able to meet her daughter's demands. The youngest calls out for her mother every time she sees a plane go by.

The family goes to church each Sunday as a mechanism for dealing with the gap in their lives. There they feel some degree of support from others in similar circumstances whom they occasionally encounter in informal settings. Carlos wants to grow in his faith, but he does not know how. He needs guidance, but is unaware of where he can find help. He is confused and in denial of his feelings of sadness and loneliness. They attend a fairly large Protestant church connected with a mainline denomination, located in the downtown area of a major city in the Philippines. With five Sunday services in three languages, the combined congregations number well over a thousand. Many opportunities are available for anyone to be plugged into the life of the church; aside from small groups, there are many other ministries designed especially for different segments of the church, such as children, youth, young adults, young married couples, married couples, men, women, choir, and the praise and worship team. Despite all these however, Carlos still often finds himself lost and lonely in the crowded church.

This story of a ruptured Filipino family, albeit with pseudonyms, is based mostly on the factual experiences of a real family that is one of ten case studies of Filipino families with absentee OFW wives/mothers contained in a book by Dr. Honey Carandang (lead author) of the University of the Philippines.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Lourdes Carandang, Beatrix Aileen Sison, and Christopher Carandang, *Nawala ang Ilaw ng Tahanan [Gone the Light of the Home]: Case Studies of Families Left Behind*, 1st ed. (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil, 2007)

A discussion paper prepared by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies in 2009 summarized findings by researchers as follows:

To date, there is still no quantification of the social costs of migration. Different studies identify the social costs to include: (a) “juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, psycho-social maladjustments, loss of self-esteem, early marriages, teen-age pregnancies, family breakdown” (Coronel and Unterreiner 2008: 21), (b) low decision making skills of migrant children (due to two layers of authority in the household: parents and caregivers); undesirable personality traits of children (spoiled, wasteful, lonely, resentful, materialistic); marital issues (Bryant 2005); (c) lack of collective identity, focus, rootedness and grounding, and patience, while they crave for acceptance, affirmation, attention and clear set of values (Tanalega 2002), (d) alienation from parents and regret for not spending quality time with parents (SMC 2004), and (e) sense of loneliness from parental absence and less socially adjusted (Battistella and Conaco 1996).<sup>2</sup>

This dissertation will study issues relevant to the ruptured Filipino families in the Philippines—specifically their needs and caring ministries afforded them by local evangelical Protestant churches—consequent to separation from family members who have left for work overseas as part of Filipino labor migration.

### Finding Home

A well-worn cliché states that home is where the heart is. “Home” is a word that can evoke myriad meanings and emotions, even contrasting ones. The project title begins with “Finding Home” for home is more than just the structure that provides shelter, it represents the center of each person’s universe, the place where family members gather for love and nurture, care and compassion, healing and rest. That is likely why God chose

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<sup>2</sup>“The Social and Economic Impact of Philippine International Labour Migration and Remittances,” Philippine Institute of Development Studies, 12, accessed January 4, 2012, <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps0932.pdf>.

to use familial language in describing the relationship between the Creator and human beings who bear God's image. It is the thought and remembrance of home that motivates OFWs to persevere through dangerous working conditions in alien surroundings and endure the pain of loneliness. "Finding Home" seeks to underscore the fact that the church can be a home too for families and individuals. It is where people who hurt can find God's healing hand through the community of faith around them. Christians in a sense can incarnate Christ each time ministry is rendered in his name.

### **Overseas Filipinos**

Even before the advent of colonial rule, Filipinos have been on the move not only within their over seven thousand islands but also within the context of trade with neighboring lands and peoples. The range of their travels radically increased following Spanish conquest. Spain ruled the Philippines through the service of its subjects in diaspora throughout the Spanish empire, and as a province of *Nueva España* ("New Spain," i.e. Mexico), an arrangement which lasted until the latter became a sovereign nation in 1821. Filipino sailors arrived on American soil due to the part they played in the galleon trade. The latter began in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century as a means of bringing the riches of the East to Spain by way of Mexico through a trade route that connected Manila and Acapulco.

The first arrival of Filipinos that could be conclusively proven with documentation date back to 1587 when there occurred the “landing of a small expedition in California.”<sup>3</sup>

Floro L. Mercene reported that after the long trans-Pacific crossing,

the Manila galleons usually made landfall at California, north of present-day San Francisco. The galleon captains were usually under strict instructions from the Spanish governor-general and the merchants in Manila not to land in California because this would mean delay in disposing of the ship’s cargo in Mexico. Moreover, the California coast was rocky and usually foggy and there was the danger of getting shipwrecked. California was an empty land, populated by various tribes of native peoples.

In spite of the dangers, the galleon pilots ignored their instructions and made surreptitious landings on the California coast as a respite from the long crossing from the Asia, which usually took four to five months. The ship was low on water and provisions, and needed replenishment.

To escape the deprivations during the long voyage itself, many Filipino sailors jumped ship in California and managed to survive by joining the local Indian tribes.<sup>4</sup>

Filipinos thereafter took part in the Spanish settlement of California, including the start of what later became the cities of San Diego and Los Angeles.<sup>5</sup> From these limited beginnings, the dispersal of Filipinos proceeded at an accelerating rate through the years. Diasporic experience is clearly not a recent phenomenon for the Filipino people. By

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<sup>3</sup> Floro L. Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World: Filipino Migration to Mexico and the Americas from the Sixteenth Century* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2007), 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

2010, overseas Filipinos numbered 9.45 million scattered throughout 217 countries and territories,<sup>6</sup> representing 4% of all international migrants worldwide totaling 214 million.<sup>7</sup>

The official definition of an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) according to the government of the Philippines is as follows:

“Overseas Filipino worker” refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a citizen or on board a vessel navigating the foreign seas other than a government ship used for military or non-commercial purposes or on an installation located offshore or on the high seas; to be used interchangeably with migrant worker.<sup>8</sup>

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas<sup>9</sup> uses the following categories for classifying citizens who leave the Philippines to work in another country:

Permanent - Immigrants, dual citizens or legal permanent residents abroad whose stay does not depend on work contracts. Temporary - Persons whose stay overseas is employment related, and who are expected to return at the end of their work contracts. Irregular - Those not properly documented or without valid residence or work permits, or who are overstaying in a foreign country.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos as of December 2010,” Commission on Filipinos Overseas, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/pdf/statistics/Stock%202010.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> “International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision,” United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://esa.un.org/migration/index.asp?panel=1> ).

<sup>8</sup> “Republic Act No. 10022,” Official Gazette, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://www.gov.ph/2010/03/10/republic-act-no-10022-s-2010/>.

<sup>9</sup> This is described on their web site as follows: “Established on 16 June 1980 through Batas Pambansa [Republic Act] 79, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is an agency of the Philippine Government tasked to promote and uphold the interests of Filipino emigrants and permanent residents abroad, and to preserve and strengthen ties with Filipino communities overseas.” “About Us,” Office of the President of the Philippines: Commission on Filipinos Overseas, accessed December 3, 2012, [http://www.cfo.gov.ph/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=section&id=12&Itemid=789](http://www.cfo.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=12&Itemid=789).

<sup>10</sup> Commission on Filipinos Overseas, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/pdf/statistics/Stock%202010.pdf>.

This study, however, will consider OFWs without regard to classification, whether permanent, temporary, or irregular, as long as a spouse/parent is employed overseas and the rest of the family is left behind in the Philippines.

## **Globalization, Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Glocalization**

### Globalization

Globalization is the dominant concept that encompasses other related constructs such as migration, diaspora, and transnationalism. As terms and concepts evolve, they take on or lose nuances of both denotations and connotations. Globalization is not an exception. The word has been used to help explain many aspects of transitory human existence. The World Bank defines globalization in economic terms as “the growing interdependence of countries resulting from the integration of trade, finance, people, and ideas in one global marketplace. International trade and cross-border investment flows are the main elements of this integration.”<sup>11</sup> One definition from the point of view of sociology states the following: “Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> World Bank, “Globalization and International Trade,” (accessed May 1, 2012, [http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/beyond/beyondco/beg\\_12.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/beyond/beyondco/beg_12.pdf)).

<sup>12</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1992), 8.



## Diaspora

Diaspora as a theory and as an empirical reality serves as an important backdrop to this study. It is therefore critical to have at hand a clear understanding of what the term denotes. Etymologically the word traces its origin to the “Greek *διασπορά* dispersion, < *διασπείρ-ειν* to disperse” from “< *διά* through + *σπείρειν* to sow, scatter” according to the Oxford English Dictionary which further provides this definition: “The Dispersion; i.e. (among the Hellenistic Jews) the whole body of Jews living dispersed among the Gentiles after the Captivity (John vii. 35); (among the early Jewish Christians) the body of Jewish Christians outside of Palestine (Jas. i. 1, 1 Pet. i. 1).”<sup>13</sup> However, from traditionally being applied specifically to the Jewish Diaspora recorded in the Old Testament, the multifaceted utilization of the term through time, reflected particularly in the exponential growth of its popularity, has led to what one author has called “a ‘diaspora’ diaspora – a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space.”<sup>14</sup>

Khachig Tölölyan believes that the term “diaspora” goes back to 275 BCE.<sup>15</sup> Stephane Dufoix traces it to the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greeks in the writings of such men as Sophocles and Herodotus, and believes that the term as used in the Septuagint “doesn’t

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<sup>13</sup> “Diaspora, n.,” OED: Oxford English Dictionary, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://oed.com.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/view/Entry/52085?redirectedFrom=diaspora#eid>.

<sup>14</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘diaspora’ Diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-19.

<sup>15</sup> Oxford Diasporas Programme, “Robin Cohen and Khachig Tölölyan Discuss Diasporas” (discussion, University of Oxford, Oxford, England, 2011), VIDEO file, accessed May 4, 2012, <http://vimeo.com/25020401> .

refer to the historic dispersion of the Jews who were taken as captives after the destruction of Jerusalem in 86 B.C., or to any other human event” but instead “always meant the threat of dispersion facing the Hebrews if they failed to obey God’s will.”<sup>16</sup> This “religious” connection of the term generally persisted until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although Simon Dubnov in 1931 defined “diaspora” as a “Greek term for a nation or part of a nation separated from its own state or territory and dispersed among other nations but preserving its national culture.”<sup>17</sup> William Safran in 1991 proposed this definition of diaspora: “minority expatriate communities whose members shared *several* of the six following characteristics: their or their ancestors’ dispersion from a ‘center’ to at least two peripheral foreign regions; persistence of a collective memory concerning the homeland; certainty that their acceptance by the host society is impossible; maintenance of an often idealized homeland as a goal of return; belief in a collective duty to engage in the perpetuation , restoration, or security of the country of origin.”<sup>18</sup>

The following are some contemporary definitions of the term “diaspora”:

(1) “people who have relocated from their lands of birth for whatever reason.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas [Les Diasporas]*, trans. William Rodarmor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008),4.

<sup>17</sup> Simon Dubnov, *Diaspora* , vol. 4 of *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 126, quoted in Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas [Les Diasporas]*, trans. William Rodarmor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 126.

<sup>18</sup> William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Sciences: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1983): 83, quoted in Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas [Les Diasporas]*, trans. William Rodarmor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 22.

<sup>19</sup> “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action,” The Lausanne Movement, accessed May 4, 2012, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/ctcommitment.html#p2-3-5> .

- (2) “peoples on the move [...] who take up residence away from their places of origin”<sup>20</sup>
- (3) “the phenomenon of people on the move or being moved”<sup>21</sup>
- (4) “an imagined community living away from a professed place of origin”<sup>22</sup>

Three criteria that Rogers Brubaker has put forward in order to help classify a phenomenon as a diaspora are:

- (1) “Dispersion” – regardless of whether it is voluntary or not; generally understood to involve the crossing of national boundaries.
- (2) “Homeland Orientation” – where a “real or imagined ‘homeland’” is regarded as the “authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty.”
- (3) “Boundary Maintenance” – which necessitates the safeguarding and continuation of “a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society (or societies).”<sup>23</sup>

Robin Cohen proposes nine characteristics that are “normally” found in a diaspora:

- (1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically;
- (2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- (3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland;
- (4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral home;
- (5) a return movement;
- (6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time;
- (7) a troubled relationship with host societies;
- (8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other

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<sup>20</sup> Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2012), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Enoch Wan, “Diaspora Missiology,” *Global Missiology* 4, no. 4 (2007): 1, accessed May 4, 2012, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/303/848>.

<sup>22</sup> Steven Vertovec, “Cosmopolitanism in Attitude, Practice and Competence” (MMG Working Paper 09-08, Göttingen, Germany, 2009): 5, accessed May 9, 2012, [http://www.mmg.mpg.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/wp/WP\\_09-08\\_Vertovec\\_Cosmopolitanism.pdf](http://www.mmg.mpg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/wp/WP_09-08_Vertovec_Cosmopolitanism.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Brubaker, 5-6.

countries; and (9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries.<sup>24</sup>

Given the wide range by which the concept of “diaspora” is understood and the term used, perhaps Cohen was right in labeling it a “provocation” in that in its presence during discourse, “people have to think;”<sup>25</sup> in a similar light Tölölyan called it “a term ‘*bon pour penser avec.*’”<sup>26</sup>

In this study, “diaspora” is used to mean people who have left their country of origin for whatever reason, maintain transnational ties with it, and retain a sense of identity based on that perceived homeland. As used in “Filipino diaspora,” the term will refer to Filipinos who have left the Philippines to live in another country either permanently as emigrants or temporarily as migrant workers, whether legally with documentation or irregularly without official permission by the host foreign government. These Filipinos resort to various means and actively exert effort to keep connected to family, friends, hometowns, and/or even churches or organizations. They also persevere in self-identifying as Filipinos regardless of citizenship status. “Filipino diaspora” will be used synonymously with “overseas Filipinos” and “transnational migrant Filipinos.”

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<sup>24</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 180.

<sup>25</sup> Oxford Diasporas Programme 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, “Diaspora Studies: Past, Present and Promise” (Working Papers Paper 55, Oxford, U.K., April 2012): 5, (accessed May 9, 2012, <http://www.migration.ox.ac.uk/odp/pdfs/WP55%20Diaspora%20studies.pdf>).

## Transnationalism

Another manifestation of globalization may be found in transnationalism, a term which refers to “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement ... [and] that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.”<sup>27</sup> A broader definition covers “not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organizations.”<sup>28</sup> In this study, transnational Filipino families are therefore the ones characterized by separation from at least one spouse/parent due to migration to a foreign country. Transnational attempts by ruptured Filipino families to bridge their separation by geographical distance are evident in such practices as reliance on electronic communication (phone calls, texting, video chats), *balikbayan* boxes (shipments to the ruptured families of material goods, e.g. television sets, cameras, kitchen appliances), and even visits back home. These are all attempts by those overseas to assure the rest of their families back in the Philippines of their continued love for and attachment to those whom they left behind.

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<sup>27</sup> Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, ed. Linda Glick Schiller Basch (New York, NY: Rutledge, 1994), 7.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Faist, “Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners?” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, eds. Rainer Baubock and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 9.

## Glocalization

The word “glocalization” quite succinctly encapsulates the trauma experienced by the traditional Filipino family when forces at work worldwide impact them at the level of the home. The term has been described as an apt explanation for the “flat earth” that results due to “the seamless integration between the local and global;” a “flat earth” is the aftermath when what was formerly foreign becomes familiar due to the “comprehensive connectedness” characteristic of today’s world.<sup>29</sup> It is “the interrelationship between the local and the global in their multifaceted, multidirectional, interactive dynamic influence one upon the other.”<sup>30</sup>

### Statement of the Problem

With the rate of labor migration from the Philippines to the rest of the world showing no signs of abatement, the forced rupture of many Filipino families, as many fathers, mothers, and at times even both leave their loved ones behind, continues to be a corollary and very real issue that the Philippine Protestant Church has to contend with. This study will look at the approaches taken by the church in its response to the brokenness and pain experienced by the ruptured OFW family due to the overseas

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<sup>29</sup> Bob Roberts Jr, *Glocalization: How Followers of Jesus Engage the New Flat World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 14-15.

<sup>30</sup> Charles E. Van Engen, “The Glocal Church: Locality and Catholicity in a Globalizing World,” in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 159.

employment-related separation of a spouse/parent from the remaining spouse and/or children. The Church's approach should embody a comprehensive strategy for ministry to families left behind in the Philippines by family members who are part of the Filipino diaspora; it should be a plan of ministry shaped by needs as felt by the family members and as perceived by those who minister to them. What can the Philippine church do to respond to needs and assist their members in coping with and/or overcoming the deleterious effects of a family member's absence due to transnational labor migration? On one hand are family needs that are crying for answers, and on the other hand is the question of what corresponding care the church is able to provide. Research will pursue addressing issues from the two perspectives of families and the church.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this interdisciplinary study is to research and discover how the evangelical Protestant Church is able to minister to the needs of members' families in the Philippines generated by the absence of spouses/parents who are part of the Filipino labor migration phenomenon. The goal is to assess the quality of care provided by the Church to those who suffer from the dire repercussions of family life disruption brought about by the outflux of key members as transnational workers. Information from the investigation of two research questions will lead to implementing a missional response to separated families.

## Research Questions

The official 2010 Census of the Philippines estimated the total population of the country at 92.34 million.<sup>31</sup> The labor force amounted to 38.89 million in the same year.<sup>32</sup> The 2010 Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos reported a total of 9.45 million (47% permanent, 45% temporary, and 8% irregular) who lived abroad in 217 countries and territories.<sup>33</sup> Based on these statistics, in 2010 about 1 out of every 10 Filipinos lived and/or worked outside of the Philippines. This is not an insignificant rate and raises questions regarding its impact on the Filipino family. A historical demographic review served as a background to the study of Filipino migration and its resulting effects. This study of the Filipino transnational family sought to find out how and why they have arrived at their current continued growth in numbers.

Countries worldwide have of late recognized the Philippines as a supplier of migrant labor to the world. Initially through Republic Act 8042 (1985) and subsequently amended by Republic Act 10022 (2010), the government of the Philippines had *de facto* adopted a policy geared toward the exportation of labor.<sup>34</sup> A daily average of 4,000

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<sup>31</sup> "Philippines in Figures," National Statistics Office, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://www.census.gov.ph/> .

<sup>32</sup> "Household Population 15 Years Old and Over and Employment Status, Philippines: 2010 - January 2012," Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/PUBLICATIONS/Current%20Labor%20Statistics/STATISTICAL%20TABLES/Tab2.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Commission on Filipinos Overseas, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/pdf/statistics/Stock%202010.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> "Republic Act No. 10022," Official Gazette.



Filipino men and women leave the country with the objective of finding gainful employment elsewhere in the world.<sup>35</sup>

The family is the core unit or building block of the nation and its social fabric. The validity of such a statement achieves further depth of meaning in Filipino culture with the concept of the family perceived as extended and stretched even further by fictive kinship. Stresses and challenges stemming from the past have by the start of the 21st century greatly affected the Filipino family. Ecclesiastes 1:9b states that “there is nothing new under the sun,”<sup>36</sup> and while this may be so on the individual family level, it is the depth or pervasiveness of these challenges, engendered by labor migration that in turn accelerated the spread of the Filipino diaspora, that is relatively recent.

This dissertation research required a look into two specific areas of study: the social realities of the Filipino family and the present state of the evangelical Protestant church’s ministry to the OFW families within their congregations. Research questions covered social and ecclesial inquiries in order to discover the needs of left-behind family members and draw up a portrait of the church’s ability to serve these members at their points of need. The realities of a life marked by continuously trying to bridge distances that divide families left behind in the Philippines from OFW loved ones call for a reasoned, sensitive, and concerted response by the church that takes into serious consideration the transnational, crosscultural, and paradigm-shifting ramifications of relationships marked by separation and in need of healing.

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<sup>35</sup> “Overseas Employment Statistics 2010,” Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, accessed June 8, 2012, [http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/2010\\_Stats.pdf](http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/2010_Stats.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> All Bible references are from The New International Version Bible (NIV) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973).

**Research Question 1: What issues confront the transnational Filipino church member family ruptured by separation from an OFW spouse/parent and how do they respond to these issues?**

**Research Question 2: How does the church respond to the issues that confront the transnational Filipino church member family ruptured by separation from an OFW spouse/parent?**

The issues and corresponding responses raised by these two research questions served as the seedbed for renewed awareness and action by the church regarding opportunities for pastoral, missional, and communal ministry that would offer healing to Filipinos touched by the ruptures posed by labor migration. Since the church consists of its people, and families are part of the Body of Christ, the healing and strengthening of one heals and strengthens the other; the two are intimately related.

### **Theological Framework**

The Great Commission that Jesus issued to the disciples in Galilee subsequent to his resurrection embodied the missional task of the Church:

<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

Mission involves evangelism expressed in both word and deed. Jesus ministered to both body and soul; Christians, as the body of Christ, are to do the same. The spiritual rebirth of non-believers and their entry into the covenant community is a major task of the people of God with the help and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Mission likewise involves the ministry of members of the Body of Christ to other members of the same Body, for there is only one Body. The love and care, expressed in divergent manners including prayer and material ways, that parts of the same Body render to one another bear witness to the love of God.

<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.<sup>38</sup>

The same ministry by the Body to the Body is evident in Paul's letter to the church in Philippi whereby he acknowledged with gratitude the support that the Philippian church gave to his missional work in Thessalonica.

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. <sup>17</sup> Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

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<sup>38</sup> Acts 2:42-47.

<sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, when he wrote to the church in Galatia, Paul couched his message in familial terminology by addressing the Galatians as follows: “<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”<sup>40</sup> Numerous parts of Scripture instruct the followers of Christ to love, serve, fellowship, and perform many other ways of caring for one another. John 13:34, Romans 12:10, and 1 Peter 3:8 are just some instances that emphasize the importance of member care.

From the point of view of eternity and without denigrating the need for social concern, salvation of the soul has primacy. God is preparing and building up the people of God “from every nation, tribe, people and language.”<sup>41</sup> The church as the people of God is charged with the mission of God which seeks to reach the whole world with the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. God by his prevenient grace has prepared each tribe and people to hear the shepherd’s voice, for they are able to hear if they would listen. God in the person of the Holy Spirit is empowering and enabling the people of God to do and accomplish the task that he has set before them.<sup>42</sup>

Primarily due to the relative lack of trained clergy among overseas Filipinos

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<sup>39</sup> Philippians 4:14-19.

<sup>40</sup> Galatians 5:13.

<sup>41</sup> Revelation 7:9.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 10:28, Mark 16:15, Acts 28:28

particularly in limited access countries and in the high seas (from tankers to cruise liners),<sup>43</sup> many evangelical OFWs are in ministry to others wherever they are in the world, but who is caring for their families in the Philippines and what kind of care are they receiving? The Bible has many portrayals of Jesus as the one who sets the prime example of best practice member care. He enables his people to experience peace regardless of circumstances.<sup>44</sup> He provides protection and sustenance (John 10:14). He even gave the world the greatest love of all.<sup>45</sup> Now it is the task and privilege of the church to be the body of Christ on earth.<sup>46</sup>

### **Research Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis**

The Research Methodology employed drew from Literature Review, Qualitative Research (surveys, questionnaires, etc.), Quantitative Research (analysis of data from interviews), Demographic Studies supplemented by Ethnographic tools, and the Case Study Method. All contributed, especially with the support of an emic perspective, to the basis for drawing conclusions.

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<sup>43</sup> In 2007, over 200,000 Filipino seafarers represented about 20% of all seamen in the world. "Salary Guide for Filipino Seamen," *OFWGuide*, accessed December 4, 2012, [http://www.ofwguide.com/article\\_item.php?articleid=604](http://www.ofwguide.com/article_item.php?articleid=604).

<sup>44</sup> John 14:27.

<sup>45</sup> John 3:16, 15:13.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:27.

Method	Data Collection
Literature Review	Compile information from books, journals, reports, papers, and studies, either in print or online, in order to acquire a degree of understanding with regard to the current state of knowledge in the field of OFW studies.
Qualitative Research	Acquire information on Philippine history, politics, government policy, and faith relevant to comprehending the OFW phenomenon. Acquire and analyze, with the use of coding, responses to questions contained in questionnaires designed, respectively, for church leaders and acting heads of OFW families.
Quantitative Analysis	Assemble statistics derived from data provided by responses to questionnaires; data gleaned presented in visual form through charts or tables. Acquire information in the areas of Philippine economics and demographics relevant to understanding the OFW phenomenon.
Case Study Method	Bring together life stories sourced through interviews of heads of left-behind OFW families; <sup>47</sup> case studies serve as real-life examples of the different issues involved in understanding the experiences of OFW families.

Figure 1. Data Collection Methods.

This study employed a qualitative approach to data collection through the use of structured interviews. These used either Filipino or English or both based on the interviewee's preference, with the aid of questionnaires which had both languages. The questionnaires (in English) are found in Appendices B and C.

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<sup>47</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods (Applied Social Research Methods)*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 106.

STEP 1 Senior Pastor's Interview	STEP 2 Survey meeting at 4 Churches (use 2 questionnaires)	STEP 3 Interviewee Selection Process for 24 OFW Families	STEP 4 Schedule Follow- Up Oral Interviewees	STEP 5 Follow-Up Oral Interviews	STEP 6 Transcription of All 36 Oral Interviews After Clarifying Any Issues	STEP 7 Transmit 36 Transcribed Interviews to Researcher
1. Use Pastor's questionnaire in oral interview. 2. Introduce study. 3. Schedule survey meeting at church. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastor attends to introduce Field Assistant</li> <li>• Pastor identifies 1 Staff Member and 1 Lay Volunteer to take Church Worker's Questionnaire.</li> </ul> 4. Pastor provides list of OFW families to contact by email.  <div style="text-align: center;">↓ <b>STEP 2</b></div>	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">OFW Family Questionnaire</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Gather and survey OFW families in each of 4 churches. Invite them through pastor and directly by email.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">↓ <b>STEP 3</b></div> <div style="text-align: center;">Church Workers' Questionnaire</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Pastor invites 1 Church Staff Member and 1 Lay Volunteer and gives their names to Field Assistant.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">↓ <b>STEP 5</b></div> </div>	1. Collect and review data on OFW Family Questionnaires. 2. Do follow-up on comments from the survey. 3. Select 24 (6 each from the 4 churches surveyed in the study). 4. Use these criteria for selection: years working overseas, skill level, issues experienced, and insights. 5. Transmit all surveys to Field Assistant after clarifying comments.  <div style="text-align: center;">↓ <b>STEP 4</b></div>	1. After selection of 24 OFW Families, make appointments for oral interviews (in person, by phone, or by online video chat such as Skype). 2. These represent 6 each from 4 church congregations in the Greater Manila Area (a total of 24). 3. We need 20 but there are 4 extra interviews in case some do not show.  <div style="text-align: center;">↓ <b>STEP 6</b></div>	1. 1 Staff Member 2. 1 Lay Volunteer 3. 1 of each above (total of 2 per church) from 4 churches in the Greater Manila Area (total of 8).  <div style="text-align: center;">↓ <b>STEP 6</b></div>	1. 4 pastors 2. 24 OFW Families 3. 8 Staff Members and Lay Volunteers  <div style="text-align: center;">↓ <b>STEP 7</b></div>	

Figure 2. Field Research Process Flow Chart.

Notes: This chart presents the planned steps for field research; as it turned out, participating churches had no lay volunteers involved in OFW ministry, and three church leaders from each of the first three churches participated in the study. The fourth church had two rather than three church leaders take part in the interviews.

Due to personal constraints, I was precluded from conducting interviews *in situ*. Rather, they were conducted by a hired field assistant familiar with research, conducting interviews, and the requirements of dissertation writing. Interviewees were drawn ultimately from two groups based in the National Capital Region of the Philippines—24 families left behind by either parents or spouses who have worked or are currently employed overseas and 11 Protestant church pastors and/or church workers involved in ministry to the aforementioned families.

The criteria for the choice of participants aimed for diversity. They are:

1. for churches—denominational backgrounds, congregational size, location, and practice of OFW ministry.
2. for OFW families—people who act as the head of the left-behind family, civil status, age, gender, and relationship to and length of time separated from the OFW.

The following steps for analysis as prescribed by John Creswell in his book *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* were used with coding based on emergent data:

Step 1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis.

Step 2. Read through all the data.

Step 3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process.

Step 4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.

Step 5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.

Step 6. A final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation or meaning of the data.<sup>48</sup>

Library research encompassed both printed resources (for example, books, peer-reviewed journals, statistical reports) and digital resources (for example, e-books, Philippine government reports and publications available through the World Wide Web, and articles drawn from Philippine newspapers).

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<sup>48</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009), 185-189.



## **Delimitations**

The population sample was drawn from the National Capital Region, which represents the third largest sender of OFWs in the country at 12.6% of the 2012 total. Diversity in sample characteristics was targeted as a way of achieving a more generalized profile. This approach however precludes any findings that could be accounted for by differences, for example, in OFW age, gender, or occupation/earning capacity.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Globalization, diaspora, transnationalism, and glocalization as noted earlier, served as the background for understanding the issue of ruptured Filipino families. Particular attention was paid to transnationalism since it provides ruptured families with the mechanisms for dealing with the ramifications of separation and preservation of familial ties. The nature and functioning of the Filipino family and of pastoral care were critical to comprehending the challenge faced by the church in ministering to the separation being experienced by many OFW Filipino families.

A multidisciplinary approach to this study also necessitated touching on a wide range of disciplines including history, economics, demographics, and politics. Finding answers to the research questions involved archival, library, and electronic resources. The first research question necessitated setting forth the historical background that led to the current status of the Philippines as a major source of migrant labor to the

world. In this the author relied mostly on the perspective of Filipino writers and academics such as Renato Constantino (who specialized in Philippine history and colonial experience) and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California). Online resources provided access to documents, studies, and statistics produced by both the Philippine government and non-governmental organizations (e.g., Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative)<sup>49</sup> and even international bodies (e.g., the World Bank and the International Migration Institute of the University of Oxford).

This study of ruptured families' needs and of what the church is doing in response employed ethnographic tools based on the theory of phenomenology, supported by Berger and Luckmann's theory on "The Social Construction of Reality."<sup>50</sup> Evaluation of the church's efforts at meeting the felt needs of the families they minister to utilized an adaptation of the "best practice model for member care" of Kelly O'Donnell and Dave Pollock as the basis for gauging success or lack thereof.<sup>51</sup> Kurt Lewin's conceptualization of action research was used to advantage in bringing about changes to the church's approach in its ministry to ruptured families as suggested by study findings.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> According to their web site, "Atikha is a non-government organization that provides economic and social services to overseas Filipinos and their families in the Philippines. The organization aims to help address the social cost of migration and tap the development potential of migration." "About Atikha," Atikha, accessed December 6, 2012, <http://www.atikha.org/about.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1967).

<sup>51</sup> Kelly O'Donnell, ed., *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library Pub, 2002), 16.

<sup>52</sup> Clem Adelman Adelman, "Kurt Lewin and the Origins of Action Research," *Educational Action Research* 1, no. 1 (1993): 7-24.

## Review of Relevant Literature

Robin Cohen of the University of Warwick in his *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* traces the development of “diaspora” as a concept and a label applied to various groups of people through history from the Jewish experience to the present day within the context of globalization.<sup>53</sup> This book provides a needed background for understanding what Filipinos have gone through to such an extent that about ten per cent of the total population now live and work beyond the borders of the country.

Roland Robertson and Kathleen E. White in their chapter “What is Globalization?” in *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization* point out that the global and the local are not mutually exclusive concepts but can coexist at the same level, namely the glocal.<sup>54</sup> The ruptured Filipino OFW family marked by the pain of separation from a loved one serves as a stark depiction of the global economy intruding into the intimacy of the family home.

Joaquin L. Gonzalez III of the National University of Singapore published *Philippine Labour Migration: Critical Dimensions of Public Policy* in 1998,<sup>55</sup> a time when the departure of thousands of Filipinos had already begun to accelerate. He touches on different aspects of the official Philippine government policy of managed labor

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<sup>53</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

<sup>54</sup> Roland Robertson and Kathleen E. White, “What Is Globalization?” in *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization*, ed. George Ritzer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 54-66.

<sup>55</sup> Joaquin L. Gonzales III, *Philippine Labour Migration: Critical Dimensions of Public Policy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998).

migration particularly in light of then-recent enactment of “The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995.”

The focus of *Nawala ang Ilaw ng Tahanan* [literally, “gone the light of the home”]: *Case Studies of Families Left Behind by OFW Mothers* is a collection of the stories of 10 families.<sup>56</sup> The lead author is Maria Lourdes Carandang of the University of the Philippines. The book gives factual examples of the consequences brought about by the wife/mother’s departure to work overseas, such as feelings of loneliness, emptiness, and sadness, and of the coping mechanisms employed by the husband/children in order to cope.

*The Philippines: A Singular and a Plural Place* by David Joel Steinberg of Long Island University is a scholarly attempt at helping those of other cultures achieve a degree of understanding concerning Filipinos, of how despite their plurality and complexity the people have nonetheless managed to achieve a sense of national identity.<sup>57</sup> The book deals with the roles that factors such as kinship, religion, and politics play in shaping the country and its people.

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez of the University of California Davis in her *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* used the ethnographic method approach in order to study the transformation of the Philippines into a “global

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<sup>56</sup> Ma. Lourdes Carandang, Beatrix Aileen Sison, and Christopher Carandang, *Nawala ang Ilaw ng Tahanan- Case Studies of Families Left Behind*, 1st ed. (Pasig City, Philippines.: Anvil, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> David Joel Steinberg, *The Philippines: a Singular and a Plural Place*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).

broker of labor and the kind of functions it performs in the contemporary global order.”<sup>58</sup> She delineates how the government of the Philippines has undertaken the systematic commodification of its citizenry; while hailing the migrant workers as “new heroes” and seemingly affording them new rights and privileges (“overseas employment itself is cast as a ‘right’ of Philippine citizens, which the state pledges to guarantee”), the government has at the same time “reconfigured citizenship” in order to preserve the profitability of migrant labor exportation.<sup>59</sup>

*The Social and Economic Impact of Philippine International Labour Migration and Remittances* by Victorina Zosa and Aniceto Orbeta Jr. is a discussion paper issued in 2009 by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies.<sup>60</sup> It serves as a compendium of findings by other researchers in the field. For example, here is one noteworthy finding: children left behind by a parent favor the mother’s presence in lieu of the father’s inasmuch as mothers rather than fathers are more adept at taking on both parental gender roles within the family.<sup>61</sup> This is significant because of the fact, that while men outnumber women among OFWs, no wide disparity in absolute numbers exists. As of 2011, there were 1.09 male OFWs for every single female OFW<sup>62</sup> (the male to female

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<sup>58</sup> Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2010), xv.

<sup>59</sup> Rodriguez, xx-xxi.

<sup>60</sup> Victorina Zosa and Aniceto Orbeta Jr., “The Social and Economic Impact of Philippine International Labor Migration and Remittances,” Philippine Institute for Development Studies, accessed November 27, 2012, <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps0932.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> “Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children,” Scalabrini Migration Center, accessed November 27, 2012, <http://www.smc.org.ph/heartsapart/pdfs/Hearts%20Apart.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> “Number and Percentage Distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers by Sex and Region: 2010 and 2011,” Republic of the Philippines National Statistics Office, accessed October 30, 2012, <http://www.census.gov.ph/sites/default/files/attachments/hsd/specialrelease/Tab2.pdf>.

ratio stood at 1.07, 1.12, and 1.10 in 2008, 2009, and 2010 respectively).<sup>63</sup>

*Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children* presents the findings of a 2003 study collaboratively sponsored by the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People-CBCP<sup>64</sup>/Apostleship of the Sea-Manila, Scalabrini Migration Center, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration. The study's goal was to perform "research on left behind families that would guide the development of more responsive policies and programs. It is a new assessment of how families, especially children, are coping with separation, remittances, children's well-being and many other related issues."<sup>65</sup>

*Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World*, edited by Kelly O'Donnell, presents a range of articles on how member care is practiced throughout different global regions.<sup>66</sup> Although the theory of member care is rooted in the welfare of those in missionary service, the field has expanded into other areas including the ministry of the church to those within and beyond the Body of Christ.

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<sup>63</sup> "The Pinoy Diaspora: Where Do Our OFWs Come From and Where Do They Go?" National Statistical Coordination Board, accessed November 27, 2012, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/sexystats/2012/SS20120516\\_ofw.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/sexystats/2012/SS20120516_ofw.asp).

<sup>64</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

<sup>65</sup> "Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children," Scalabrini Migration Center, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.smc.org.ph/heartsapart/>.

<sup>66</sup> O'Donnell, ed., *Doing Member Care Well*.

## Ethical Considerations

The ethical regard for subjects remained paramount in this study. Preservation of their privacy and the high value assigned to their trust in this study were constants that were rigorously kept. Details of sensitive issues were withheld in favor of generalized statements. The use of pseudonyms safeguarded actual names, in addition to finding a balance between the use of information gathered and maintaining confidentiality of identities.

Furthermore, respect for individuals, cognizant of their dignity and worth as bearers of the *imago Dei*, has long been a constant in the author's philosophy of ministry. Ethical consideration of research subjects flows from the belief that ministry as service to God and humanity ultimately is based on the precedence that Jesus set during his time on earth. It was part of the author's creedal values during years of pastoral service and continues to this day. Accordingly, informed consent by each interviewee was a nonnegotiable prerequisite for data collection (through interviews, including audio recordings thereof), analysis, and interpretation or any other use for the purpose of the study. Digital audio recordings were kept secure during the duration of the study and shall be deleted upon completion or termination of the study. Confidentiality was strictly observed throughout; names and other information that can potentially identify participants were disguised in order to preserve privacy. Copies of the final report arising from the study will be made available, in digital or electronic form, to all interviewees upon request.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Filipino Diaspora**

#### **Introduction: The Philippine Experience**

This chapter delves into the various facets of history, politics, economics, demographics, and faith that influenced the experience of Filipinos with regard to labor migration. The aspects of history, politics, economics and demographics are here discussed separately. Nevertheless, in reality all parts of the Philippine diasporic experience are intertwined to such an extent that discussing one inevitably touches on the others. These factors serve as the context that helps explain why thousands of Filipinos now fly out of the country's airports every day at great social cost. Background information is important to understanding important dimensions at the heart of the study. Knowledge about factors that led to the Filipino Diaspora prepares the reader to grasp two significant elements of this study—the Filipino family experience and Faith. It easily leads to an important recognition: The experience of OFW left-behind families in the Philippines today occurs within a complex history of the necessity for employment abroad and survival of the family through participation in labor migration.



## Historical Aspect

The World Bank, based on 2010 data, ranked the Philippines, with over 4 million Filipinos permanently settled overseas, as 9<sup>th</sup> among the countries of the world regarding emigrants worldwide.<sup>67</sup> The latest estimate by the Philippine government placed the total number of countries and territories where Filipinos are found worldwide outside of the Philippines at 227.<sup>68</sup>

Due to the insular nature of Philippine geography, interisland travel has long been a main feature of Filipino life, including contact with neighboring islands and mainland Asia. The advent of colonial rule provided the means by which intercontinental movement and wider dispersal of Filipinos began.

Spanish conquest saw not only the arrival of *conquistadores* but also of explorers. Skilled in sea travel, local seafarers accompanied Spanish explorers beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as they journeyed to the west coast of North America and parts of South America.

The first arrivals that could be conclusively proven with documentation date back to 1587 when there occurred the “landing of a small expedition in California.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Dilip Ratha, Sanket Mohapatra, and Ani Silwal, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 2 ed. (n.p.: World Bank Publications, 2010), 3.

<sup>68</sup> Commission on Filipinos Overseas, “Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos.” [www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/2011\\_Stock\\_Estimate\\_of\\_Filipinos\\_Overseas.pdf](http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/2011_Stock_Estimate_of_Filipinos_Overseas.pdf) (accessed June 3, 2013). A cursory check of the world wide web using Google results in the number of countries in the world to be either 195 or 196, depending on whether or not Taiwan is recognized as part of China or not.

<sup>69</sup> Floro L. Mercene, *Manila Men in the New World: Filipino Migration to Mexico and the Americas from the Sixteenth Century* (Diliman, Quezon City.: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 38.

However, the galleon trade that brought riches of the East to Spain from 1565 to 1815 through a trade route that connected Manila in the Philippines and Acapulco in Mexico strongly influenced Filipino emigration across the Pacific. Both the Philippines and Mexico at the time were part of the Spanish empire. Filipinos arrived in the Americas as part of the galleon trade, conscripted by their colonial overlords to work in royal dockyards and on board Philippine-made ships that plied the famous galleon trade across the vast Pacific Ocean to Mexico and the “New World” from 1565 to 1815. Their work included woodcutting, shipbuilding and repair, as well as various ship crew jobs.<sup>70</sup>

After the long crossing across the Pacific Ocean,

the Manila galleons usually made landfall at California ... north of present-day San Francisco. The galleon captains were usually under strict instructions from the Spanish governor-general and the merchants in Manila not to land in California because this would mean delay in disposing of the ship’s cargo in Mexico. Moreover, the California coast was rocky and usually foggy and there was the danger of getting shipwrecked. California was an empty land, populated by various tribes of Indians.

In spite of the dangers, the galleon pilots ignored their instructions and made surreptitious landings on the California coast as a respite from the long crossing from the orient, which usually took four to five months. The ship was low on water and provisions and needed replenishment.

To escape the deprivations during the long voyage itself, many Filipino sailors jumped ship in California and managed to survive by joining the local Indian tribes.<sup>71</sup>

Thereafter, Filipinos took part in the Spanish settlement of California, including the start of what later came to be the cities of San Diego and Los Angeles.<sup>72</sup> A Filipino

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<sup>70</sup> Joaquin L. Gonzales III, *Philippine Labour Migration: Critical Dimensions of Public Policy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 26.

<sup>71</sup> Mercene, 12.

presence has also been identified dating back to 1763 “in the bayous of the Mississippi River just outside the city” of New Orleans in Louisiana.<sup>73</sup> In 1883, an article in Harper’s Weekly magazine gave a detailed description of a village of Filipinos also near New Orleans.<sup>74</sup> A known center of the shrimp industry was Manila Village during the first half of the twentieth century, a time which saw the Filipino population grow into the thousands.<sup>75</sup>

By the waning years of Spanish colonial rule, a segment of Filipino migrants played a critical role in the move toward Philippine independence. These were the *Ilustrados* (“the learned/enlightened ones”), the scions of the Filipino elite, who were usually educated in Europe where they were exposed to the ideals of nationalism and freedom. Several of those who were active in the drive for independence came from their ranks, including Dr. Jose Rizal, a well-educated and widely-travelled intellectual ultimately executed by the Spanish in Manila in 1896 and who is traditionally regarded as the country’s primary national hero.

The resultant acquisition of the Philippines, as well as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Guam, by the United States under the terms of the Treaty of Paris of 1898 following the defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American War led to the onset of American colonial rule. Although the Spanish crown reigned over the islands for over three centuries, far longer

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 70; Eloisa Gomez Borah, “Chronology of Filipinos in America Pre-1898,” University of California, Los Angeles, June 3, 2013, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://personal.anderson.ucla.edu/eloina.borah/chronology.pdf>.

<sup>73</sup> Mercene, *Manila Men*, 94.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 103

than the Philippines' history as an American colony of roughly half a century, one would be hard put to easily and categorically determine which colonizer had a deeper, wider, and more lasting influence on the country and its people.

With the change in colonial overlord came a concomitant transition in the Filipino worldview from a Eurocentric one with Spain as the "motherland" to where America became a modern day "Promised Land" of sorts, abetted in no small part by the restructuring of Filipino life and the remolding of the people's psyche in the image of the colonizer. Education during the Spanish era revolved primarily around the Roman Catholic catechism and the rudiments of literacy.

The curriculum for the primary schools listed the following subjects:

- Christian doctrine
- Notions of morality
- Notions of sacred history
- Reading
- Writing
- Practical teaching of the Spanish language
- Principles of Spanish grammar with orthography
- Principles of arithmetic...
- Notions of general geography (for boys only)
- Notions of the history of Spain (for boys only)
- Notions of practical agriculture as applied to the fruits of the country (for boys only)
- Industrial work for girls (mostly sewing and embroidery)
- Rules of urbanity (or good manners)
- Music<sup>76</sup>

The arrival of the Americans saw the institution of an educational system structurally patterned after that of the United States, implemented very early on with the recruitment and movement of hundreds of American teachers from the U.S. to the

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<sup>76</sup> Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Philippines* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 53.

Philippines,<sup>77</sup> and marked by the decision made by William Howard Taft as the first Civil Governor of the Philippines to use the English language as the medium of instruction in the schools.<sup>78</sup>

Under the U.S. administration ... the curriculum strongly emphasized the mechanical trades, such as woodworking and agriculture for the boys and housekeeping for the girls. Mirroring the theoretical connection between sports and Christianity, athletics were stressed, especially baseball, basketball, track and field, and boxing. Thus, by the outbreak of World War II, the Philippines had a nonreligious educational system open to all classes of people that had produced a dramatic rise in literacy.

There is, of course, a counterargument. Many, if not most, postwar scholars, especially postcolonial writers, have insisted that education was used to Americanize the Filipino and to keep the elite in power, all of which would lead to future favorable political and economic activities for the United States and the Philippine ascendancy. Free public education was designed to help suppress the violent independence movement and mold the Filipinos into a subservient colonial people.<sup>79</sup>

These were significant factors in the transformation of the Filipino into America's "little brown brother."<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, history has also proven that these considerations have proven to be critically foundational in preparing millions of Filipinos for deployment as today's Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

Even by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Filipino seafarers were already arriving in

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<sup>77</sup> The first 509 American teachers were referred to as the Thomasites owing to the fact that they arrived in 1901 on the U.S. Army Transport Thomas, a "converted cattle cruiser." Ninfa Saturnino Springer and Robert Earl Springer, "The Thomasites: Early American Teachers in the Philippines," University of Michigan, accessed October 8, 2013, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~ninfa/nohs/thomasites.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Adam David Burns "Imperial Vision: William Howard Taft and the Philippines, 1900-1921" (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2010), 57, accessed October 11, 2013, Edinburgh Research Archive, <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/4506/2/Burns2010.pdf>.

<sup>79</sup> Joseph P. McCallus, *The Macarthur Highway and Other Relics of American Empire in the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2010), 147-148.

<sup>80</sup> Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother: How the United States Purchased and Pacified the Philippine Islands at the Century's Turn* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1961).

North America as crew members of Canadian and American trading, surveying, and whaling expeditions to the west coast of British Columbia and Alaska. Moreover, even before the U. S. colonization of the Philippines, adventurous Filipino migrants were serving large American and European passenger ocean liners as cabin boys, deckhands, and domestic helpers.<sup>81</sup>

From these limited beginnings, the advent of American colonial rule saw an increase in Filipino migration directed initially toward the United States and then worldwide thereafter. There is an observable historical ebb and flow to the American influx of Filipinos; however, the overall trend has been one of growth expressed historically through “three ... systematic ‘waves’ of international labour migration: the first wave from 1900 to the early 1940s, the second wave from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, and the third wave from the mid-1970s to the 1990s.”<sup>82</sup>

The first wave consisted of Filipinos on opposite ends of the social scale. On one hand were the *pensionados* (“pensioners”), so called because they were young men from elite Filipino families who were selected, sent, and fully supported by the U.S. government for training and education in American institutions of higher learning as part of the overall scheme to solidify American control over the country and its people. On the other hand, Filipino farmers and agricultural laborers were hired for the fields and plantations of Hawaii and the West Coast, and the whaling ships and canneries of Alaska. Filipinos, though not officially regarded as American citizens, were by virtue of

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<sup>81</sup> Gonzalez, 26.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

American colonial rule classified as American nationals therefore legally exempting them from the race-based immigration restrictions imposed by the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of 1870, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 between the U.S. and Japan, and the "Asiatic Barred Zone" created by the Immigration Act of 1917.<sup>83</sup> The Filipinos' status as American nationals came to an end with the recognition by the United States of Philippine independence in 1946 following the implementation of the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, otherwise known as the Philippine Independence Act which involved a ten-year transition period disrupted by World War II and the Japanese invasion and takeover of the islands.

The period of the second wave of Filipino emigration to the United States was bracketed by the end of World War II and the end of the Vietnam War. It started with the migration of Filipino veterans who had fought alongside American forces during the Second World War. Enactment of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 marked a key change in American immigration policy; the law's provision for family reunification figuratively opened the door much wider to entry into the country.<sup>84</sup> Professionals joined the flow of migrants to America. Medical workers headed too to Canada and Australia. In addition, the wars in Vietnam and Korea and attendant American military operations in the Asia-Pacific region created a demand for workers. The 1970s saw the start of the oil

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<sup>83</sup> Gonzalez, 27-29.

<sup>84</sup> Migrants from the Philippines who were granted legal permanent resident status in the United States jumped by 309.7% from 17,245 in the decade of the 1950s to 70,660 in the 1960s. U.S. Homeland Security, *2011 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2012), 8.

boom in the Middle East and a rise in hiring of Filipino engineers and skilled workers by countries in that part of the world.<sup>85</sup>

The third wave of Filipino migration was marked by the confluence of several factors that eventually directly contributed to the Philippines' current state of affairs as a major supplier of migrant labor to the world. Some of these factors include the following: the 1973 Arab oil embargo which saw the price of crude oil dramatically increase from around \$10 in the early 1970s to over \$50 per barrel by 1974,<sup>86</sup> the negative effects of this price hike on the economy of the Philippines as an oil-importing nation, the declaration of martial law by then-president Ferdinand Marcos, and the closure of the American military bases in the Philippines in 1992.<sup>87</sup> The net result was widespread poverty aggravated by high levels of unemployment and underemployment. These will be discussed in further detail in a later section.

### **Political Aspect**

Parts of the preceding historical section touched on the topic of how present-day Filipinos numbering over 10 million came to be scattered over 200 countries and

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 30-32.

<sup>86</sup> George T. Abed, "The Implications of a Lasting Oil Boom in the Middle East," Institute of International Finance Annual Membership Meeting, October 19-21, 2007, accessed July 5, 2013, <http://www.iif.com/download.php?id=3vL+eisOT+M=%E2%80%8E>.

<sup>87</sup> Gonzalez, 33-36.



territories all over the world. This segment will focus on major political developments in Philippine history relevant to the process by which labor migration became a major source of foreign exchange earnings for the country, thereby in effect actualizing the transformation of the Filipino worker into a major export commodity.

The colonial experience, particularly under the influence of American imperialism, was critical in laying the foundation of today's Filipino labor migration. The labor brokerage system in the Philippines is in large part a result of the U.S. colonial legacy in the Philippines. First, it is in the colonial labor system that we can track the institutional precursors of this system. Second U.S. colonialism and subsequently, neocolonialism has had deep and lasting consequences for the Philippines economically and politically.<sup>88</sup>

America's part in the formative years of Filipino labor migration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be clearly seen, for example, in the way that Filipino women studied and trained in the United States under the same *pensionado* program that the American colonial government used to prepare young Filipino men for leadership positions in Philippine business, industry, and administration. Those who went back to the country and assumed prestigious positions became prima facie evidence to the people that America held the key to achieving success in life as measured in terms of rank and riches. The Americanization of the Filipino allowed the American Dream to take root among the coconut trees of the islands, at least in terms of aspirations revolving around material prosperity and the definition of success in life. Furthermore the establishment of an

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<sup>88</sup> Rodriguez, 1-2.

American-style system of education in the Philippines eventually covered all levels of education, including the medical professions. Nurses currently comprise a large subset of skilled labor migrants. “Nurses Professional” made up 28.9% of all (41,835) “Professional, Technical and Related Workers” in 2010.<sup>89</sup> On the day of this writing, the web site of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration publicized vacancies for 360 nurses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and 500 nurses for Germany.<sup>90</sup> The continued migration of Filipino nurses is foreseen due to the relatively large number of nursing graduates in the Philippines and the projected strong demand for healthcare professionals overseas due to the aging populations of many developed countries.<sup>91</sup>

Although the Tydings-McDuffie Act catered to the xenophobic sentiments of the time, the reclassification of the Filipino from American national to “alien” or “foreigner,” and the imposition of an annual quota of 50 Filipino immigrants into the U.S. practically stopped the influx of Filipinos. Nonetheless, there eventually emerged pathways for Filipino labor migration to persist.

For one, the introduction of the U.S. Exchange Visitor Program in 1948 enabled the gradual buildup of the number of Filipino nurses employed by American medical

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<sup>89</sup> “OFW Deployment per Skill and Country - New hires For the Year 2010,” Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/2010%20Deployment%20by%20Major,%20Sub-Major%20Occupation%20and%20Sex%202010%20-%20New%20hires.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> “Announcements,” Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.poea.gov.ph/>.

<sup>91</sup> Victorina Zosa and Aniceto Orbeta Jr., “The Social and Economic Impact of Philippine International Labor Migration and Remittances” (Philippine Institute for Development Studies Discussion Paper Series No. 2009-32, Makati City, Philippines; November 2009), 8, accessed August 15, 2013, <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps0932.pdf>.

institutions. The nurses furthermore enjoyed the full support of the Philippine government which helped young women take advantage of the Exchange Visitor Program.

Filipino men also had a door, albeit a much narrower one, provided by the Philippines' colonial and neocolonial ties with the United States through recruitment by and service with the U. S. Navy. Filipinos were initially limited to serving as stewards during the colonial era. Thereafter, the Military Bases Agreement of 1947 between the two countries also provided for the "voluntary enlistment [of selected young Filipino men] into the United States Armed Forces" through "recruitment into the Navy."<sup>92</sup> The program ended by year-end 1992 with the termination of the Military Bases Agreement and the retrenchment/downsizing of the U.S. Armed Forces. A press release by the U.S. Navy at the time reported that "about 34,620 Filipinos enlisted in the Navy between 1952 and 1990, ... the only period for which figures are available."<sup>93</sup> The cataclysmic eruption of the Mount Pinatubo volcano in 1991 led to the evacuation on the island of Luzon of Clark Air Base which had been an American military base since 1903. ("In the post-World War II era, Clark Air Base became the largest U.S. military airbase outside the United States" and was a crucial part of American operations during the Vietnam War.)<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Bureau of Naval Personnel, "Filipinos in the United States Navy," Navy, October 1976, accessed July 10, 2013, <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/filipinos.htm>.

<sup>93</sup> H.G. Reza, "Navy to Stop Recruiting Filipino Nationals: Defense: The End of the Military Base Agreement with the Philippines Will Terminate the Nearly Century-Old Program: Defense," Los Angeles Times, February 27, 1992, accessed July 10, 2013, [http://articles.latimes.com/1992-02-27/local/me-3911\\_1\\_filipno-sailors](http://articles.latimes.com/1992-02-27/local/me-3911_1_filipno-sailors).

<sup>94</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Clark Air Base," accessed September 16, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/119983/Clark-Air-Base>.

As noted earlier, the years of the Marcos regime in Philippine history, particularly the period of his dictatorial reign, proved to be a critical time for the development of the government's labor migration policy. Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 442 ("A Decree Instituting A Labor Code Thereby Revising And Consolidating Labor And Social Laws To Afford Protection To Labor, Promote Employment And Human Resources Development And Insure Industrial Peace Based On Social Justice") on May 1, 1974, less than two years after his declaration of martial law on September 22, 1972. This decree called for the establishment of the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB). As part of its *raison d'être*, the OEDB was tasked with the following:

1. To promote the overseas employment of Filipino workers through a comprehensive market promotion and development program;
2. To secure the best possible terms and conditions of employment of Filipino contract workers on a government-to-government basis and to ensure compliance therewith;
3. To recruit and place workers for overseas employment on a government-to-government arrangement and in such other sectors as policy may dictate.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, the decree also provided for the creation of the National Seamen Board. Its responsibilities included the following:

1. To provide free placement services for seamen;
2. To regulate and supervise the activities of agents or representatives of shipping companies in the hiring of seamen for overseas employment and secure the best possible terms of employment for contract seamen workers and secure compliance therewith;
3. To maintain a complete registry of all Filipino seamen.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Chapter 1, Article 17, Labor Code of the Philippines.

<sup>96</sup> Chapter 1, Article 20, Labor Code of the Philippines.

The decree and its provisions including formation of the OEDB and the NSB proved to be significant in that it represented the first time that the government officially undertook a comprehensive and integrated program for the training, recruitment, and placement of Filipino workers for the overseas employment market, a role that was previously performed by the private sector. Secondly, it concurrently represented a deliberate shift in focus from America to the rest of the world as the target destination for Filipino workers.

The decree also imposed a “ban on direct-hiring [by any overseas employer]”<sup>97</sup> and “mandatory remittance of foreign-exchange earnings,”<sup>98</sup> measures which both helped ensure that the government’s coffers would directly benefit from the export of migrant workers. The latter particularly proved to be a lifesaver for the Philippine economy in subsequent decades.

Marcos was quite clear in his administration’s goals with regard to the exportation of Filipino manpower:

For us, overseas unemployment addresses two major problems: unemployment and the balance of payments position. If these problems are met or at least partially solved by contract migration, we also expect an increase in national savings and investment levels. In the long run we also expect that overseas employment will contribute to the acquisition of skills essential to the development of the country’s industrial base.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Chapter 1, Article 18, Labor Code of the Philippines.

<sup>98</sup> Chapter 1, Article 22, Labor Code of the Philippines.

<sup>99</sup> Letizia R. Constantino, “SM 86: Overseas Workers,” in *Issues without Tears: A Layman's Manual of Current Issues* (Quezon City, Philippines: Karrel, Inc., 1986), 67.

Marcos and his power grab through the imposition of martial law meant both political and economic unrest and uncertainty, which in turn led to a rapid rise in the number of Filipinos who fled the country in order to look for employment elsewhere. In 1971, 1,863 left as Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs). With the onset of martial law, 14,366 OCWs departed for foreign lands, a rapid rise of 671.1%. The number went up again in 1973 to 36,418. The issuance of the Labor Code in 1974 and its implementation dampened the number of OCWs to 32,764, but the trend since then has been upward. Six years later, the total had reached 214,590 by 1980.<sup>100</sup> By 2012, there were 2.2 million OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) of which OCWs, those with work contracts, numbered 2.1 million or 95.3%.<sup>101</sup> The changeover in focus and terminology from *Overseas Contract Workers* to *Overseas Filipino Workers* during the administration of President Fidel Ramos reflected the government's desire to increase the reach of its services and protection to include even Filipinos abroad who did not have employment contracts that were heretofore requisite to qualify for government assistance. This change in policy in turn followed the public outcry that resulted from the execution in March 1995 by hanging of a Filipino woman, Flor Contemplacion, by the government of Singapore. She had worked there as a domestic helper and was convicted, some say unjustly due to questionable evidence, for the murder of another Filipino domestic helper and a boy the latter was caring for.

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<sup>100</sup> H. Kurth and N.H. Liem, eds., *Migrant Overseas Workers: New Area of Concern for Labor Unions* (Manila: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1988), n.p., quoted in Joaquin L. Gonzales III, *Philippine Labour Migration: Critical Dimensions of Public Policy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 32.

<sup>101</sup> "2012 Survey on Overseas Filipinos," Republic of the Philippines, National Statistics Office, September 4, 2013, accessed October 12, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/2012-survey-overseas-filipinos>.

Republic Act 8042 (“An Act to Institute the Policies of Overseas Employment and Establish a Higher Standard of Protection and Promotion of the Welfare of Migrant Workers, Their Families and Overseas Filipinos in Distress, and for Other Purposes”) was passed into law in June 1995.<sup>102</sup> This represented the Philippine government’s response to the people’s clamor for increased protection and care for the millions of their compatriots working abroad brought about by their perceived lack of official support for the unfortunate Flor Contemplacion.

### **Economic Aspect**

The Philippines is blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Assets include “timber, cobalt, silver, gold, salt, copper” in addition to the bountiful seas that surround the islands.<sup>103</sup> These plus a high literacy rate, due in large part to the educational system instituted during the country’s years as part of the American empire, should have served as positive contributory factors to Philippine economic well-being. Negative factors however proved to be too powerful and negated the positive ones for decades.

It definitely did not help that the country got off to an onerous start during the period of transition to independence when treaties and agreements were put into place that unduly favored America, its citizens and corporations in terms, for example, of

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<sup>102</sup> “Republic Act No. 8042,” Republic of the Philippines, Congress of the Philippines, June 7, 1995, accessed August 19, 2013, [http://www.congress.gov.ph/download/ra\\_09/RA08042.pdf](http://www.congress.gov.ph/download/ra_09/RA08042.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> “Library: The World Factbook: Philippines,” Central Intelligence Agency, last modified August 22, 2013, accessed August 22, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tp.html>.

Americans in the Philippines having rights that should have been limited to Filipinos alone, and terms of trade that heavily favored American businesses. Senator Lorenzo Tañada denounced parity in a commencement address he delivered in 1965 at a local university.

Parity was imposed in exchange for war damage payments. Free trade was moreover guaranteed for a definite period. What did those signify? The perpetuation of our colonial type economy and the stifling relations with America are being invoked to give Americans more rights than Filipinos themselves in the case of retail trade nationalization and to demand the continuation of rights acquired under parity after 1974. Under parity we have alienated huge tracts of the national patrimony to American corporations. Under parity we have imported billions of pesos worth of duty-free American goods and exported to the United States less than a third in value of our export commodities. The influx of American goods has prevented industrialization.<sup>104</sup>

Specifically, blatantly one-sided “special relations” that existed between the United States and the Philippines were rooted in the (1) Bell Trade Act [or Agreement] of 1946 and (2) US Military Bases Agreement of 1947. According to Senator Claro M. Recto in an address he gave in 1954,

This is, indeed, the first instance in history where an independent nation has granted to citizens of another rights equal to those enjoyed by its own citizens. The irony of the thing lies in the fact that were we to seek, for the sake of reciprocity, the same rights from the United States ... we would be met with the observation, which is unanswerable, that it is not within the power of the United States government to grant any such equal rights to citizens of another country.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Lorenzo Tañada, “The Myths We Live By (1965) - Senator Lorenzo Tañada,” *The Filipino Mind*, August 25, 2008, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://www.thefilipinomind.com/2008/08/myths-we-live-by-senator-lorenzo-tanada.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Renato Constantino, *The Making of a Filipino: A Story of Philippine Colonial Politics* (Quezon City, Philippines: Malaya Books, 1969), 203.



Despite the official recognition of Philippine independence by the United States of America on July 4, 1946, that date merely marked the transition of the country from colony to neocolony. American interests prevailed over those of the Filipino people and nation due to external pressures. For example, the third president after independence, Ramon Magsaysay, has been described at the time as “the only really sure friend the United States and CIA could count on in Asia.”<sup>106</sup> The decades of the 1960s and the 1970s saw different administrations try varying approaches to economic development from import-substitution industrialization to export-oriented industrialization, none of which succeeded for various reasons, one of which was “the dominant presence of the United States in Philippine firms that engaged in [industrialization]. These U.S.-influenced companies initially pumped in capital investments but later on repatriated most of their earnings to the United States.”<sup>107</sup>

Another significant cause for the failure of these strategies were the advice and conditions imposed by international lending agencies (such as “the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)” as “prerequisites to be satisfied before development financing was allocated.”<sup>108</sup> The bottom line was that those conditions and the results they engendered proved to be counterproductive to the welfare of the Philippine economy and people. “The corporations who benefited were mostly multinational corporations who

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<sup>106</sup> Joseph Burkholder Smith, *Portrait of a Cold Warrior* (New York: Putnam, 1976), 250.

<sup>107</sup> Gonzalez, 60.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

were given special privileges (by [Marcos'] Presidential Decrees) to exploit natural resources, repatriate corporate gains, and import the necessary machineries.”<sup>109</sup>

The reasons for the historically lackadaisical economic performance of the Philippines are numerous, complex, and multifaceted, and likewise are beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, two factors are worth noting further. One is the country's growing population. The other is chronic poverty.

From an estimated 1.5 million in 1799 to around 7 million during the changeover from Spanish to American colonial rule at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to over 19 million by the middle of the century, to an estimated 105.7 million by July 2013, the Philippines currently ranks as the twelfth largest country in the world in terms of population size.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>110</sup> The 1799 estimate was made by a Roman Catholic friar and excluded non Catholics. “National Statistical Coordination Board,” August 19, 2013, accessed August 19, 2013, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d\\_popn.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_popn.asp).

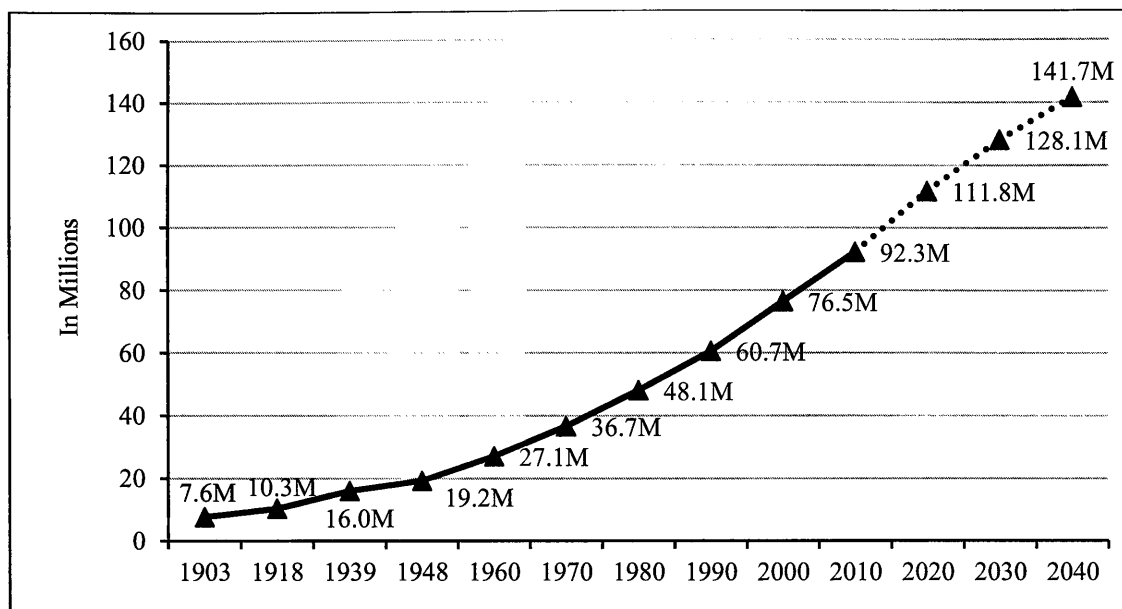


Figure 3. Population of the Philippines.

Sources: “Population of the Philippines: Census Years 1799 to 2010,” National Statistical Coordination Board, September 18, 2013, accessed August 19, 2013, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d\\_popn.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_popn.asp) and “Population Projections,” National Statistical Coordination Board, accessed August 22, 2013, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d\\_popnProj.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_popnProj.asp).

This “accomplishment” was achieved despite the decline in population growth rate experienced in the last four decades from a high of 3.1% in the years leading up to 1970 to the lowest rate of 1.9% based on the 2010 census. The growth rate for 2013 is estimated at 1.84%, thereby giving the country a rank of 63rd in the world.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook: Philippines,” accessed August 21, 2013, [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html)

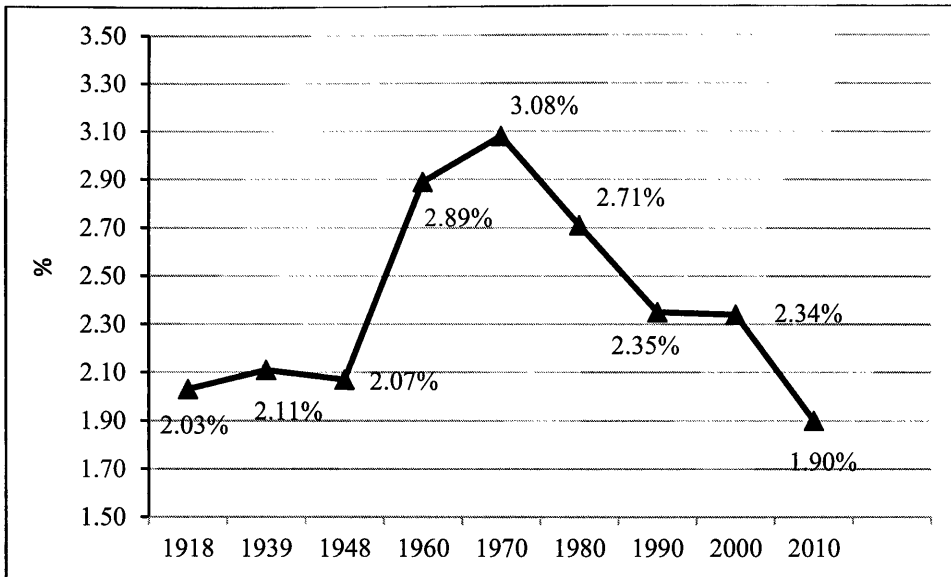


Figure 4. Average Annual Population Growth Rate.

*Source:* National Statistical Coordination Board, “Population of the Philippines: Census Years 1799 to 2010,” accessed August 19, 2013, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d\\_popn.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_popn.asp).

A large population translates into a large labor force of 40.42 million (2012 estimate);<sup>112</sup> add to this a young population with a national median age of 23.4 years,<sup>113</sup> plus a poverty rate of 27.9% (2012 estimate)<sup>114</sup> and exacerbated by unemployment and underemployment rates of 7.5% and 19.2% respectively (April 2013 estimates),<sup>115</sup> and

<sup>112</sup> Carmelita N. Ericta, “Employment Rate in July 2013 Is Estimated at 92.7 Percent: Results from the July 2013 Labor Force Survey (LFS),” Republic of the Philippines, National Statistics Office, September 10, 2013, accessed April 16, 2014, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/employment-rate-july-2013-estimated-927-percent>.

<sup>113</sup> Carmelita N. Ericta, “The Age and Sex Structure of the Philippine Population: (Facts from the 2010 Census),” Republic of the Philippines: National Statistics Office, August 30, 2012, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/age-and-sex-structure-philippine-population-facts-2010-census>.

<sup>114</sup> “Poverty Statistics - Data and Charts,” National Statistical Coordination Board, April 23, 2013, accessed August 24, 2013, <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/datacharts.asp>.

<sup>115</sup> “Statistics: Labor and Employment,” National Statistical Coordination Board, September 2013, accessed October 9, 2013, [www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d\\_labor.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_labor.asp).

the result is a brew conducive to social unrest, political instability, and economic downturn, all of which any government at any time would normally seek to forestall or at least mitigate.

The next chart, from the National Statistics Office, is a visual representation of the degree to which the population of the Philippines is young despite decreasing rates of population growth in recent decades as noted earlier.

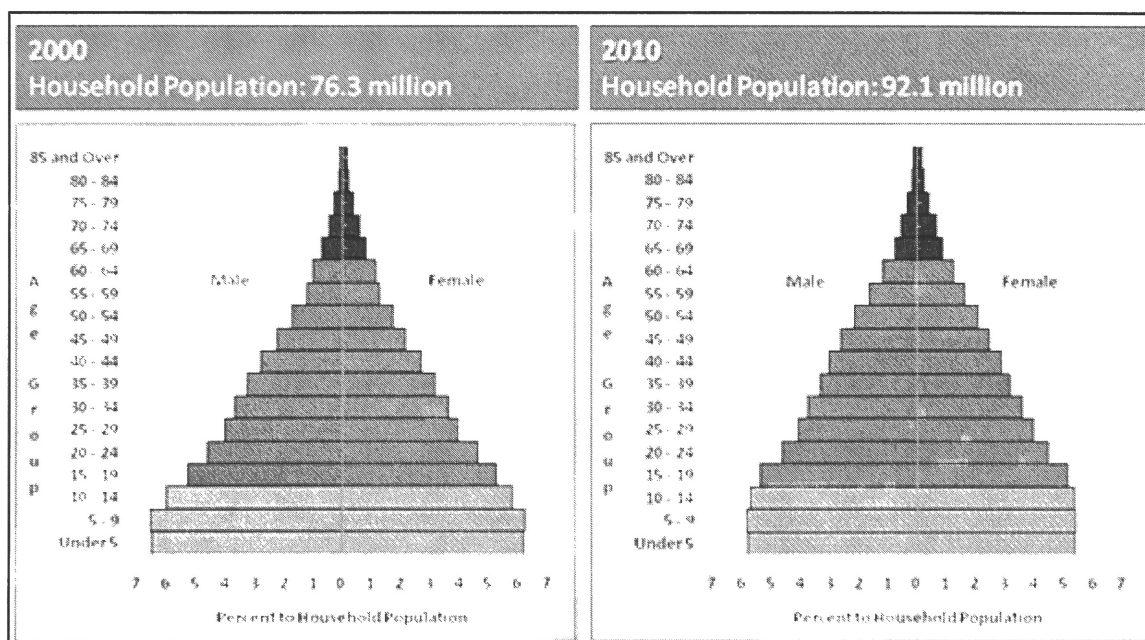


Figure 5. Household Population by Age and Gender.

Source: Carmelita N. Ericta, "The Age and Sex Structure of the Philippine Population: (Facts from the 2010 Census)," Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistics Office, August 30, 2012, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/age-and-sex-structure-philippine-population-facts-2010-census>.

Table 1. Poverty Incidence Among Families and Population

POVERTY INCIDENCE*		
YEAR	AMONG FAMILIES	AMONG POPULATION
1991	28.3%	33.1%
2003	20.0%	24.9%
2006	21.1%	26.4%
2009	20.9%	26.5%
2012**	22.3%	27.9%

\*“Poverty Incidence (P)—refers to the proportion of families (or population) with per capita income less than the per capita poverty threshold to the total number of families (population).” *Sources:* “Technical Notes: Notes on the Official Poverty Statistics in the Philippines - Series 2003-1,” Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistical Coordination Board, July, 2003, accessed August 24, 2013, <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/technotes/poverty/concept.asp>. and Romulo A. Virola “2009 Official Poverty Statistics,” Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistical Coordination Board, February 8, 2011, accessed February 22, 2013, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2009/Presentation\\_RAVirola.pdf](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/2009/Presentation_RAVirola.pdf).

\*\**Source:* “Poverty Statistics - Data and Charts - Time Series Data,” Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistical Coordination Board, April 23, 2013, accessed August 24, 2013, <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/poverty/datacharts.asp>.

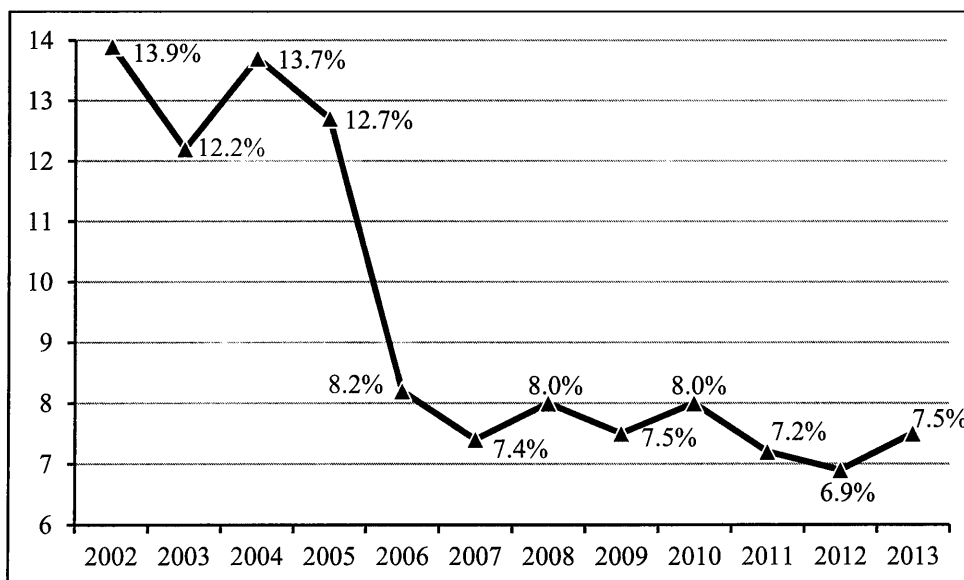


Figure 6. Unemployment Rate of Household Population 15 Years Old and Over.

*Source:* “Labor and Employment,” Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistical Coordination Board, September, 2013, [www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d\\_labor.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_labor.asp).

Building on the initiative taken by Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s to formalize the bureaucracy necessary to control the hiring of Filipino workers by foreign employers, the exportation of the Filipino as a commercially viable and even profitable commodity has grown to be a multi-billion dollar business venture for the Philippine government.

According to [former President Gloria Macapagal-]Arroyo, she is not merely president but also the “CEO” of a profitable “global enterprise” that generates revenues by successfully assembling together and exporting a much sought-after commodity worldwide: “Highly-skilled, well-educated, English-speaking” as well as “productive” and “efficient” workers. By calling herself a “CEO” Arroyo represents herself not as a head of state but as an entrepreneur, the ideal neoliberal subject, who rationally maximizes her country’s competitive advantage in the global market. I suggest that the Philippines, especially when it comes to migrants, is a labor brokerage state.<sup>116</sup>

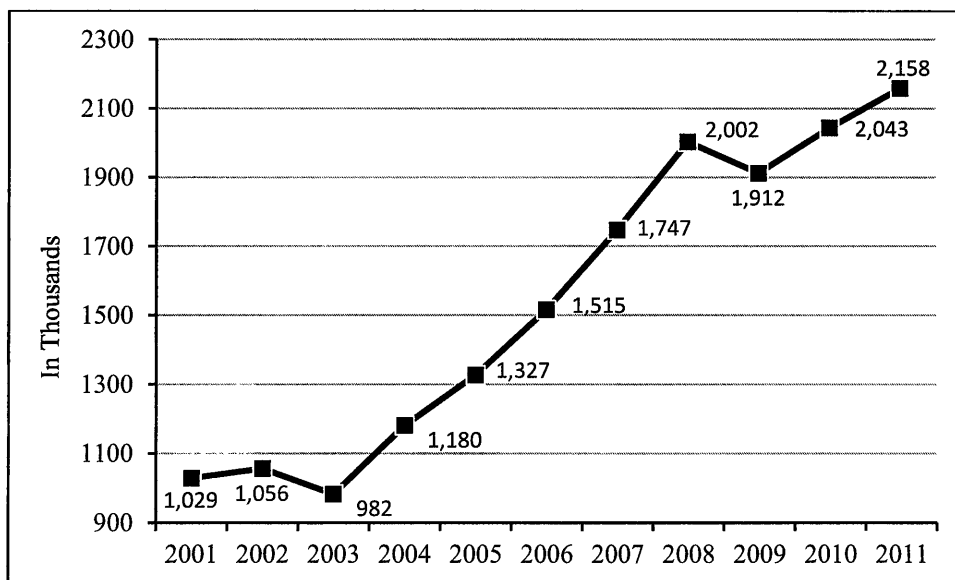


Figure 7. Total Number of OFWs.

Source: “Search Results,” Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistics Office, accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/search/node/total%20number%20of%20ofws>.

<sup>116</sup> Rodriguez, x

The funds sent back to their families in the Philippines by labor migrants has in fact turned out to be the single most important lifesaver for the national economy. The following graph shows the rising trend of remittances sent by overseas Filipinos back to their families in the Philippines “coursed through commercial banks, thrift banks, offshore banking units, and foreign exchange corporations of sea-based and land-based OFWs.”<sup>117</sup> If anything, the amounts shown here are understated since they do not take into account funds sent through unofficial/informal channels, such as requesting trusted friends or relatives to bring cash with them when traveling back to the Philippines. From US\$1.0 Billion in 1989, cash remittances according to the most recent data amounted to US\$21.4 Billion for the year 2012 and US\$10.7 Billion for the first semester of 2013.<sup>118</sup>

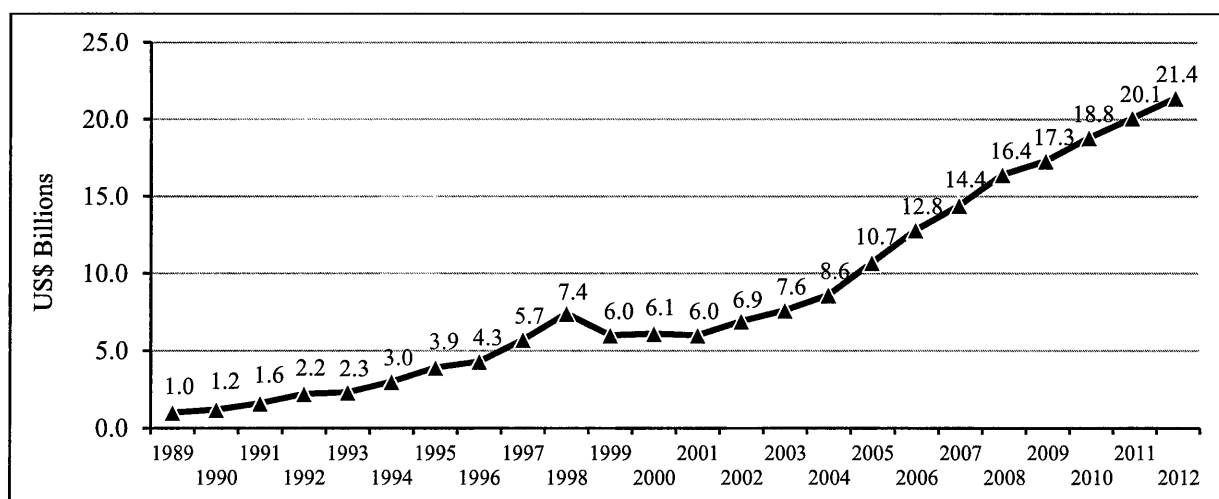


Figure 8. Overseas Filipinos' Remittances to the Philippines.

Source: “Economic and Financial Statistics,” Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, accessed August 23, 103, [http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/efs\\_ext3.asp](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/efs_ext3.asp).

<sup>117</sup> *Selected Philippine Economic Indicators: Concepts and Definitions* (Manila, Philippines: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, published monthly), xi, accessed August 23, 2013, <http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/spei/glossary.pdf>.

<sup>118</sup> “Economic and Financial Statistics,” Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, accessed August 23, 2013, [http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/efs\\_ext3.asp](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/efs_ext3.asp).



Remittances flow into the coffers of the Philippines from all corners of the world. The lion's share, of the top ten countries where remittances originate from as of 2012, is accounted for by the United States. This is understandable since it is correlative to the fact that based on the 2010 U.S. Census, Filipinos constitute the second largest Asian group in the United States numbering at 3.2 million.<sup>119</sup> A similar correlation is seen with regard to Canada, a major source of remittances second only to the United States, where the Philippines since 2009 has been second only to China in terms of "Permanent Residents by Source Country."<sup>120</sup> The Philippines ranks first overall in terms of "Foreign Workers" in Canada.<sup>121</sup> Saudi Arabia represented the third largest source of remittances; the 2010 Philippine census reported that 22.1% of all OFWs that year worked in the Kingdom.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth M. Hoeffel et al., *The Asian Population: 2010* (n.p.: U.S. Census Bureau, March 2012), 15, accessed August 26, 2013, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf>.

<sup>120</sup> "Facts and Figures 2012 – Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents - Permanent Residents," Citizenship and Immigration Canada, August 1, 2013, accessed August 30, 2013, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/permanent/10.asp>.

<sup>121</sup> "Facts and Figures 2012 – Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents - Temporary Residents," Citizenship and Immigration Canada, August 1, 2013, accessed August 30, 2013, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/temporary/08.asp>.

<sup>122</sup> Carmelita N. Ericta, "More OFWs in Saudi Arabia (Results from the 2010 Survey on Overseas Filipinos)," Republic of the Philippines: National Statistics Office, July 8, 2011, accessed August 30, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/more-ofws-saudi-arabia-results-2010-survey-overseas-filipinos>.

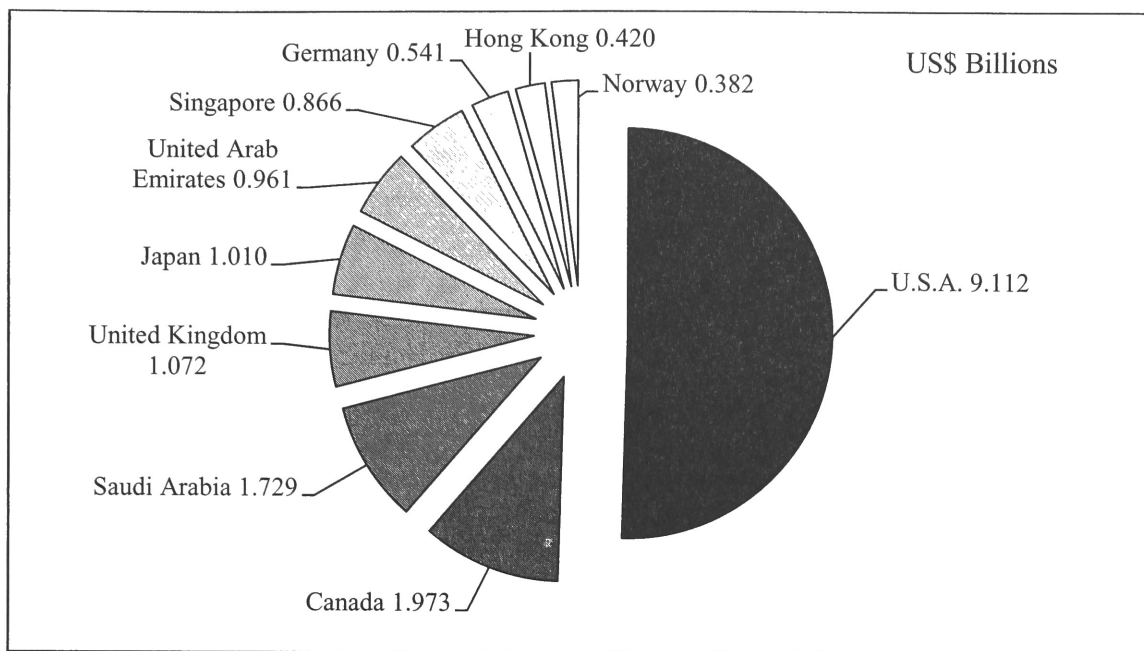


Figure 9. 2012 Primary Sources of Remittances to the Philippines.

Source: "Overseas Filipinos' Cash Remittances: By Country, by Source," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, accessed August 30, 2013, [http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/spei\\_pub/Table%2034.pdf](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/spei_pub/Table%2034.pdf).

The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has likewise been on a generally upward trend. GDP "measures the total output within the geographic boundaries of the country, regardless of the nationality of the entities producing the output."<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Selected Philippine Economic Indicators: Concepts and Definitions, xxii.

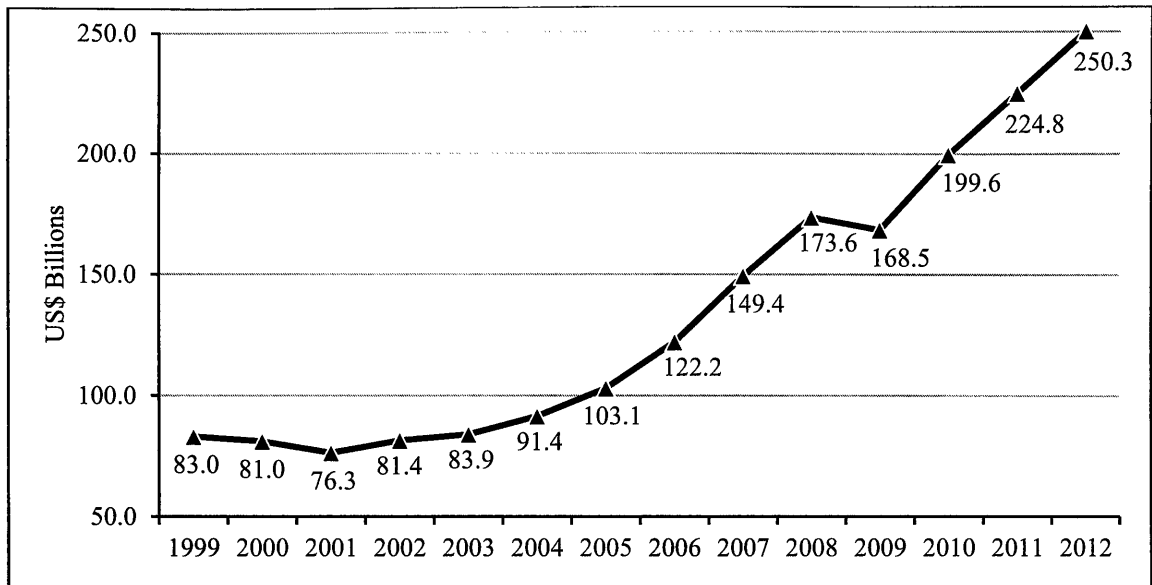


Figure 10. Gross Domestic Product of the Philippines.

Source: "Selected External Debt Ratios," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, accessed August 30, 2013, [http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/spei\\_new/tab28.htm](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/spei_new/tab28.htm).

In the field of economics, GDP is commonly accepted as one of a country's key economic indicators. It is especially regarded as an important gauge for measuring a country's economic development. Since remittances are acknowledged as playing a role in the development of a nation, the connection between migration and development is often considered too, particularly the ratio of remittances to GDP.

The next chart depicts the trend of this ratio through the years in the experience of the Philippines. Whereas both remittances and GDP have been sharing upward trends in recent years as Figures 8 and 10 illustrate, the ratio of remittances to GDP has been experiencing a decline. This signifies that remittances, while still significant and continuing to grow, is gradually becoming less critical to the economic development of the nation as before.

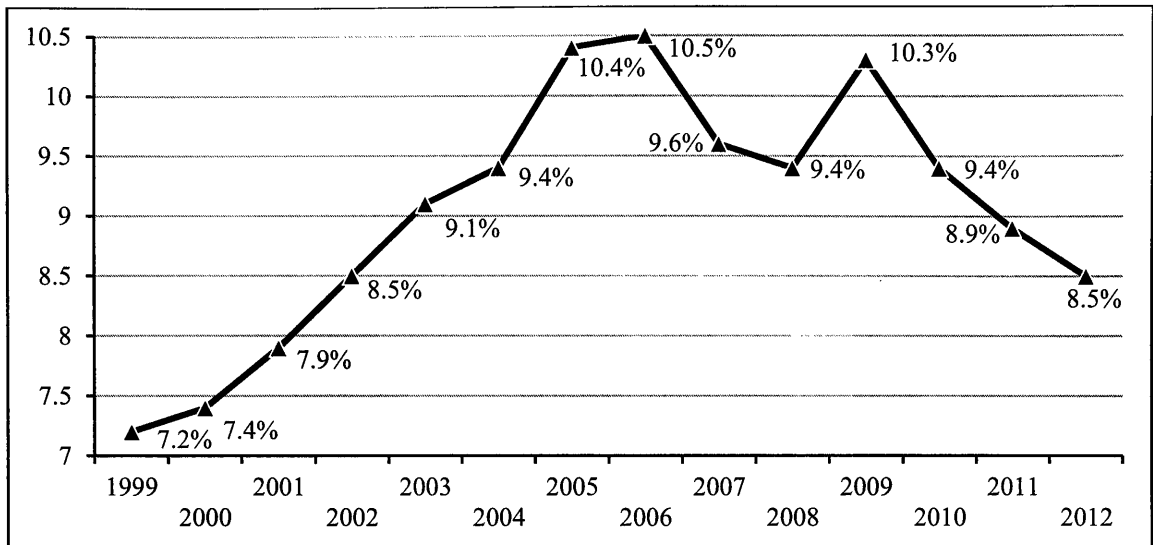


Figure 11. Remittances as Percentage of Gross Domestic Product.

*Source:* Data from Figures 8 and 10.

### **Migrant Labor Exportation as Government Policy**

As previously pointed out, labor migration has long been an aspect of Philippine history through the centuries. It was not, however, until the fortuitous convergence of several factors in the decade of the 1970s that exportation of Filipino labor became a major concerted endeavor officially controlled and implemented by the Philippine government. Those factors, both internal and external, included the American-patterned educational system of the islands that was rooted in the country's colonial past, a literate labor force conversant in the English language, national problems such as unemployment and sluggish economic growth, and the growing wealth of other countries, especially those in the oil-rich Middle East and the "tiger economies" of Asia. Philippine government officials have through the years often disavowed implementing as official

policy the commodification of the Filipino worker as an export product for earning precious foreign exchange, but the truth is that the enterprise continues to be a profitable one for the government as evidenced by the upward trend of remittances and corresponding benefits to the national economy. It is no wonder then that the Philippines has been referred to as a “labor brokerage state.”<sup>124</sup>

Building on the institutional antecedents of the U.S. colonial labor system, the postcolonial (or more precisely, the neocolonial) Philippine state erected a program of labor export to absorb spreading unemployment and underemployment and increasing rural displacement, the necessary consequences of neoliberal restructuring. Just as importantly, exporting labor became a profitable endeavor for the Philippine state as millions of U.S. dollars are generated from workers’ remittances and even from the fees that the bureaucratic processing performed by the Philippine migration agencies requires.<sup>125</sup>

Philippine government leaders have time and again denied having an official policy with regard to labor migration as a development tool. The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 8042) explicitly states in its “Declaration of Policies” that:

While recognizing the significant contribution of Filipino migrant workers to the national economy through their foreign exchange remittances, the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Rodriguez, 141.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 141-142.

<sup>126</sup>An Act to Institute the Policies of Overseas Employment and Establish a Higher Standard of Protection and Promotion of the Welfare of Migrant Workers, their Families and Overseas Filipinos in Distress, and for Other Purposes, Republic Act 8042, § 2 Par. (c), Congress of the Philippines (June 7, 1995).

The available de facto evidence nonetheless points to the contrary. Aside from the legal framework and the bureaucratic structure currently in place, the government's National Economic and Development Authority in its "Medium-Term Development Plan 2001-2004," instituted a goal that has since been left unchanged of "one million workers per year [that] will be deployed overseas."<sup>127</sup> This objective was first achieved in 2006 and has consistently been surpassed yearly since then.

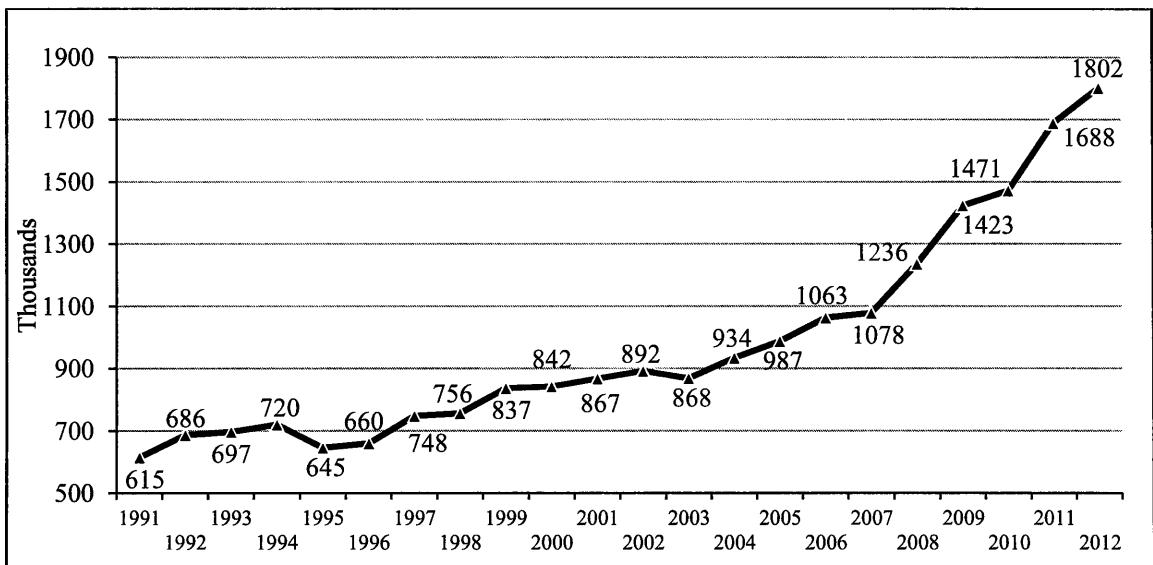


Figure 12. Deployed Overseas Filipino Workers.

Source: "OFW Statistics," Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, accessed August 9, 2013, <http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/statistics.html>.

Furthermore, the Philippine government continues its deep involvement in the entire vertical integration of the migration process. Note that the government's handprint in some form or another is manifest in the "characteristics of contract migration" given by the then-Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment:

<sup>127</sup> "Medium-Term Development Plan 2001-2004," National Economic and Development Authority, accessed August 31, 2013, [http://www.neda.gov.ph/ads/mtpdp/chapters\\_1-6/ch2.htm](http://www.neda.gov.ph/ads/mtpdp/chapters_1-6/ch2.htm).

1. “Driven by Demand [in] Destination Countries”–“The process of hiring OFWs begins with the prospective employers submitting recruitment agreements to our labor attachés and foreign service officers [assigned to embassies and consulates throughout the world] for verification and authentication.”
2. “Contract-Based and Consistent with Standards Set by the Philippine Government” – “An OFW who leaves the country is processed by the POEA under standards that cannot be lower than double what a comparable job in the Philippines is offered.”
3. Recognizes and Respects the Culture and Regulations of Both Source and Destination Countries”–“All OFWs are required to undergo country-specific pre-departure orientation seminars on the culture and regulations of the destination countries.”
4. OFWs Covered by Protective/assistive Mechanisms On-site Set Up by the Philippines”–“There are 200 labor officers all over the world meant to specifically assist OFWs.”
5. “Covered by Increasing Bilateral Discussions/Negotiations with Destination Countries”–“To date [2006], the Philippines has 10 labor agreements, 11 social security agreements and 38 recognition of credentials/certificates by the destination countries. At any given year, discussions are held between the Philippines and the 10 destination countries with the highest concentration of Filipinos in their territories.”<sup>128</sup>

### **Demographic Aspect**

Based on the Philippine government’s estimation, 10.5 million Filipinos as of year-end 2011 lived overseas, of which 47% were permanent residents or immigrants in their respective countries, 43% were temporary migrants, while 10% were irregular or lacking official documentation for residency or employment.<sup>129</sup> “Although most

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<sup>128</sup> Patricia Santo Tomas, “Migration and Development: The Philippine Experience” (Philippine Statement, Thirty-Ninth Session of the Commission on Population and Development, United Nations, New York, NY, April 4, 2006), accessed August 27, 2013, [http://www.un.int/philippines/statements/20060404\\_b.html](http://www.un.int/philippines/statements/20060404_b.html).

temporary migrants are OFWs, some of them are students, trainees, entrepreneurs, businessmen and their dependents who are overseas for at least six months.”<sup>130</sup>

Overseas Filipino Workers in 2011 according to the Philippine government’s National Statistics Office totaled 2.2 million, of which 52% (1.1 million) were men and 48% (1.0 million) were women.<sup>131</sup> As can be gleaned from Figure 11 and Table 2, while the numbers of men and women have recorded an upward trend throughout the past decade, men and women nevertheless consistently accounted for almost equal parts of the total from year to year, with the men outnumbering the women by only a slight margin. The only exception to this was in 2006, but even then the women exceeded the men by a mere 0.8 percentage point.

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<sup>129</sup> “Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos as of December 2011,” Commission on Filipinos Overseas, accessed September 2, 2013, [http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/2011\\_Stock\\_Estimate\\_of\\_Filipinos\\_Overseas.pdf](http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/2011_Stock_Estimate_of_Filipinos_Overseas.pdf).

<sup>130</sup> Cherry Joy Veniles, “Immigrants Outnumber OFWs,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 17, 2013, accessed September 3, 2013, <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/69339/immigrants-outnumber-ofws>.

<sup>131</sup> “Table 3 Number and Percentage Distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers by Age Group and Sex: 2010 and 2011,” Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistics Office, accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/sites/default/files/attachments/hsd/specialrelease/Tab3.pdf>.



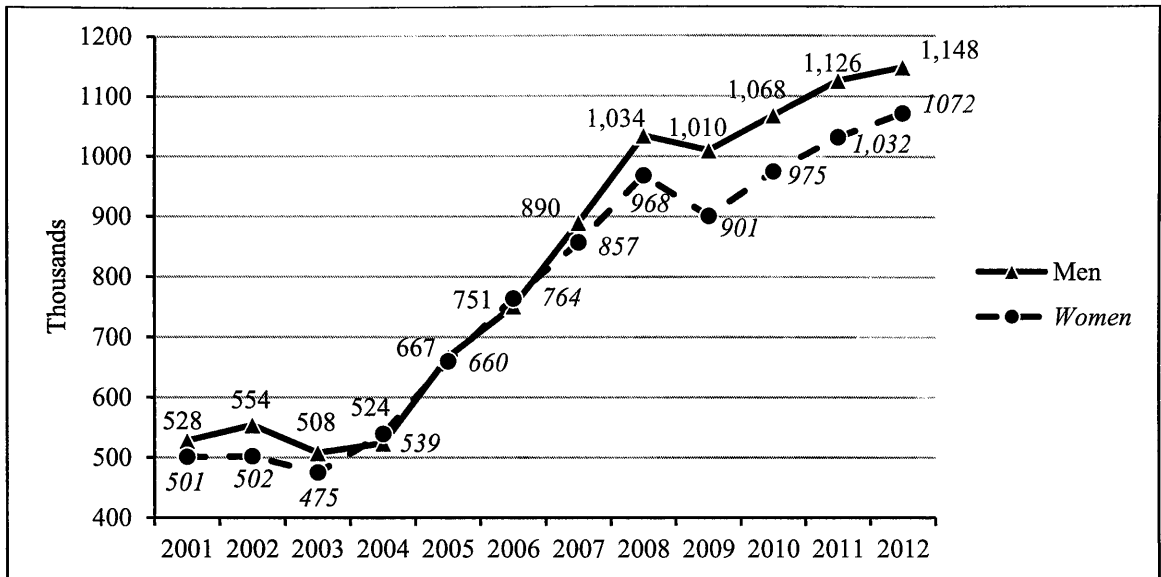


Figure 13. Number of OFWs by Gender.

Source: "Index of Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF) Reports," Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistics Office, accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-force/sof-index>.

Table 2. Breakdown of OFWs by Gender.

YEAR	MEN	WOMEN
2001	51.3%	48.7%
2002	52.5%	47.5%
2003	51.7%	48.3%
2004	51.1%	48.9%
2005	50.3%	49.7%
2006	49.6%	50.4%
2008	50.9%	49.1%
2009	51.6%	48.4%
2010	52.3%	47.1%
2011	52.2%	47.7%
2012	51.7%	47.8%

Source: "Index of Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF) Reports," Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistics Office, accessed September 3, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-force/sof-index>.

A different scenario however is observable when deployment figures for new hires classified by gender are considered. Figure 14 clearly illustrates the historical fact

that women predominate in terms of new hires deployment and have done so for most of the last 18 years.

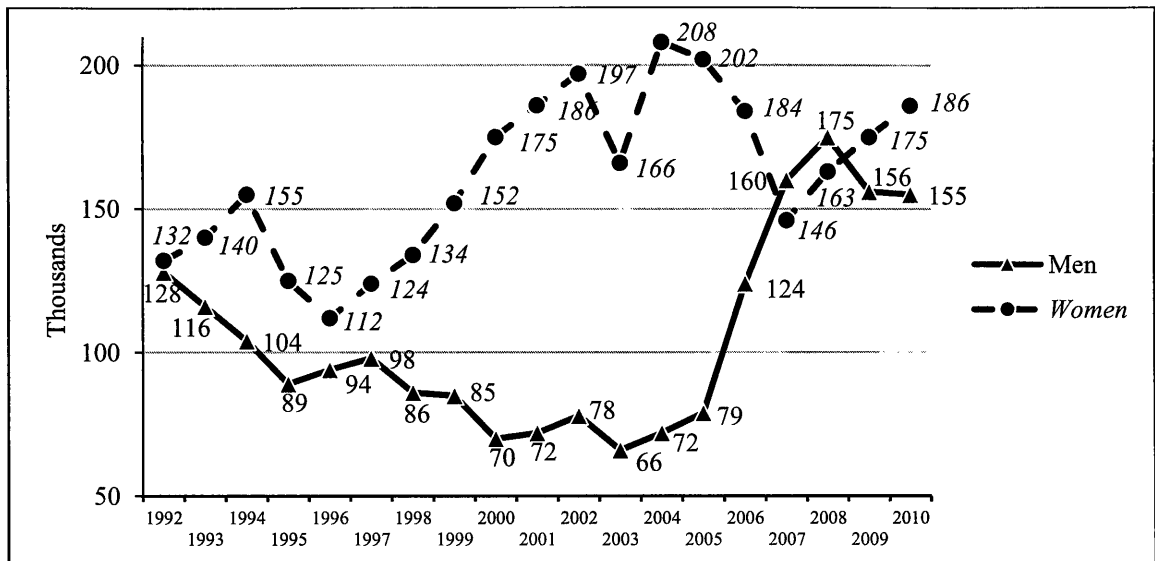


Figure 14. OFW Deployment–New Hires.

Source: “OFW Statistics,” Republic of the Philippines: Department of Labor and Employment - Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://poea.gov.ph/stats/statistics.html>.

The feminization of Philippine labor migration has often been noted, particularly with reference to the social cost of the phenomenon involving the family and young children as well as gender-related issues. A study released by the Asian Development Bank in July 2014<sup>3</sup> on “The Impact of the Global Crisis on Asian Migrant Workers and Their Families: a Survey-Based Analysis with a Gender Perspective” that focused especially on the Philippines and Indonesia (chosen “because they are among the largest labor-exporting countries in Asia and their migrant labor force is strongly feminized”),<sup>132</sup> stated the following:

<sup>132</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Highlights: A Survey-Based Analysis with a Gender Perspective: Impact of the Global Crisis on Asian Migrant Workers and Their Families* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, July 2013), 6, accessed September 19, 2013, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/impact-global-crisis-gender-highlights.pdf>.

Among others, the findings show that (1) there is an increasing feminization in the current migration; (2) women migrants tend to have lower education, skills, and income; (3) women migrants face greater difficulties in reintegrating into the domestic labor market upon their return; (4) more women migrants would like to go abroad again after their return; (5) more women in migrant families work in vulnerable employment; and (6) women in migrant households generally face a heavier burden due to their gendered and reproductive roles.<sup>133</sup>

The then-Secretary of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas stated in April 2008 that the migration of Filipino women grew in the 1980s and 1990s due to the economic growth of markets such as Singapore and Hong Kong.<sup>134</sup> As the number of women in those places entering the work force continued to grow, the demand for domestic helpers to take care of their homes and children emerged and rose. The increase in the demand for “entertainers” in Japan in the 1980s was also a factor. Unfortunately however, these types of work have historically been proven to be fraught with danger for women, subjecting them to the risk of abuse plus physical and sexual violence.<sup>135</sup> Female migration experienced a downturn in 2005 and onward due to two factors: (1) Japan

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<sup>133</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Highlights*, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Dante A. Ang, “Philippine International Migration: Causes and Consequences” (lecture, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, April 16, 2008), accessed August 6, 2013, [http://philippinesintheworld.org/sites/default/files/Philippine%20Intl%20Migration\\_Causes%20and%20Consequences.pdf](http://philippinesintheworld.org/sites/default/files/Philippine%20Intl%20Migration_Causes%20and%20Consequences.pdf).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. The Case of Maricris Sioson: Maricris was 22 years old when she left the Philippines to work as an entertainer/dancer in Fukushima, Japan. In September of the same year, she returned to the Philippines in a casket. Hepatitis was listed as cause of death on her Japanese death certificate. The family discovered that her body bore two stab wounds and signs of injury. An autopsy found head trauma as the cause of death. The Philippine government tried to investigate the true circumstances of her death but the Japanese government refused to cooperate and blocked any inquiry. No one has been brought to justice for the murder of Maricris. “Japan: The Death of Maricris Sioson,” Equality Now: Ending violence and discrimination against women and girls around the world, December 1, 1993, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.equalitynow.org/node/113>.

imposed limits on the admission of entertainers, and (2) the POEA enforced “a new set of policies for the protection of domestic workers in 2007.”<sup>136</sup>

In 2004 a consortium of NGOs and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (an agency of the Department of Labor and Employment) released a study which underscored the greater impact on the family when the OFW family member is the woman rather than the man. The departure of increasing numbers of wives and mothers is leading to the unintended consequence of a redefinition of traditional gender roles and even the cultural conceptualization of what constitutes a family.

When men migrate, the left-behind wives indeed assumed more responsibilities with their dual roles as fathers and mothers. ... When women migrate, it appears that families go through more adjustments—this is not surprising because changes in women’s roles often have more implications for the family than changes in men’s roles.<sup>137</sup>

What happens to the children? They are cared for either by female relatives or by women too poor to emigrate in search of work. The mothers try to keep in touch by phone and email, sometimes calling several times a week. When a child has problems at school, for example, the mother will try to resolve them—attempting in effect to mother at a distance. But what almost never happens is that the fathers of these children get involved more fully in caring for them and raising them. (In fact, often the fathers themselves work away from home elsewhere in the Philippines [or overseas], only coming home at weekends [or as their overseas contracts allow].)<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Center for Migrant Advocacy, “Working Paper on Overseas Migration” (2011), 10, accessed August 6, 2013, <http://centerformigrantadvocacy.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/working-paper-on-overseas-migration-2011.pdf>.

<sup>137</sup> Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People et al., “Filipino Families in Motion,” in *Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children* (Quezon City, Philippines: Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004), 2-3.

<sup>138</sup> Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, “Human Sacrifices: What Happens When Women Migrate and Leave Families Behind? The Case of the Philippines Raises Some Troubling Questions”, *The Women's Review of Books* 19, no. 5 (February 2002): 16, [www.jstor.org/stable/4023791?origin=JSTOR-pdf](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4023791?origin=JSTOR-pdf).

The Institute of Labor Studies, the research arm of the government's Department of Labor and Employment, held a forum in March 2012 in order to discuss the topic of "Men Left Behind," and specifically the following:

how men experience shifts in household labor division triggered by women's migration, how diverse notions of masculinity and gender identities are being reworked and renegotiated in the transnational family, how men are confronted with the need to take on child care duties while at the same time being under considerable pressure to live up to locally accepted masculinity ideals, and how they gratify their pleasures and deal with their travails in their spouse's absence.<sup>139</sup>

The forum ended with the recognition that neither one organization nor one solution can address all the issues, but that it will take the participation of all the stakeholders involved to assist "men left behind."<sup>140</sup>

The expectation, that the onward and upward progression of both Filipino labor migration and its feminization will continue, calls for continued vision-casting, advanced planning, and constant review by not only the government and all involved, but especially the church as a growing number of divided families will need the presence, love, and care of God that the church is tasked to share and minister to those who are hurting.

The feminization of overseas employment is a trend that can be expected to continue in years to come because of increased demand in industrialized countries for workers in sectors traditionally associated with women—domestic work, care-giving,

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<sup>139</sup> "Men Left Behind: A SHE Left, HE Stayed Forum on Gender and Filipino Migration: The Social Costs of Feminized Labor Migration in the Philippines," Department of Labor and Employment, Institute for Labor Studies, accessed September 4, 2013, <http://ilsdole.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/1men-left-behind-proceedings.pdf>.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

entertainment, and the sex trade as well as retailing and labor-intensive manufacturing. Activists and advocates for women's rights have called attention to abuse and discrimination suffered by women migrant workers arising from their immigration status, national origin, lower-status jobs and gender. Due to the "hidden" character of domestic work, they are too frequently victims of violence, including sexual assault in the workplace and are also particularly vulnerable to trafficking by criminal networks.<sup>141</sup>

### **The Filipino Family Experience**

The United Nations unequivocally avers in the first part of Article 16. (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society."<sup>142</sup> The same most certainly holds true in the case of the Philippines where the nuclear family and the extended family traditionally overlap to a large degree as conceptualized in both Filipino society and culture. The family and its extended version serve as the foundation and rationale for the values that dictate the behavior of the typical Filipino. As an example of this, it could be considered normative for an OFW to subject one's self to the sacrifices and hardships connected with overseas employment for the sake of being able to send funds back to the Philippines in order to pay for the education of the children of others within the extended family. While kinship

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<sup>141</sup> Patricia B Licuanan, foreword to *Nawala ang Ilaw ng Tahanan: Case Studies of Families Left Behind by OFW Mothers* by Maria Lourdes Arellano-Carandang, Beatrix Aileen Sison, and Christopher Carandang (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 2007) v-vi.

<sup>142</sup> United Nations, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," United Nations, accessed August 28, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>.

ties play a major role in the conduct of one's life, the relationships generated by fictive kinship are likewise important in that, for instance, the migrant's preferred destination, whether as a permanent immigrant or a temporary worker, could be influenced by the presence or absence of friends or relatives in foreign places.

The primacy of relationships and connections can be illustrated by the preference given not only to people close to the parents or engaged couple but also to local officials or celebrities when choosing godparents for one's child or the wedding of a man and a woman. The parents of the child or engaged couple becomes the *compadre* (co-father) or *comadre* (co-mother) of the godparents or "sponsors" at the baptism or wedding, and vice versa. "The relationship implies reciprocal obligations between the two [sets of] *compadres* [and *comadres*], as well as between the child [or couple] and god[parents]. ... Inasmuch as the relationship is permanent, both parties become members of one large 'ritual family'"<sup>143</sup>

While the nuclear family is generally the most important, the Filipino kinship system is best described as bilateral-extended in that relatives on both the mother's and father's side are given equal weight. Obligations and relationship extend to grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins and often other relatives as well.<sup>144</sup>

Although Western values continue to make inroads into Filipino culture, many traditional values in varying degrees still reveal the sway of over 300 years of Spanish colonial rule, for example:

family attitudes (e.g. toward marriage, dating, sex, chaperones, and stability of marriage), the Spanish sense of community and social life, the Spanish-accentuated hierarchical social structure and aristocracy, the *amor*

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<sup>143</sup> Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Philippines* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 84.

<sup>144</sup> A. Timothy Church, *Filipino Personality: a Review of Research and Writings* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 1986), 55.

*propio* characteristic (a sense of personal dignity and sensitivity), [and] the *compadre* system (an extension of kinship through sponsorship at baptism, confirmation, or marriage).<sup>145</sup>

Our Spanish heritage is so much a part of us that it is frequently difficult to dissociate that which is Spanish from that which is genuinely native to what is now known as the Filipino people.<sup>146</sup>

To ask therefore, whether Spanish culture has influenced the Filipino psychology seems to me like asking whether a mother has influenced her child. I think it is that deep. I feel it is that simple.<sup>147</sup>

The family is the foundation of the Filipino's identity; it is the source of security, a sense of belonging, and acceptance. One relies on the family, not the state, to provide the care and support needed in crucial times, especially in one's later years. This is the traditional ideal, but reality at times differs.

*Case: Teresita D. Sajonia.* Teresita lives in the village of San Miguel in Iloilo, a province in the middle of the Philippines, located between the main island of Luzon in the north and the largely Muslim island of Mindanao in the south. She looks older than her 56 years, worn down by years of poverty and hardships in life. When she was younger, she worked as a domestic helper in Singapore for 10 years, the last 8 years of which she spent with the Chen family, caring for the 3 young sons—Anthony, Justin, and Christopher. The youngest, Christopher, was newborn when she started working for the family. They called her “Auntie Terrie.” Sixteen years after she left Singapore and returned to the Philippines, the young men looked for and found Teresita back in her home village. While Teresita never had children of her own, she saved photographs of the

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<sup>145</sup> Church, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Vicente Rosales, “The Influence of Spanish Culture on the Psychology of the Filipino”, *Unitas* 38, no. 4 (1965): 498.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.



boys with her through the years. She had kept very little of her earnings as a maid in Singapore for herself, instead sending most of her money back to the Philippines for the education of her brother's sons, who in turn chose to turn their backs on her once they eventually finished their studies and became established in their respective fields.<sup>148</sup> What the latter have done runs counter in many ways to traditional values; these include care and respect for the elderly plus the recognition of a debt of gratitude to those who have provided valuable help. The indifference shown by Teresita's nephews stand in stark contrast to the love displayed by the Singaporeans who knew her for only 8 years during their childhood.

Filipinos, by definition, are a multicultural people with Chinese, Spanish, Malayan, Indonesian, South Asian, American, and, in the south, Muslim cultural influences. The result of these influences emphasizes a shared identity and connectedness, the centrality of the family, acceptance of uncertainty, ability to relate to others, respect offered according to the individual's place in the structure of hierarchical relations, adaptability, and religiosity.<sup>149</sup>

A book on psychotherapy dealing with the role of culture in an ethnically diverse America has a chapter, written by Manila-born clinical psychologist Maria Root, devoted

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<sup>148</sup> Joanne Soh, "I Cried My Eyes Out When She Left: Anthony Chen," *Straits Times* (Singapore), August 7, 2013, accessed September 12, 2013, <http://stcommunities.straitstimes.com/movies/2013/08/07/i-cried-my-eyes-out-when-she-left-anthony-chen>; "Pinay Who Inspired Cannes Film Now Living in Poverty," ABS-CBN News.com, August 2, 2013, accessed September 12, 2013, <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/lifestyle/08/02/13/pinay-who-inspired-cannes-film-now-living-poverty>. The catalyst that led the Chen boys to look for their former caregiver was a film produced and directed by Anthony Chen "inspired by" their time with Teresita which won the *Camera D'Or* prize at Cannes, France in May 2013. The title of the film, *Ilo*, came from the name of their domestic helper's province in the Philippines, Iloilo. For a plot summary, please refer to: Stephen Dalton, "Ilo Ilo: Cannes Review," *The Hollywood Reporter*, May 19, 2013, accessed September 16, 2013, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/ilo-ilo-cannes-review-525336>.

<sup>149</sup> Virgilio G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience*, 2nd ed. (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 1994), n.p., quoted in Monica McGoldrick, Joe Giordano, and Nydia Garcia-Preto, eds., "Filipino Families," in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2005), 319.

to “Filipino Families” in the United States that lists “Filipino family constellations.”<sup>150</sup>

Some are familial formations also applicable to those in the Philippines, particularly the left-behind families of OFWs. These include the following:

- (1) “multi-generation household”—It is traditionally not unusual to find three or even four generations living together under one roof.
- (2) “transnational family arrangements”—with spouses living in different countries, “driven by the need for income not available in the Philippines” or as a “face-saving way of marital separation in a country that does not allow divorce.”<sup>151</sup> One possible consequence is—
- (3) “multiple families in different countries.”—This is an unfortunate aspect of reality when the original husband and wife separate without official dissolution of their marriage and initiate new relationships and even households with other partners sans official recognition of their new families.
- (4) “cross-cultural families” that result from “interracial marriages.”<sup>152</sup>

The expectation that the onward and upward progression of both Filipino labor migration and its feminization will continue calls for continued vision setting, advanced planning, and constant review by not only the government and all involved, but

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<sup>150</sup> Maria P.P. Root, “Filipino Families,” in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, ed. Monica McGoldrick, Joe Giordano, and Nydia Garcia-Preto, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2005), 320.

<sup>151</sup> Apart from one city-state (the Vatican), the Philippines is the sole country in the world where divorce remains forbidden.

<sup>152</sup> Root.

especially the church as a growing number of divided families will need the love and presence of God that the church is tasked to embody and share with the world.

### Faith

When the Portuguese explorer Fernão de Magalhães (Ferdinand Magellan), under the patronage of the king of Spain, Carlos I, landed in 1521 on an island in the archipelago that would later be named after Felipe II (who succeeded Carlos I), the Muslim faith already had a foothold in the south. Were it not for the forced introduction of Roman Catholicism, the country would now be a Muslim nation. The Spanish colonizers came with the Christian cross in one hand and a sword in the other.

While the missionary preached the faith, there was a soldier to back him up. Very symbolic of this union is the ancient statue of Legazpi and Urdaneta on the south-west corner of Intramuros, facing the bay. Legazpi's sword has been lost in the passing of time, but the symbolism remains: the cross and the sword conquered the Philippines together. The faith was brought by a conqueror. Unlike St. Patrick, a former slave preaching unarmed to the Irish, or St. Augustine to the English, or St. Boniface to the Germans, the Spanish missionaries, whether they liked it or not, shared the image of strength and authority of the conquistadores.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Jose Vicente Braganza, *The Encounter: the Epic Story of the Christianization of the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines: Catholic Trade School, 1965), 202.



Figure 15. Statue of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and Andres de Urdaneta in the Walled City of Intramuros in Manila, The Philippines. This statue of two Basque men, one a *conquistador* and the other a friar, memorializes their arrival in the Philippines in 1565.

*Source:* “Monument of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and Andres Urdaneta (Intramuros),” VisitPinas.com, July 12, 2010, accessed October 3, 2013, <http://visitpinas.com/monument-of-miguel-lopez-de-legazpi-and-andres-urdaneta-intramuros/>.

Spain colonized the Philippines for three reasons: God, gold, and glory—though not necessarily in that order. Whatever lofty or spiritual intentions motivated the *conquistadores* to introduce their brand of Christianity into the islands, the truth of the matter is that they used faith as a potent weapon of colonization, an effective means of subjugating and controlling the people. (The American imperial takeover of the Philippines used a different tool for colonial control. Introduction of the English language paved the way for instilling American values and ideals into the heart and soul of the Filipino.)

The basis for what developed into what is now accepted as a typically Filipino way of life and manner of viewing the world was laid during the early years of Spanish occupation. What is considered today as indigenous was largely shaped by Spanish impositions and the response of the natives thereto. As the principal architects of the colonial edifice, the priests fashioned a theocratic society with religion as the core of Spanish cultural control. Religion assumed political dimensions and vice-versa. It should be noted that the clergy exercised their tremendous influence not only in the service of Spanish colonialism but more particularly to maintain their hold on the people and to protect and enhance their stake in the economic life of the colony. Alongside the teaching of the catechism, emphasis was placed on certain virtues that perpetuated blind acceptance of the rule of

the friars. Resignation and passivity were virtues that made a good colonial as well as a docile parishioner. Respect for the master and depreciation of indigenous ways were twin objectives that facilitated control.<sup>154</sup>

The propagators of Roman Catholicism used not only religion as a means for furthering their colonial control of the islands but complemented it with education, or the lack thereof.

The Spanish language was not taught except in schools reserved for children of Spaniards. Instead, the friars learned the dialects and spread the catechism through the local tongues. This was an effort to screen the people from reading works in Spanish. ... In the Philippines, the development of ignorance ... had its historical origins in the consecration of ignorance as a virtue in a Catholicized Philippines under friar rule.<sup>155</sup>

Lode Wostyn, a Dutch Roman Catholic missionary-theologian who has spent 30 years in the Philippines, had this to say about the Roman Catholicism introduced by the Spanish friars into the country:

The type of Christianity that reached the Philippine shore has failed to touch the Filipino experience. During almost four centuries of colonization, the Spanish missionaries proclaimed a “Tridentine Christianity with a Spanish garb,” a form of Catholicism commonly referred to as “split-level Christianity.”

Split-level Christianity is characterized by a soteriology patterned after the “dualistic model of satisfaction:” suffering in this life should be embraced for in heaven will be fulfilment and reward. This perspective encourages fatalistic attitudes and behaviours. The Filipino zest for life, family and relationships is considered with suspicion. But Filipino Catholicism celebrates Good Friday, a major Christian Feast in the Philippines. The Catholic Code imposes a “puritan morality” which promotes unquestioned passivity and blind obedience. In effect, it justifies the present social arrangements: the rich and powerful few are served by the poor majority. At the same time, this puritanism advocates a negative view of the human body.

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<sup>154</sup> Renato Constantino, “Identity and Consciousness: The Philippine Experience” (paper presented in Symposium 3 of the VIII World Sociology Congress, Toronto, Canada, August 20, 1974), 7-8.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

Catholic liturgical rituals are devoid of the passions and celebratory character which is typical of Filipino psyche. Official Catholicism has set ritual standards that neither reflect nor embody the people's cultural practices. It has promoted rites that became a sort of magic. In many cases, its celebrations hardly touch on pressing social issues. Religious rituals celebrated on various occasions have justified and even encouraged suffering.<sup>156</sup>

The Spanish/Catholic imprint is evident in today's Filipino migration in the manner by which thousands of Filipinos leave daily for foreign parts of the world. They do so with a fatalistic willingness to go headlong into risks and uncertainties, to face potential hardship and suffering, for the sake of the families they leave behind in return for some hoped-for eventual reward. It is therefore not for lack of merit that one author referred to Filipino labor migrants as "human sacrifices."<sup>157</sup>

The *World Christian Database* projects the 2015 population of the Philippines to be 101.8 million, with Christians representing 90.9% and evangelicals 5.3%.<sup>158</sup> If the ratio of evangelicals to total population is applied to the total number of OFWs as of 2011, i.e. 2.2 million, it would indicate as an educated estimate that there could have been at least 116.6 thousand Evangelical Filipinos overseas. Some of them will be undoubtedly in places closed outright to or less than tolerant to Christianity and Christian missions, such as Saudi Arabia which has no freedom of religion and where conversion from Islam

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<sup>156</sup> Lode Wostyn, "Doing Liberation Theology: A Filipino Agenda" (paper presented at the 2003 Forum for Liberation Theologies, Holy Spirit College, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium, October 24, 2002), accessed September 17, 2013, [http://theo.kuleuven.be/nl/onderzoek/centra/centr\\_bevrijding/centr\\_bevrijding\\_archives/centr\\_bevrijding\\_archives\\_forum/FLT02-03chronicles.pdf](http://theo.kuleuven.be/nl/onderzoek/centra/centr_bevrijding/centr_bevrijding_archives/centr_bevrijding_archives_forum/FLT02-03chronicles.pdf).

<sup>157</sup> Parreñas, "Human Sacrifices."

<sup>158</sup> Todd M. Johnson, ed., *Country: Philippines*, in the World Christian Database, accessed April 21, 2014, <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org.ezproxy.asburyseminary.edu/wcd/esweb.asp?WCI=Detail&Mode=2&Detail=45&Key=phil&Instance=101932&LIndex=6>.

to Christianity is forbidden and could warrant lashings, imprisonment, and even execution, at times at the hands of one's own family. One incident bears witness to this Islamic/Saudi practice. In 2008, a young woman who had converted to Christianity died in Saudi Arabia when her father (who was a member of the religious police) cut her tongue and then "burned her to death following a heated debate on religion."<sup>159</sup> The Kingdom has been a major destination for thousands of OFWs since the 1970s and Filipino Christians have experienced various forms of persecution there for their faith, including arrest, imprisonment, forced conversion to Islam, and deportation.<sup>160</sup>

There are Filipino Christians who have envisioned a missionary force consisting of OFWs positioned strategically by God's leading throughout the world, primarily due to personal traits that lend themselves very well toward making Filipinos "natural" missionaries according to the National Director of the Philippine Missions Association:

1. Hospitable, Friendly, Merciful, Strong Sense of Community
2. Persevering and Adaptable
3. Musically Adept
4. High Language Acquisition Ability
5. High literacy, English speaking
6. Only Christian Country in Asia
7. Formerly part of the Muslim bloc<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Mariam Al Hakeem, "Saudi Man Kills Daughter for Converting to Christianity," *Gulf News (Dubai, UAE)*, August 12, 2008, accessed September 19, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-man-kills-daughter-for-converting-to-christianity-1.124541>.

<sup>160</sup> "Saudi Arabia," Christianity Today, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/topics/s/saudi-arabia/> and Asia News, "Philippines - Saudi Arabia: Christian Filipino Migrants Forced to Convert to Islam," Spero News, January 28, 2010, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://www.speroforum.com/site/article.asp?id=26368&t=PHILIPPINES+%96+SAUDI+ARABIA++++Christian+Filipino+migrants+forced+to+convert+to+Islam>.

<sup>161</sup> Rey Taniajura, Incidental Mission: Philippine Case Study "Moving the OFW Missions Phenomenon from Incidental to Intentional" (Philippine Missions Association, August 22, 2011), 10-12, accessed September 19, 2013, <http://philippinemissionsassociation.com/pdf/incidental-missions.pdf>.

Resources in print are available for the recruitment, selection, training and preparation of OFWs for sending as missionary tentmakers.<sup>162</sup> However, even before training became available, stories gathered from all over the world has proven that God's Holy Spirit is already guiding and using Christian OFWs in bringing people into God's kingdom wherever they may be.<sup>163</sup> God is indubitably the best trainer of all.

Another helpful resource is a book published in 2012, *Blessing OFWs to Bless the Nations*.<sup>164</sup> It includes a chapter with recommended steps toward setting up an "OFW Ministry Desk" that churches can follow in their own places of ministry.

1. Share the vision and the need.
2. Pray and enlist the possible members of the team.
3. Call for a meeting and define the Team's functions, composition, and roles.
4. Launch the OFW Ministry Desk and install the OFW Team Members.<sup>165</sup>

The book likewise provides proposed responsibilities once a team is formed within the church for OFW ministry.

1. *Serves* as the Care Group for OFWs.
2. *Educates* the church on OFW life and tentmaking missions.
3. *Responds* to the needs of OFWs and their family members especially in times of crisis.
4. *Visits* OFW families and prays with them regularly.
5. *Equips* and trains OFWs in cross-cultural disciple-making.
6. *Helps* OFWs find their role in the Great Commission.

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<sup>162</sup> One example is the following: Bert Claro [pseud.], *A Higher Purpose for Your Overseas Job* (Makati City, Philippines: CrossOver Books, Inc., 2007), n.p., accessed September 19, 2013, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/215/600>.

<sup>163</sup> Luis Pantoja Jr., Sadiri Joy Tira, and Enoch Wan, *Scattered: The Filipino Global Presence* (Manila, Philippines: Lifechange Publishing, 2004), 291-360.

<sup>164</sup> Ana M. Gamez, *Blessing OFWs to Bless the Nations* (Makati City, Philippines: Church Ministry Strengthening Inc., 2012), n.p.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-61.



7. *Informs and updates the congregation.*
8. *Meets regularly for information, intercession, and instruction.*<sup>166</sup>

*Case: Irene Lascano-Sato.* Irene is a Filipino woman who had been in Japan since 1994. While undocumented as a worker, she moved from job to job as a factory worker, child minder, and a night club entertainer. Eventually she married a Japanese man, and they had a son and daughter. Irene went through a very difficult time when illness struck the family. A sister and 2 other women, OFWs themselves, visited and shared the Gospel with her the day after she had contemplated ending her life. “It wasn’t easy for me to become born again because I had to give up a lot of things, especially the idols and images that I grew up with. But the Lord made me understand that if He is in my heart, He didn’t have to live in things made by man.” Now she owns and runs a Filipino store which she had dedicated to God as a “place for prayer meetings and weekly Bible studies. Her prayer ministry has seen healings, “not just in the body and emotions, but most of all in the Spirit. ... Many have received the Lord Jesus as a result of coming to the Filipino Store.”<sup>167</sup>

The Holy Spirit is also at work in the Philippines in different ways:

(1)The Korean connection, ... define[d] as the growing and increasing partnership between Filipino and Korean missions organizations and missionaries that are based in the Philippines in pursuing the Great Commission, (2) the global economic shift where the balance of power is now tilting more and more in favor of the East vis-à-vis the West, and (3) the increasing interest and involvement of Filipino youth in missions.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Gamez, 62-65.

<sup>167</sup> Irene Lascano-Sato, “God’s Store,” in *Blessing OFWs to Bless the Nations*, ed. Ana M. Gamez (Makati City, Philippines: Church Ministry Strengthening, Inc., 2012), 120-124.

<sup>168</sup> Taniajura, 24.

In trying to explain the complexities of life in the Philippines to foreign visitors, Filipinos often use some variation of a common refrain, that the country and its people are what they are today because they spent over three centuries in the convent (Spanish rule) followed by almost half a century in Hollywood (American rule). Clearly, it is much more complicated than that, but God's hand is on the country and God has a plan for the people. The following chapter focuses on the field research.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Churches and Their OFW Families**

#### **Introduction**

The research performed for this study is not comprehensive. It involves a sampling of churches identified through inquiries and referrals by colleagues and acquaintances familiar with church ministry in the Philippines, particularly within the Greater Manila Area. The churches who were invited and agreed to participate in the study met the design standards, foremost of which is the presence of OFW families within the congregations. They also represent a diversity of denominational backgrounds, congregational size, and the manner by which they ministered to their OFW families.

#### **Overview of Churches in the Study**

This study focuses on four Filipino churches all situated within the National Capital Region of the Philippines, which is centered on Manila, the capital. These churches participated in the OFW data collection, surveys, and interviews. Each is an evangelical Protestant congregation of varying denominational affiliations and congregational size. This chapter presents a brief profile for each church, including history and congregation. While the goal was to interview three church leaders involved in ministry to OFW families from each church for a total of 12, the final total reached 11

since Church D had two church leaders who took part in the study. Results of the data collection appear in Chapters 4 and 5.

### Church A

While located in the Greater Manila Area, Church A has its historical roots in the ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance which initially focused on the island of Mindanao in the southern part of the country.<sup>169</sup> This complied with the “Mission Comity Agreement” which divided the country into various parts and allocated them to different Protestant denominations as mission fields for their missionaries who started arriving in 1901 shortly after the start of the American colonial era.<sup>170</sup>

As converts, members, and adherents migrated to the capital area of Manila on the island of Luzon after the Second World War for work and study, the denomination felt the need in the 1950s

“to open a Mission Home in Manila to shepherd the young people [of the denomination] studying in Manila,” using the Mission Home garage as their place of worship. The work grew and the Missions sent another missionary ... to help the students’ ministry. They met regularly for fellowship and worship, until such time they felt the need to move to a bigger and more conducive place of worship, when their number greatly increased.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Isaias Catorce, “An Evaluation of the 2009 Mindanao Training Event for CAMACOP Evangelists Involved in Public Proclamation for Church Planting” (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2010), 16-17, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1360&context=ecommonsatsdissertations>.

<sup>170</sup> “A Brief History,” CAMACOP: The Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://www.camacop.org.ph/php/aboutus/history.php>.

<sup>171</sup> Church A web site, accessed August 2, 2013.

The church was officially founded in the Quezon City area as Church A in 1961 with the dedication of both the church building and parsonage.<sup>172</sup> Church A was the first church affiliated with their denomination not only in the Greater Manila Area but also on the island of Luzon, and has planted at least 13 churches in the area plus more in provincial locations.<sup>173</sup> It has an average weekly attendance of 600.<sup>174</sup>

Six acting heads of OFW families within the church took part in the surveys and interviews at Church A as part of this study at the church on April 6, 7, 10, and 14, 2013. Three members of the staff (the Senior Pastor, the previous Senior Pastor, and the Head of Administration and Finance) were interviewed in April 2013 for this research.

## Church B

Church B began in 1958 with a Bible study in the Greater Manila Area led by foreign missionaries at the home of a local family and evolved into a storefront church in the interim before becoming officially recognized as a church in 1959.<sup>175</sup> The church acquired land in 1964, built on it, and dedicated a new church building the following year; Church B has continued to expand their facilities as needed through the years.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Church A web site, accessed October 22, 2013.

<sup>173</sup> Church A web site, accessed November 11, 2013.

<sup>174</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May, 2013.

<sup>175</sup> Church B web site, accessed October 22, 2013.

<sup>176</sup> Church B web site, accessed November 11, 2013.

With 23 charter members as of its founding, Church B experienced a sustained period of growth from 1984 with the help of Evangelism Explosion.<sup>177</sup> The church as of 1987 has had a role in the planting of 40 churches, a statistic which they have since lost track of. Church B currently has an average weekly attendance of 850. It is affiliated with the Conservative Baptist Association of the Philippines.<sup>178</sup>

As part of this study, six acting heads of OFW families within the church took part in the surveys and interviews at Church B on April 2, 7, and 14, 2013. Three members of the staff (the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, and the OFW Ministry Coordinator) were interviewed on April 2 and 10, 2013 for this research.

### Church C

Located in a municipality on the eastern side of the Greater Manila Area, Church C was officially started at the end of March 1976. There were 21 in attendance who occupied 8 wooden church pews which the pastor built, together with the pulpit, just the week before. The church can also trace its history to the conversion of one man a few years earlier at a revival meeting held in a carpenter's shop.<sup>179</sup> God used that man and his burden for the salvation of his family and neighbors to eventually establish Church C.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May, 2013.

<sup>179</sup> Robert Bickert, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2013.

Through its 37-year history, the church has planted seven churches and produced from its ranks five pastors and one medical doctor/career missionary who has served in Zambia and Nepal.<sup>180</sup> Church attendance has varied through the years and currently has an average of 185 per weekend.<sup>181</sup> It is part of the Wesleyan Church of the Philippines.

As part of this study, six acting heads of OFW families within the church took part in the surveys and interviews at Church C on April 21, 2013. Two members of the staff (Administrative Pastor and Pastor) were interviewed on March 20 and April 23, 2013 for this research.

#### Church D

The non-denominational, charismatic Church D was started in 1990 through the initiative of an American missionary couple with a “neighborhood volleyball game” that led to a Bible study that in turn became a house church which grew and eventually became a full-fledged church. Today it has a “network of churches throughout the Philippines, and deployed Filipino missionaries overseas.”<sup>182</sup> Through the years Church D has planted churches in other regions of the country and has established a missionary

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<sup>180</sup> Bickert.

<sup>181</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May, 2013.

<sup>182</sup> Church D web site, accessed October 24, 2013.

presence in neighboring parts of Asia as well. Church D is located in a southern suburb of the Greater Manila Area and has an average weekly attendance of 1,400.<sup>183</sup>

As part of this study, six acting heads of OFW families within the church took part in the surveys and interviews at Church B on May 19 and 21, 2013. Three members of the staff (the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, and the OFW Ministry Coordinator) were interviewed in April 2013 for this research.

### Summary

These churches represent various doctrinal traditions and polity formations. They differ also in the size of their congregations and the OFW presence therein, the reach and scope of their respective ministries, and the resources at their disposal. The one incontrovertible characteristic that unites them however is the fact that these churches all agree in upholding the Scriptures as the Word of God, in their Christ-centeredness, and in their being mission-minded. Their concern for their flocks is evident in their sensitivity to the realities of life that lead many of their church families to send loved ones away to foreign lands and seas. They moreover concur that ministering in a holistic manner to the needs of OFWs and their families is part and parcel of the *missio Dei*.

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<sup>183</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May, 2013



### Overview of the OFWs

Considering that the heads of family left behind are predominantly female, it follows that the OFWs are largely male (79.2%). The sample conforms to the trend seen in “Table 2. Breakdown of OFWs by Gender,” in which men continue to outnumber women, albeit slightly, among all OFWs. In relation to the respondents interviewed, husbands account for 62.5% of the OFWs, and fathers 12.5%. The rest are wives (2), a daughter-in-law, and a brother-in-law. The mean age is 50.0 years. Half (50.0%) are employed in the Middle East, followed by 20.1% in Asia, 8.3% at sea, and 4.2% in Europe. Occupations cover the whole gamut of endeavors, ranging from domestic helper to crew member on a cruise liner to electrical engineer to optometrist. A majority (52.1%) are in their second to third decade of work as OFWs. Over a quarter (26.1%) of the OFWs are close to finishing their first decade. A minority (12.5%), specifically those in North America, indicate that they do not intend to return to the Philippines; implied here is the planned eventual emigration of the rest of the families to join the OFWs.

Table 3. Distribution by Gender of OFWs Represented by Families in the Study.

	Church A	Church B	Church C	Church D	Total
Male	6	5	4	4	19
Female	-	1	2	2	5

Table 4. Distribution by Age of OFWs Represented By Families in the Study.

Church	Age					
	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	All
A		2	1	2	1	6
B			3	1	2	6
C	1			4	1	6
D		1		2		3
All	1	3	4	9	4	21

(Note: Two respondents did not provide age data for their OFWs.)

Table 5. Occupations of the OFWs Represented by Families in the Study.

Administrative and Managerial Workers	assistant to company president
Professional Technical and Related Workers	telecommunications engineer, marine engineer, electrical engineer (3), optometrist, computer programmer
Service Workers	household manager, caregiver, restaurant cook, domestic helper, security guard
Production Workers	pipe installer, electrician, logistics officer
Seaworker	cruise liner staff member, seaman

(Note: These broad classifications were guided by the major occupational groupings used by the Philippine government.)<sup>184</sup>

<sup>184</sup> "OFW Deployment per Skill and Country - New Hires for the Year 2010," Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, March 6, 2014, accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/2010%20Deployment%20by%20Major,%20Sub-Major%20Occupation%20and%20Sex%202010-%20New%20hires.pdf>.

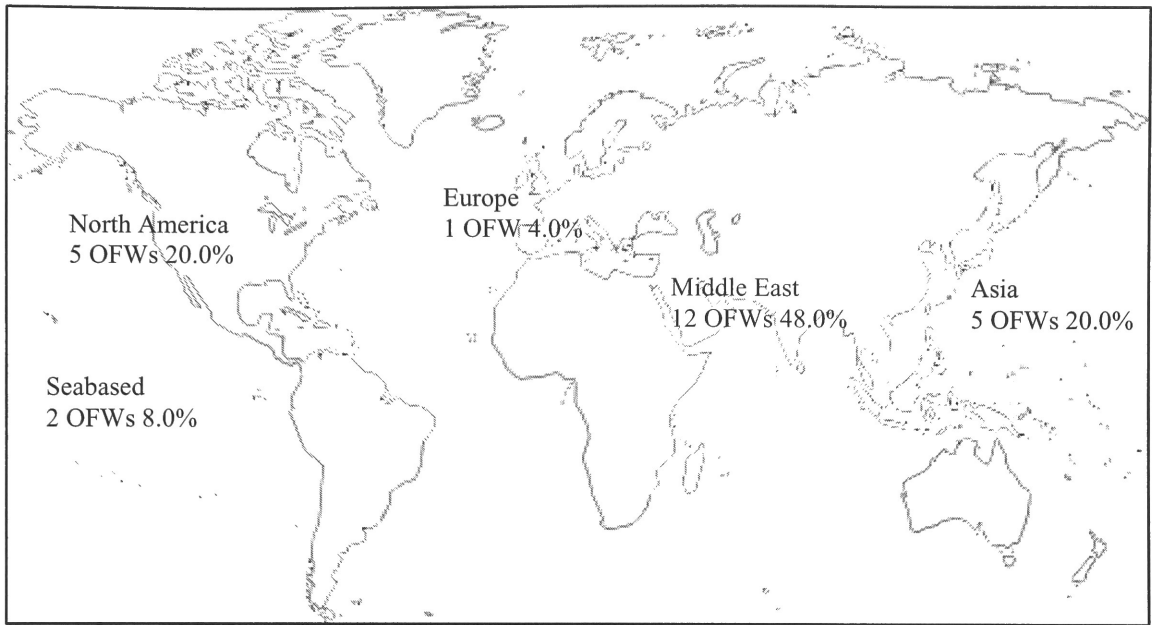


Figure 16. World Distribution of OFWs Represented by the Families in the Study.

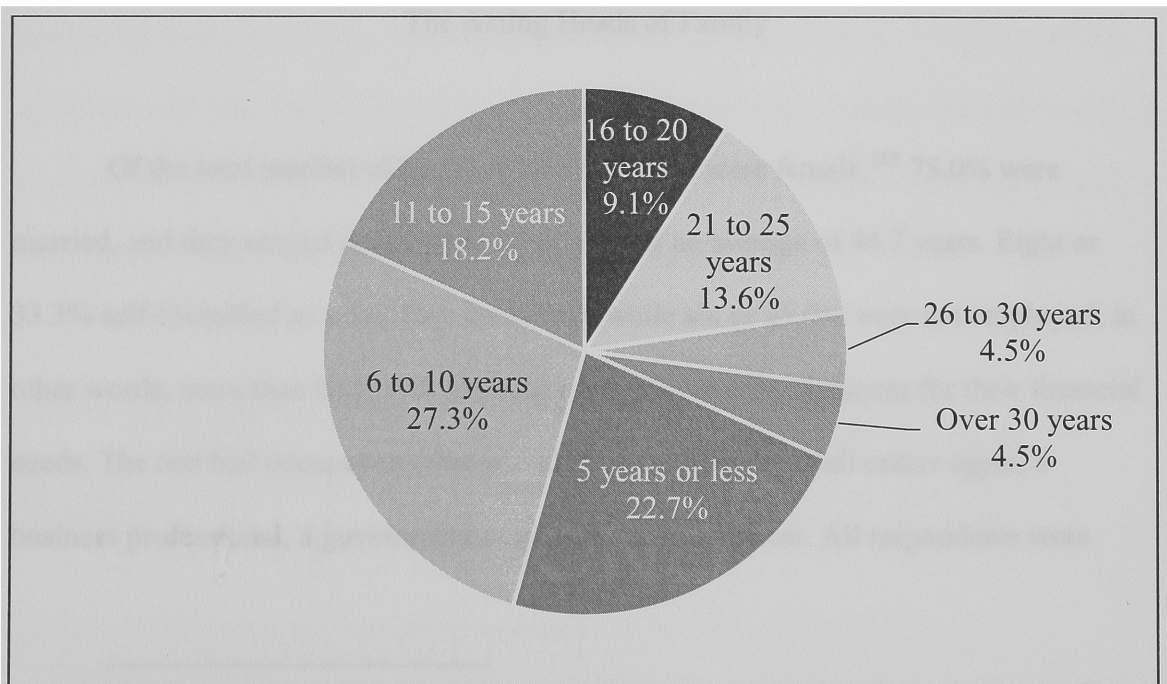


Figure 17. OFW Families Classified by Years Separated from OFW.  
Note: Two respondents had no replies.

## The Left-Behind Families

For each church involved in the study, an initial survey of the heads of the OFW families using the questionnaire provided the data that served as the foundation for identifying those chosen for further follow up. To the extent possible, diversity, in terms of such criteria as gender, marital status, age, occupation, and length of time separated from the OFW, was a goal. Six heads of OFW families were chosen for each of the 4 churches, thereby yielding a total sample of 24.

### The Acting Heads of Family

Of the total number of heads of family, 83.3% were female,<sup>185</sup> 75.0% were married, and they ranged in age from 20 to 67 with an average of 44.7 years. Eight or 33.3% self-identified as a full-time housewife while six or 25.0% were not employed; in other words, more than half at 58.3% relied completely on remittances for their financial needs. The rest had occupations that varied from working as a call center agent, a business professional, a government employee, or an engineer. All respondents were

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<sup>185</sup> The absence of both a congregational profile in terms of gender for each of the churches and a large sample size preclude arriving at possible reasons for the dominance of women among acting heads of left-behind OFW families. It was however the author's observation, while living in the Philippines, that women outnumbered men as churchgoers. A search online led to the statement that in "the Philippines, women are 65 to 70 percent of the active churchgoers." Rosemary Radford Reuther, "Christianity and Women in the Modern World," in *Today's Woman in World Religions*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 285.

members of their respective churches. Length of church membership ranged from 28 years (since 1985) to 2 years (2011). All likewise reported regular church attendance which they viewed as a positive factor in their spiritual growth as Christians. Nearly all (there was one exception) agreed that their church was a welcoming place for OFW families. Further, the heads of family unanimously believed that being part of their local church has helped them grow stronger in their faith and that both the Bible and the fellowship they had within the church have helped them grow spiritually and cope with life issues, especially those that arise due to being a left-behind family.

Among those who took part in the study, the typical family had a husband/father working in the Middle East, with the wife/mother left in the Philippines to manage the household. In relation to the interviewees, husbands accounted for 62.5% of the OFWs, and fathers 12.5%. The average family had two children living at home likely to be 15 years old or older (1.7:1 is the ratio of children 15 years and above to those below) and female (1.5:1 female to male ratio of children living at home).

Table 6. Distribution by Gender of Acting Heads of Families in the Study.

	Church A	Church B	Church C	Church D	Total
Male	1	1	1	1	4
Female	5	5	5	5	20

Table 7. Distribution by Age of Acting Heads of Families in the Study.

Church	Age					All
	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	
A		2	3		1	6
B		1	2	2	1	6
C	3		2		1	6
D		2	1	1	2	6
All	3	5	8	3	5	24

Table 8. Civil Status of Acting Heads of Families in the Study.

Church	Single	Married	Widowed	Total
A	1	5		6
B	1	5		6
C	2	4		6
D		4	2	6
Total	4	18	2	24

Table 9. Occupations of Acting Heads of Families in the Study.

Professionals	chief financial officer, case worker, civil engineer, ESL teacher, teacher, businessman, businesswoman, government employee
Others	housewives (8), call center agent, student, part-time pastor,

(Note: Five did not report any occupation.)

### The Children Left Behind

The 24 households in the study had 53 children, both young and adult.<sup>186</sup> Eight or 15.1% of the total are adults who have left home. In addition, 17 adult children (or 32.1% of the total) lived at home as is customary with many Filipino families. They range in age from 20 up to 40.

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<sup>186</sup> Adult is herein defined as 20 years old and above.

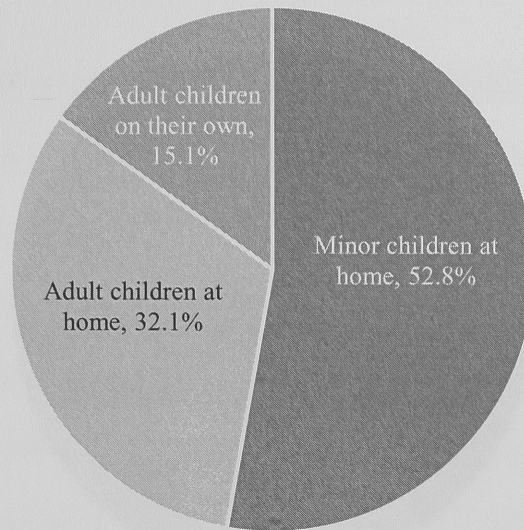


Figure 18. Distribution of Children, by Age and Residence, of OFW Families in the Study.

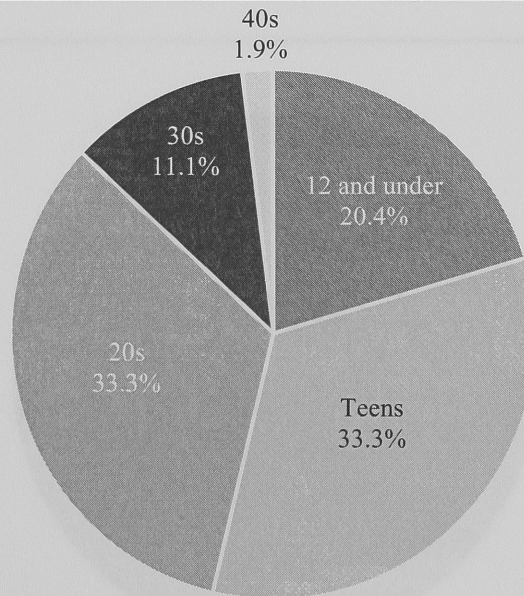


Figure 19. Distribution by Age of Children and Adult Children Left Behind by OFW Parents.

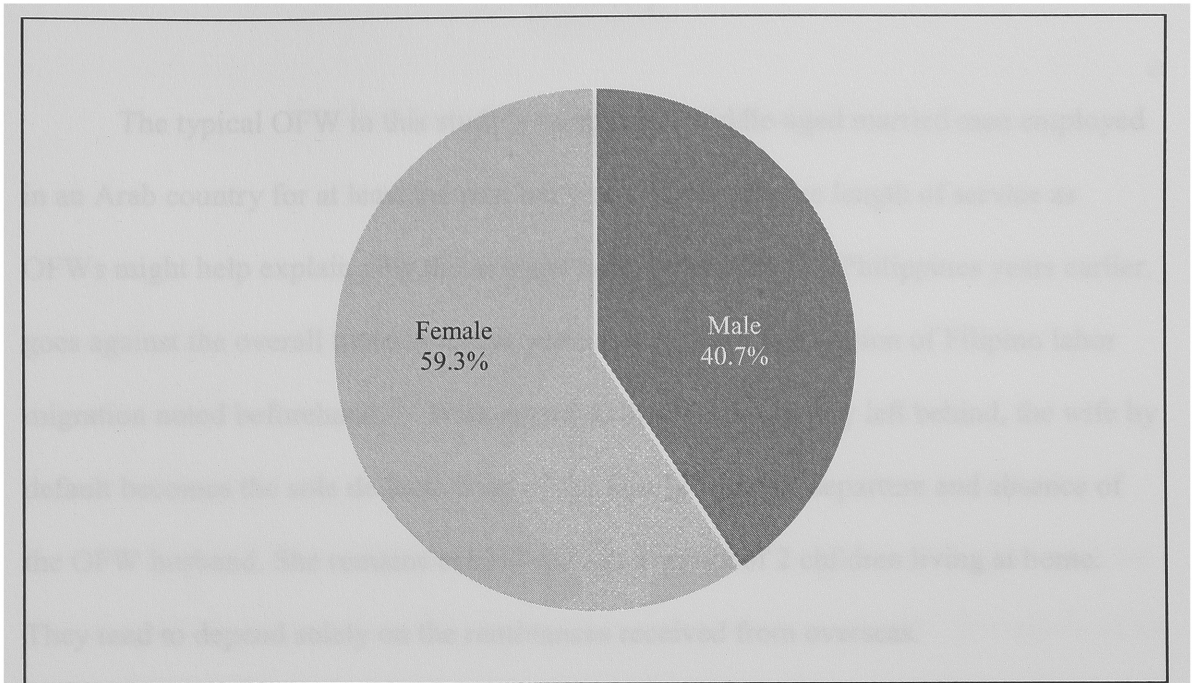


Figure 20. Distribution by Gender of Children and Adult Children Left Behind by OFW Parents.

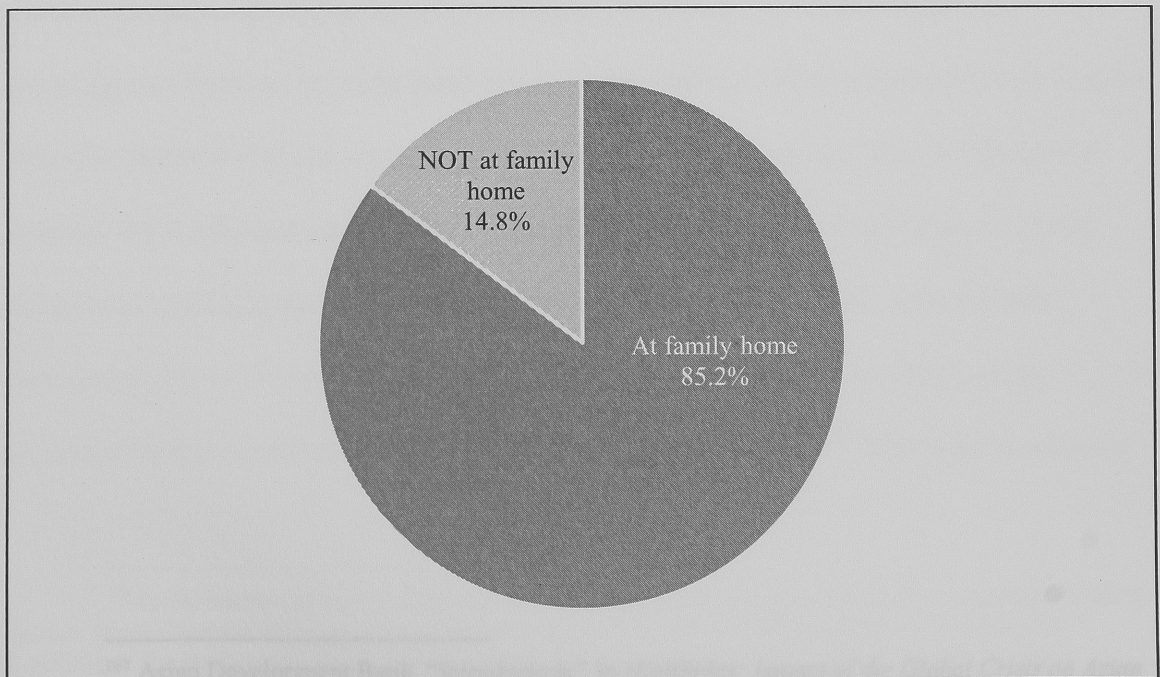


Figure 21. Distribution by Residence of Children and Adult Children Left Behind by OFW Parents.

(Note: "Family home" refers to the primary residence of the nuclear OFW family unit.)



## Summary

The typical OFW in this study's sample is a middle-aged married man employed in an Arab country for at least the past ten years. Their average length of service as OFWs might help explain why the average here, having left the Philippines years earlier, goes against the overall trend in recent years toward the feminization of Filipino labor migration noted beforehand.<sup>187</sup> With regard to the average family left behind, the wife by default becomes the sole de facto head of the family with the departure and absence of the OFW husband. She remains behind with an average of 2 children living at home. They tend to depend solely on the remittances received from overseas.

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<sup>187</sup> Asian Development Bank, "Introduction," in *Highlights: Impact of the Global Crisis on Asian Migrant Workers and Their Families: a Survey-Based Analysis with a Gender Perspective* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2013), 6, September 19, 2013, [www.adb.org/sites/default/files/impact-global-crisis-gender-highlights.pdf](http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/impact-global-crisis-gender-highlights.pdf).

## Chapter 4

### Family Findings: Research Survey Interviews

#### Case Studies<sup>188</sup>

##### Althea

Althea is a housewife with adult children. Her husband plans to keep on working abroad until his retirement. He is entering his fourth decade as an OFW. The nature of his work both takes him away from his family and allows him time with them too for extended periods of time. Their preferred means of communication are by regular mail and email. Although Althea admits missing her husband, she believes that the geographical distance between them has not really affected their relationship as a couple. She also believes that his work-related absence has not negatively affected the family. Instead, his remittances enabled them “to send [their] children to school, build [their] own house, [and acquire some] savings and a few investments.” One goal remains concerning the use of remittances, and that is to set up a business or have enough investments that could serve as their “preparation for retirement.” They turn to relatives

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<sup>188</sup> In the interest of maintaining confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to respondents based on the “Most Common Filipino Names” for 2005 and 2010. “Most Common Filipino Names: 2005,” Republic of the Philippines, Philippine Statistics Office, National Statistics Office, March 10, 2009, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/most-common-filipino-names-2005>. Carmela G. Lapeña, “John Paul, Althea Most Popular Names for Pinoy Babies, as Spanish Names Decline,” GMA News Online, June 28, 2013, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/315071/lifestyle/artandculture/john-paul-althea-most-popular-names-for-pinoy-babies-as-spanish-names-decline>.

when a need arises; they have never asked the church for any help. If anything, Althea would appreciate, first, “constant visitation and fellowship,” and, second, “counseling and involvement of OFW children in youth ministry, church activities and programs.”<sup>189</sup>

### Angeline

Angeline is a young housewife. Her husband has been an OFW for almost a decade. They have a young child of preschool age. Angeline has been a member of her church for almost a decade and a half. She sees herself as a regular attender although “it changed when I had a baby without a *yaya* [nursemaid]. I could not attend church regularly.” Angeline has a positive view of her church and feels that it is a welcoming place that has helped her grow in her faith and life; “Especially when I have a problem, the messages help.” In fact, she rates the preaching/teaching/Bible study offered by the church as its foremost feature. However, she regards the pastor/pastoral staff as lowest among the church features she rated. She would appreciate “visitation at home once in a while” and “communication with the pastor.” Her husband is still growing in his walk with God. “My husband joined my faith. I encourage him to join [with other Christians for] fellowship [when he is overseas].” Due to the nature of his work, their communication is limited usually to email or phone calls initiated by him. “I need to talk to someone also. Decision making is on me; I do not want my child to grow up without

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<sup>189</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

his father; *parang kawawa* [seems pitiful]. I can't work also, *kanino ko siya iiwan* [with whom can I leave him]? *Kung nakatawag na siya* [When he is able to call], there is relief. *Nandoon ang trust ko* [My trust is there]. I am selective on who to share issues with."<sup>190</sup>

### Christine

Christine is a full-time homemaker with young adult children at home with her. She has been a member of the church for nearly a decade, and values most the preaching/teaching/Bible study, worship/music, and prayer that the church offers. Her husband has been an OFW as a professional technical worker for over a decade. For approximately the first half of his term abroad, the whole family stayed together overseas before Christine returned to the Philippines with the children. The separation has not caused any major problems. "Haven't really any difficulties when we were apart since he comes home every once or twice a month, except I am very concerned about security at home during the night since I am with two young children. We manage well because we are in constant communication," which they accomplish through phone calls ("all the time"), texting ("mostly"), and travel. "Remittances sent are more than enough for us." She turns to the church for prayer and finds the pastor very helpful. She suggests that left-behind OFW families should have "more information on why their family member (mother or father) has gone abroad/away." She believes that OFW families "need

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<sup>190</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

education/training/awareness (preparedness)” with regard to “possible effects of separation, whether emotional or intellectual/mental.”<sup>191</sup>

### Erica

Erica is a middle-aged woman employed outside the home in a service capacity. Her husband has been working as a service worker overseas for a few years and currently has no date as to when he plans to return home permanently. She has been a member of her church for half a decade. She considers the church’s preaching/teaching/Bible study ministry as its strongest aspect and its pastor/pastoral staff as the weakest. Her children are all minors and in her care. “I develop open communication with my children and actively listen to them. It is very hard when my sons sometimes disobey me. I teach my children to make good choices in life . . . encourage them to join youth activities in school.” Erica would also like to see more “fellowship—not just once but monthly. I will make church and fellowship fit my schedule.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

## Grace

Grace is a young woman, a student, and single. She is a member of the church and relishes most the fellowship that she enjoys there. She and her siblings are all adults now; two of them live at home with their mother. “I’m thankful *kasi nagsacrifice siya para mameet yung* financial needs *namin* [because he sacrificed in order to meet our financial needs]; and I miss my dad. When I miss my dad, I just message him on Facebook; and I always pray for him for strength and protection. As a daughter, there are occasions *po na* [that] I long for my dad whenever he misses an important event *pero* [but] I [also] understand *naman din yung* [the] situation.” His physical absence does not cause any issues within the family; “*wala naman po kasi* [none because] we can always contact him *naman*” primarily through online video chats and phone calls.<sup>193</sup>

## Jasmine

Jasmine, a middle-aged housewife, has an OFW husband who has worked abroad for over a decade. Their plan is for him to continue as an OFW for up to five years more when most of their children will be adults and the youngest in his late teens. The welfare of the children has served as the main consideration for the father’s departure. “*Medyo naka apekto sa mga anak ko pero pinaunawa ko sa kanila kung bakit kailangan may*

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<sup>193</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

OFW. [The children were somewhat affected but I tried to help them understand why it was necessary for their father to be an OFW]. It is because we love them and we want them to have a good future and to meet all their needs.” Her main coping mechanism has been her faith, specifically through prayer. Prayer ministry was likewise the one factor that she valued most in her church, followed by the pastoral staff and the teaching ministry. Jasmine also finds comfort in her husband’s own faith, a stark example of the OFW abroad serving as a source of encouragement and assurance to the family left behind, specifically the spouse. “He is busy in church ministry [in the country where he works].” The 80% share of his income that he sends home and her use of a budget has allowed them to pay bills (“*Naibigay ang mga pangangailangan ng family* [We were able to meet the needs of the family]) and still save (“Yes, we have savings in the bank for the future—*kinabukasan ng mga anak at sa aming mag-asawa* [for the future of our children and for ourselves as husband and wife].”<sup>194</sup>

### John Paul

John Paul is a young, married man. His wife left a few years ago in order to work as a service worker in another country. They intend to start a family once his petition for immigration is approved, and he and his wife can be together again. “We plan to have kids when we’re finally together since we want to raise our future kids hands-on and

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<sup>194</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

guide and monitor their growth.” John Paul has been a member of his church for less than five years. His church attendance is regular except for times when work or family responsibilities intervene. He has a high regard for the church and counts preaching/teaching/Bible study, prayer, and pastor/pastoral staff as the top three aspects of the church. He remarks positively also on the manner by which he is received by the church. “Church members and pastors are always cheerful. They smile and greet you every time you meet them and it feels like you have a very big family despite the absence of loved ones since they are working abroad.” He feels, however, that the church could be more helpful to OFW families “through outreach programs.” He and his wife keep in touch mostly through SMS<sup>195</sup> or texting, followed by online video or voice chats, and phone calls. Daily communication is the coping mechanism they rely on to deal with any issue caused by separation; “I miss her physical presence.” As far as he is concerned, “the biggest issue is how to go to her and be with her.” Another way of coping for him is to be occupied. “Keeping one’s self busy through family gatherings and work and other activities might help to not miss them (OFW family member) so much, but one must not forget to keep in touch with their loved ones regularly to keep them happy and remembered.” With regard to the church ministering to left-behind OFW families, he suggests the following, “Just keep in touch with them regularly. It makes them feel important and remembered.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> SMS is an acronym for “Short Message Service.”

<sup>196</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.



## Joshua

Joshua is a middle-aged man involved in part-time ministry. He has been an active member of his church for nearly three decades and can usually be found there three days out of every week. The top three factors he likes most about his church are, in descending order, the pastoral staff, the preaching/teaching/Bible study, and worship. His wife has been employed as a service worker abroad for a few years. They have one child. Joshua is a confident man; “*Alam ko ang kalagayan ko, ang capacidad ko* [I know my situation, what I am capable of], secure with self.” He is thankful that they have seen the quality of their lives improve as his wife saves her earnings where she is. He feels his burden as a provider has lessened (“*Nabawasan ang load ko bilang provider.*”). Their goal is to save enough to have their own home and to secure their child’s education. As his child goes through adolescence, he is thankful that the church is there to help give guidance and teaching; “*Sunday–malaking bahagi ang tulong ng church* [the church has been a great help]; she’s on her own; she now goes to church by herself. *Lalo niya kakailanganin ang* [She will need even more the] young people’s group and fellowship, it is different from a father’s or parental guidance, as well as guidance from older brothers and sisters [in the church].” Joshua highlights the importance of being connected to the life of the church.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

## Joy

Joy is a woman in late middle age with adult children. Her husband has been an OFW for over two decades, and plans to keep on working for as long as he can. A daughter is also an OFW in another country. Joy coped by “praying and submitting everything to the Lord.” “I laid hands in prayer over my children and surrendered them to the Lord which He perfectly answered. *Walang napariwara* [No one went astray] or influenced by *barkadas* [bad company]. Joy receives financial support but “I do not know the exact salary of my husband. He has another woman and I know he gives part of his money to the other family for sustenance also.” Joy survives with the help of people in her church through “prayers. The pains and worries—the Lord took away. He really gives strength and courage.” “The OFW family needs a “strong spiritual foundation, especially both parents; otherwise many get entangled, down to the children. Only in the Lord can anyone stand.”<sup>198</sup>

## Kimberly

Kimberly is a young housewife who has been a church member for five years. Her husband left three years prior to work overseas in a skilled position. They have one child, a toddler. She rates the pastor or church a 4 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 corresponds to “very helpful.” Rather than resorting to personal contact, “I suggest that

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<sup>198</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

they have a website; we can reach out to him (the pastor) to seek advice and prayers.”

Kimberly recognizes the sacrifices made by those who leave their families to work abroad; “I suggest that the OFW and family take care of remittances because it is really hard to earn money abroad.” She follows her own advice through the use of a budget to control her spending; “I don’t usually buy what I want; I just buy what I need.”<sup>199</sup>

### Kyla

Kyla is a full-time housewife in late middle age. Her husband has been an OFW for over two decades, and is currently employed as an administrative and managerial worker. Their children are all adults, with only the youngest still living at home. Kyla has been a member for close to a decade of her church, which she regards as a welcoming place for OFW families. She considers the pastor/pastoral staff as the strongest asset of the church. The departure of her husband caused some difficulties but they were eventually able to adjust after the first few years. “Everything has been resolved by God’s grace.” There is, however, one issue that remains—“The pastor has already tried to reach out to my husband about salvation, but to no avail. He is closed to the gospel. My husband even spent five years in [the West]—he did not grow spiritually.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

### Maribel

Maribel is a married woman in early middle-age. She has been a member of her church for over a decade. She considers it a welcoming place for OFW families and credits the people there for helping her grow spiritually as a Christian. In fact, she views the fellowship she enjoys at church to be the number one factor that she likes most about the church. Her husband is a professional worker and has been an OFW for nearly two decades. Their current goal is this: “*para sa mga anak na sana makatapos sila ng pagaaral* [that our children may hopefully finish their studies].” *Medyo nakakaya ko naman ang magpalaki at magaruga sa mga bata kahit malayo ang daddy nila* [I am somewhat able to raise and care for the children even if their daddy is far away] through prayer. *Kinakausap ko sila lalo na ngayon nagiging dalaga o binata na ang mga bata* [I talk to them, especially now that they are turning into young adults]. *Kaya tutukan talaga* [Therefore, I really focus on them].”<sup>201</sup>

### Mary

Mary is a middle-aged housewife with children mostly in their teenage years. Her husband left the family to work overseas in a skilled position over a decade ago. Mary has been a member of her church for a few years and is actively involved in church life.

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<sup>201</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

Two factors helped her survive, her faith and her children. “*Pinapalangin ko at pinapa sa Dios na lang. Iniisip ko ang mga anak ko.* [I coped by praying and entrusting everything to God. I thought of my children.]” She believes that “*lahat nito ay lilipas din* [all these will come to pass].” He is also generous in supporting them financially; “He gives *buong sueldo* [his entire salary] and more. He is a good provider.”<sup>202</sup>

### Michael

Michael is a man who is in the unique position, among the respondents, of being the one left behind. His wife has worked overseas (for “many years” with “no definite plans” of returning to the Philippines permanently) and she has the rest of the family with her too. Michael describes his occupation, at middle age, as a “man at home, a ‘*pensionado*’ [pensioner/retiree] of OFWs. My family sends me money. “*Hindi ako nakikialam sa pera* [I do not interfere with money]. They give to me.” He is “active in church” and is involved with the outreach programs of his church.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

## Michelle

Michelle is a young, single woman. Even now as a young adult, Michelle acknowledges that “my dad and I have not really grown close. When I was younger, I was indifferent to him. Now that I am older, I realize and recognize the reasons why he had to go. I can also now appreciate what he goes through since we are not always with him.” It helped that “my mom did her part in reminding us and urging us to understand and give due respect to my dad. My dad also gives the effort to connect with us, his children.” Michelle formally joined her church less than four years ago. She believes that “OFW families need genuine member care and, more importantly, the spiritual aspect.” Michelle would like to see, as far as the church is concerned, “more comprehensive member care targeting OFW family members—welcoming them home during home visits, equipping, training offered—avoid the culture of ‘what can the OFW do for or give to the church.’”<sup>204</sup>

## Nicole

Nicole is a middle-aged woman who works outside the home in a professional capacity. She is a member of her church but does not remember when she joined. She likes most the preaching/teaching/Bible study available at church, followed by the

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<sup>204</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.)

pastor/pastoral staff, and the training programs/seminars. Her husband is getting close to a decade serving as an OFW. They have one child, a preteen. “I try to explain the best I could and am careful not to allow resentments and bitterness get the better of my daughter. I will always assure her of my love. She feels that the church can “help in understanding that her situation is not unique. That there are others out there, maybe in even worse situations than she is.” Nicole would like to see her church “provide counseling where requested/needed” as a way of helping OFW families. She considers her pastor and church to be very helpful, but she only asks them for support through intercessory prayers. Financial needs are directed elsewhere.<sup>205</sup>

### **Dominant Themes Among OFW Families**

#### **Separation, the Left-Behind Spouse, and the Marital Relationship**

The overall picture that emerges of the spouses left behind by OFWs is one that is characterized by struggle. Those left behind experience stress or tension in the process of adjusting to a new reality, one marked by the absence of someone who has usually been a constant presence among them.

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<sup>205</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

### *Resultant Emotions*

Separation is a form of loss that brings about grief for most. Five respondents out of 24 explicitly used the words “*mahirap*” or “difficult” in answering the question regarding how separation affected their relationship with the OFW spouse. A left-behind wife says that their extended separation as a family has not been easy. “It makes the relationship where it is, very distant.” Others expressed their reaction to loss through a variety of negative emotions: “*natatakot* [fearful],” “*nag-aalala* [worried],” *malungkot* [heavyhearted],” “*kinakabahan* [nervous]” and “lonely.” One finds the absence of her husband “hard because you long for love and companionship.” She experiences “sometimes feeling sad or lonely. The hardest part is that when you are in trouble or sad, you do not have [your husband] to give advice or to comfort you.” Another wife, reported that “[we do not have] the time to know and adjust to each other in terms of attitudes. *Ano ba ito?* [What is this?] Sometimes *nakakatakot* [frightening]; long absence, [I am] *nag aalala* [worried]. *Kumusta na kaya siya* [How is he]? *Sana hindi mainfluence* [He will hopefully not be influenced] by worldly things. Fear! Especially when you listen to many stories from relatives, miscommunications and conflicts. It is better if he is here, and [we] have knowledge of each other. My comfort is that if he fears God, *hindi siya gagawa ng mali* [he will not do anything wrong].” Her husband’s absence caused the left-behind wife to be sad [“*malungkot*”]. She stressed that this was the main issue that bothered her. “*Wala naming malaking issue. Nalulungkot lang dahil hindi buo ang family* [There is no major issue. I am sad simply because the family is not complete.]” One left-behind husband admits that separation is hard on him; “During departure ... emotional!



*Sa paghahatid sa airport, pag-uwi sa bahay akala mo nandiyan lang* [After seeing her off at the airport, you go home and still expect to see her there]. *Kung uwian na ... iisipin mo anong oras uuwi.* [At the end of an ordinary day and] it is time for people to head home, you wonder what time she will come home [but she does not].”

Another husband/father left in the Philippines says that being far away from his loved ones has taken its toll, although he can visit them for “up to 3 months every year.” It is “hard to explain in one sentence. My dignity is at stake. After skype<sup>206</sup> and chat, you feel the loneliness. The need to relate, there is no physical presence. You become emotional. It is a new situation, you see and chat with your grandchildren but you could not touch them, *lalo akong nalungkot* [I become even sadder].” He tries to communicate but it is just not enough. “I send text messages but I cannot exert my authority. *Hiwa-hiwalay kami* [We are far apart], cannot instill authority as parent. *Nasa malayo* [Far away].” He describes his relationship with his son as “somewhat estranged.” He compares himself to a single man, but credits the church for helping him to live in peace. “The situation—*ganun ang panahon eh* [it is a different time], am the manager “man at home” by the grace of God. Church has a big contribution *para maayos ang buhay* [toward making life orderly]. To be like an eligible and available “bachelor” *mahirap sa lalaki* [is difficult for a man]—*barkada* [bad company], *inom* [drink], temptation *lalo na sa gabi* [especially at night]. *Matalino naman ako at nakapag-aral, bakit hindi ako yung nandoon sa frontline* [I am smart and educated, why am I not the one on the frontline]?”

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<sup>206</sup> Colloquial Filipino often uses proprietary brand names as generic terms. The word “skype” could be used as a noun or a verb, referring to the use of computers for video calls or chats through Skype® itself or one of the many email services that offer that feature. In a similar fashion during earlier times, “kodak” meant a photo or was conjugated as a verb with regard to the act of taking photos, regardless of what brand of camera equipment was utilized.

They are blessed to bless me, *'pensionado'* [I regularly receive money] for myself and [my] ministry *ko*.”

A sense of abandonment can also plague the one left behind. “One week after our wedding, he left for work. Where would I be if I think only of myself? In those days, *parang gusto kong lumayas* [I felt like leaving/running away]. I sacrificed for my children.” One respondent expressed deep pain in saying that her OFW husband “*nagkaraon siya ng babae* [took a mistress].” Sometime during his years as an OFW, he developed a relationship with another woman. “My husband is not a Christian. He continues to live in the sin of adultery in [the country where he works]. He needs the Lord.” His infidelity had a great impact on her. She described it as a slow, excruciatingly painful death. “*Sobrang* [Extreme] pain, betrayal, *naloko* [it drove me out of my mind], killing me softly.”

There are also feelings of doubt; “I feel insecure because God joined us together, but because of financial difficulties we are away from each other.” “*Isa pang* [Another] concern *din na pag malayo, baka matukso* [is that if he is far away, he might be tempted]. I feel secure if he is around. *Kung kami lang sa bahay, baka may papasok* [If we are alone at home, an intruder might break in]. One time *kamuntik kami masunugan* [we almost had a fire], good *nandoon ang husband ko* [my husband was there] and God’s grace. His presence in the home is important.” It is not unusual for left-behind families to be “sometimes sad or feeling lonely;” emotions can likewise be ambivalent, “*malungkot na masaya* [sad yet happy].” In five instances, the OFWs’ departure did not affect their relationship; “*alam ko ang kalagayan ko, ang capacidad ko* [I know my situation, what I am capable of], secure with self,” “personally, not at all,” “*wala* [none],” “just the same,”

plus one case where the couple “were separated even before the geographical separation.”<sup>207</sup>

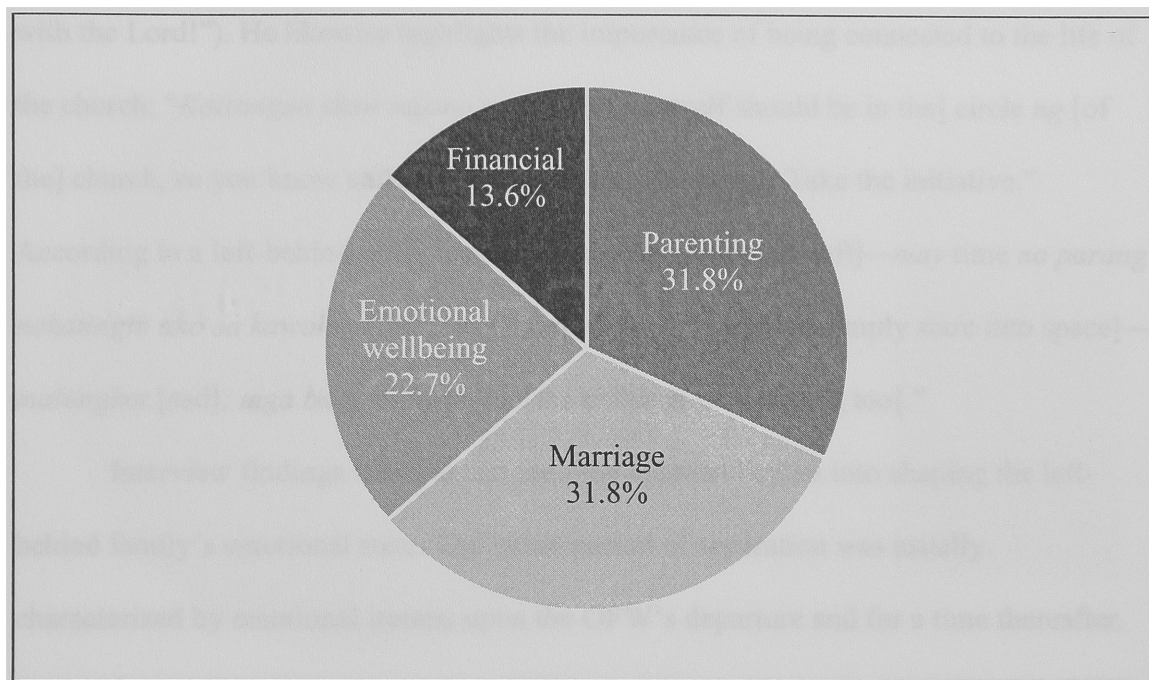


Figure 22. Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspective of OFW Families.

### *Coping Mechanisms*

The respondents rely on three primary coping mechanisms: (1) prayer; “*Pinapanalangin ko at pinapa Dios na lang* [I rely on prayer and entrust everything to God];” (2) communication, and (3) conscious choice of the will; “*Sa attitude na lang kung gusto mong malungkot o hindi; huwag na lang bigyan ng masyadong pansin* [It is a

<sup>207</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

matter of what attitude to adopt, whether you choose to be sad or not; just ignore it.” By God’s faithfulness and grace (“*katapatan at grace ni God*”), a left-behind husband feels able to overcome the emptiness caused by missing his wife (“Ministry fills the void and with the Lord!”). He likewise highlights the importance of being connected to the life of the church; “*Kailangan ikaw mismo nasa* [You yourself should be in the] circle *ng* [of the] church, so you know and can communicate your needs. Take the initiative.”

According to a left-behind wife, “*noong umalis siya* [when he left]—*may time na parang nakatingin ako sa kawalan* [there was a time when I seemed to simply stare into space]—*malungkot* [sad]; *mga bata umiiyak din* [the children were crying too].”

Interview findings indicate that the time element factors into shaping the left-behind family’s emotional state. The initial period of separation was usually characterized by emotional trauma upon the OFW’s departure and for a time thereafter. Respondents reported encountering a challenging time at the start of their lives as OFW families. The passage of time helps dull the pain and enables the left-behind to experience resignation to, acceptance of, or adjustment to the new status quo. Two different left-behind wives (with 20 and 22 years of separation from the OFW spouse, respectively) gave basically the same reply: “It was difficult at first *pero medyo nasanay na rin* [but I grew accustomed to it]” and “it was difficult for the first few years but well-adjusted now. We are more peaceful and happier than the first few years. I coped by soaking myself in God’s word.” Another copes by reminding herself that what she is going through “is for us.” She also finds solace with “the help of God and family members.” As a further means of coping, she recommends that, “based on my experience, I suggest [that others in similar situations] cultivate thankfulness.” Some also

employ a combined approach: one wife responds to misunderstandings by means of “prayer and *lakasan ang loob* [steeling oneself].”

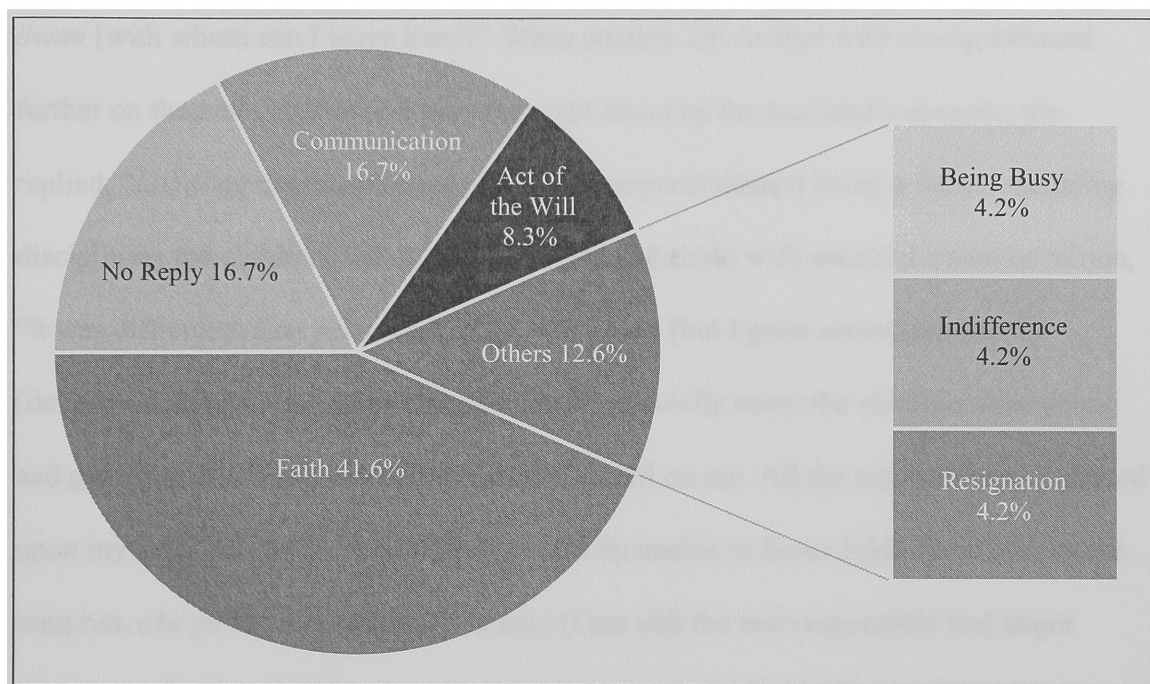


Figure 23. Coping Mechanisms by Left-Behind Families.  
(Note: By Percentage Based on 24 Responses)

### Single Parenting

The initial years prove to be particularly more prone to hardship as the husband and wife learn to adapt to new relational dynamics imposed by geographical distance. The absence of a key member of the family has ramifications on various aspects of the family and its individual members. Parenting is one area where adjustments have to be made. Whether or not the left-behind spouses are prepared to do so or not, they become

by default the acting heads of the family and are held responsible for consequences of whatever choices are made. “Decision making is on me; I do not want my child to grow up without his father; *parang kawawa* [seems pitiful]. I can’t work also, *kanino ko siya iiwan* [with whom can I leave him]?” When another left-behind wife was questioned further on the most challenging issue brought about by her husband’s absence, she replied, “*Lahat ng responsibilidad* [All of the responsibilities] being a father, including disciplining the children, fall on me.” A third left-behind wife sounded a similar refrain, “it was difficult at first *pero medyo nasanay na rin* [but I grew accustomed to it] (decision making). I had to be a single parent especially when the children were young and growing. The discipline of the children all fell on me. All the responsibility is placed upon my shoulder: father figure—substituted by uncles or *kuyas* [elder brothers]. In the long run, *ako pa rin ang sumasalo sa mga* [I am still the one responsible for] major decisions.” From a different perspective, however, she believes that her husband’s departure for work abroad “turned out to be a blessing because I brought my children to church where they were nurtured, *kung hindi, baka nasa Catholic Church sila* [if not, they might have ended up in the Catholic Church].” The left-behind spouse is forced to compensate for the absence of the OFW by taking on the duties and responsibilities of the missing parent. “*Malungkot. Ako ang nagiging tatay at nanay ng family. Kulang, wala ang ama para sa mga gawain sa bahay* [It is sad. I have to be both the father and the mother of the family. We are not complete; the father is not here to do his share of work at home].” Separation caused by at least one spouse’s employment as an OFW compels the husband and wife to reassess and even redefine their relational dynamics and the handling of household responsibilities, especially if children are involved.

Traditional Filipino culture has well-defined gender roles for the parents in a nuclear family.

Mothers were the ones largely responsible for caregiving, preparing the food, taking care of the house, helping with the children's school work, attending programs and meetings at school; disciplining the children; teaching the children about faith; teaching them good manners; and teaching them about what is right and wrong. Fathers were largely responsible for earning money, and sharing with mothers the tasks of disciplining the children and teaching them what is right and wrong.<sup>208</sup>

What does marital coregency mean when the husband and wife are separated by wide geographical distances? When the one left behind with the rest of the family is forced by circumstances to make most of the decisions that should be made by both? When they reunite for only a brief period, say, once a year? This is an area where the church can help OFW families gain tools as traditional gender roles are upended by the separation of spouses and parents and children. As a result, husbands/fathers and wives/mothers find themselves taking on responsibilities they are ill prepared for or disinclined to tackle.

Women's migration spurs the reconfiguration of the gender division of labour in transnational families, while the migration of men maintains it. Father-away migrant families usually mirror modern nuclear households. ... The transnational families of migrant men [are] unexpected sites of gender conflicts in the maintenance of intimacy. ... Intimacy is more of a challenge for migrant men to achieve with family in the Philippines than it is for migrant women. Their families suffer from emotional distance, because: generations operate in 'time pockets' that are 'outside the real time of the outside world;' migrant men do not accordingly adjust their

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<sup>208</sup> Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People-Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines /Apostleship of the Sea-Manila, Scalabrini Migration Center, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, *Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children* (Manila: Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004), 34.

performance of fathering to accommodate the needs created by distance; and fathers insist on maintaining gender-normative views of parenting.<sup>209</sup>

An earlier chapter noted the growing trend in the feminization of Philippine labor migration. Reports indicate that absence of the Filipino wife/mother exerts a greater influence on the family as compared to that of the Filipino husband/father.

The massive exodus of women—especially mothers and wives—has raised much concern about the stability of the family and the welfare of the children left behind. Mothers, after all, are acknowledged as the *ilaw ng tahanan* (light of the home) to complement fathers, who are the *haligi ng tahanan* (pillar of the home). As such, they tend to hold the family together better than the fathers. Studies have likewise shown that families have done well despite the absence of men because of the women who have taken up the slack.<sup>210</sup>

Relevant topics can include, for example, biblical principles on the definition of gender roles in the family within the context of culture, or effective communication for conflict prevention or resolution, or age-appropriate parenting.

As noted earlier, the OFWs are predominantly male in this study's sample, and most are fathers. Children, whether boys or girls, need a father or father figure especially in their formative years. Girls learn how to be treated with respect, honor, and dignity by men through their fathers. "[Our] Children are all girls and reaching teen age [years]; [they are] growing [up] with a dad who has another woman." Boys learn how to be men and how to treat women through their fathers. According to one left-behind wife/mother, "When my sons start asking about male matters, I give straightforward answers." "*Iba ang discipline ng ama* [Discipline by the father is different], especially *yung lalaki hindi*

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<sup>209</sup> Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Transnational Fathering: Gendered Conflicts, Distant Disciplining and Emotional Gaps," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 7 (September 2008): 1057.

<sup>210</sup> Alecks P. Pabico "OFW Special: Men as Mothers," Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, April 2, 2005, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://pcij.org/stories/men-as-mothers/>.



*nagpapagabi, sumusunod siya, at hindi labas nang labas* [for the son to not come home late, to be obedient, and to not always be out].<sup>211</sup>

### Communication and the OFW Family

One man blames the wide geographical distance that separates him and his OFW wife for “arguments sometimes when it comes to decision making.” Distance can bring about unbidden negative emotions, and these can hinder communication. “It makes the relationship where it is, very distant.” “Sometimes we have miscommunication. Misunderstandings are handled through long distance discussions.” “*Minsan sa layo ng partner mo, merong hindi pagkakaunawaan pero nasosolve din* [at times, because of how far your partner is, misunderstandings arise, but we are still able to resolve them].” Modern technology has progressed exponentially in the last decade or so. In some ways, geographical distance can be easily and even cheaply bridged by tools within reach of most Filipinos, primarily the use of mobile phones. The Philippines, as of mid-2013, ranked 13<sup>th</sup> worldwide in “the 100 million club: the top 14 mobile markets by number of subscriptions” with 113.2% of the population having a mobile subscription.<sup>212</sup> Personal communication with in situ proximity, however, has nuances that technological means cannot match, and this is what affects the left-behind families. A face-to-face discussion

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<sup>211</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

<sup>212</sup> “Global Mobile Statistics 2013 Part A: Mobile Subscribers Mobile Operators; Handset Market Share,” mobiThinking, December 2013, accessed February 22, 2014, <http://mobithinking.com/mobile-marketing-tools/latest-mobile-stats/a#subscribers>.

allows the parties involved full access to many factors that affect communication.

Communication involves not only words but also the tone of the voice, the eyes, facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture. The closest way of communicating while far apart that technology can currently offer is probably the online video chat. Nonetheless, it remains limited for one cannot reach out and touch the other person. A father separated from his children says, “I send text messages, but I cannot exert my authority. ... My relationship with my son is somewhat estranged.” “It is a new situation; you can see and chat with your grandchildren but you could not touch them—*lalo akong nalungkot* [I became even more depressed].”

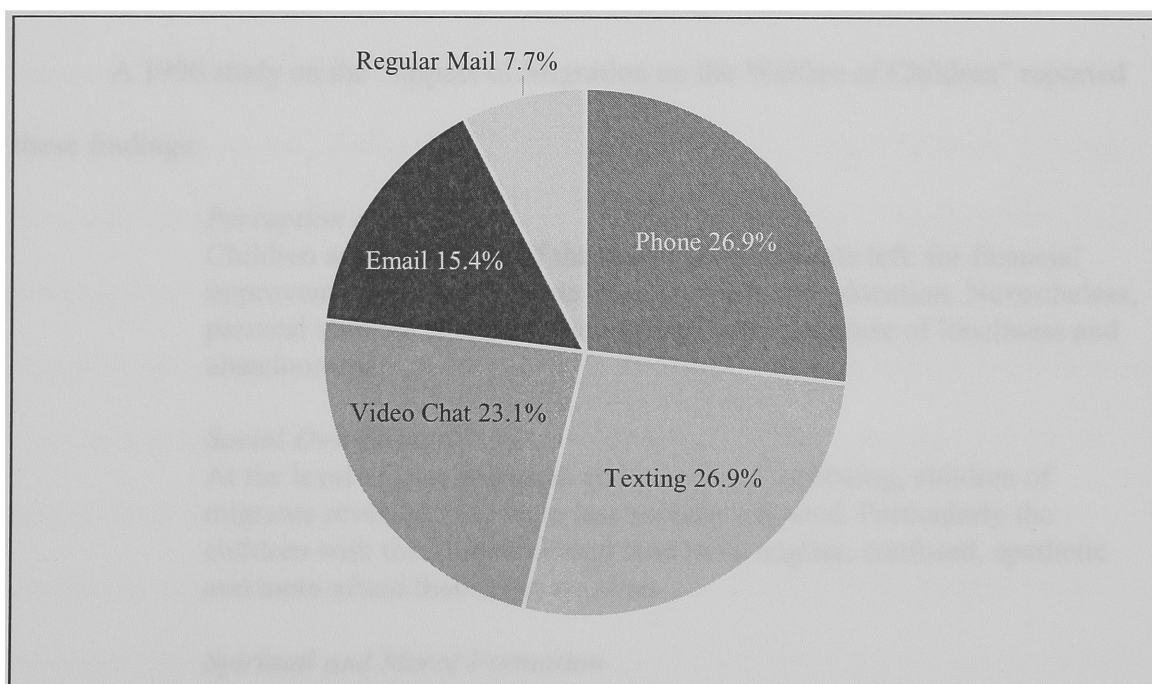


Figure 24. Popularity of Different Means of Communication Among OFW Families. (Note: Based on the number of times a means of communication is rated number 1 or most used by the family.)

## Separation and the Left-Behind Children

Young children can become the unwitting casualties of separation when parents leave with the children having no voice in the decisions made by the parents regarding becoming an OFW family. It is also possible that children may not be developmentally prepared, cognitively or emotionally, to deal with the consequences of decisions made by their parents.

Children of migrants were asked if their family had ever discussed why their parents went abroad; only 51.7 said yes. Children with two parents abroad appear to have been more involved in discussions about their parents' departure than children from other migrant families. A substantial number of children thus appear to have been left out in the decision-making of their parents concerning migration.<sup>213</sup>

A 1996 study on the “Impact of Migration on the Welfare of Children” reported these findings:

### *Perception of Migration*

Children are well aware of the reasons why parents left: for financial improvements and to provide them with a better education. Nevertheless, parental absence is experienced particularly as a sense of loneliness and abandonment.

### *Social Development*

At the level of psychological and emotional wellbeing, children of migrants revealed they were less socially adjusted. Particularly the children with the mother abroad tend to be angrier, confused, apathetic and more afraid than other children.

### *Spiritual and Moral Formation*

The absence of parents does not have a decisive negative impact on the spiritual and moral formation of the children. First, some of the parents continue to remain the children's guides even from abroad. Second, the substitutes (particularly the extended family members) exercise a positive

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<sup>213</sup> Episcopal Commission et. al., 21.

role in this regard. However, the absence of the mother is felt much more, both because fathers do not provide adequate care in spiritual formation and because the extended family members who help the father do not become sufficiently involved in the spiritual formation of the children. The situation is better when both parents are absent, because children become part of the extended family and adjust to the practices of the family.

*The Migrant Family*

The absence of parents working abroad modifies the characteristics of the family the children live in. Specifically, members of the extended family become involved. In fact, relatives are in the children's family in 25 percent of the cases when no parent is abroad, 39 percent when the father is abroad, 62 percent when the mother is abroad and 89 percent when both parents are abroad.<sup>214</sup>

“At first *magkakasama* [we were together]. Now that the children are teenagers, *nagkakaiba na ang mundo* [the world has changed]. *Minsan nangangamba ako na masanay na sila na walang tatay* [Sometimes I worry that they might get used to not having a father around]. *Kulang ang* [The] relational bond with their father [is lacking]. *Sinusulit nila kung nandiyan ang tatay nila* [They make the most of the time when their father is here]. *Ako ang nagpupuno ng kulang* [I fill the gap]. *Lahat ng ibibiling mga bagay at mga pangangailangan, sa mga gamit, doon sila attentive sa tatay nila* [They are most attentive to their father when they have wants and needs]. *Kahit inaantok ako at pagod, hinihintay ko ang 11:30 PM* (due to the time difference) *para maka skype at maikwento ang mga magagandang bagay para hindi madepress or malungkot kundi mainspire* [Even if I am sleepy and tired, I wait for 11:30 PM so that we can skype and I can give him good news that will inspire rather than depress or sadden him]. I have to be

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<sup>214</sup> Graziano Battistela and Ma. Cecilia G. Conaco, “Impact of Migration on the Children Left Behind,” *Asian Migrant* 9, no. 3 (1996): 88-90.

strong as a mother and an example, and avoid temptations.” In one family, “when the children search for a father figure or attention,” their mother responds by “talking to the kids and keeping an open line of communication.” She does not observe any major issues caused by her husband’s absence. “When my sons start asking about male matters. I give straight forward answers. They can also ask their church shepherd.” As mentioned in the preceding section, one father rued the “somewhat estranged” relationship he had with his son.

In another family, the daughter left behind longed for her absent father. “My dad has been an OFW ever since I was a kid.” A professional technical worker, her father has been away from the family for nearly three decades. She yearns for her father while at the same time recognizing the need for him to be away from the family. Compensating through rationalization, however, is never good enough since emotional needs are left unmet. “My earliest memory, when he came home for vacation, I would not welcome him because he was a stranger to me.” “Because my mom went to be with my dad for most of the year, I had to learn how to budget and take care of household matters in Manila during college. Since we are not normally close to our parents, there were events in our life (college days) that I could not express for fear of disapproval. I am just not comfortable sharing things with them, so I endured and coped on my own.”

A mother “feels sorry for my daughter who is growing up without her father by her side to share her special moments with. As the child grows, the longing for a father’s love gets more intense. At the end of the day, I would admit that I could never fill in the void that my daughter feels, created by the distance between her and her father. But I

would always assure her of my love.” “The ‘why’s’ of a child” is most challenging for the mother.

A wife/mother knows that the children too are affected by their father’s absence; “*medyo naapektuhan ang mga bata kasi hindi nila nakakasama ang ama nila, pero nauunawaan naman nila na kaya nasa malayo ang daddy nila ay para din sa kanila* [the children are somewhat affected too because their father is not with them, but they understand that their daddy is away for their own benefit].

“*Malaki ang epekto sa mga apo ko. Pareho ang ama at ina ng mga apo ko; dinadaan sa pera ang mga bata.* [The effect on my grandchildren is great. The father and mother of my grandchildren are the same; they resort to money for the children (in order to compensate for their absence)].”<sup>215</sup>

There is a trade-off between money and adult time when one or both parents work abroad. Simply put, less time spent with children are compensated with more money that their parents send. In addition, children’s satisfaction only improved when both money and adult time/attention provided to them increased.<sup>216</sup>

### OFW Remittances and the Family

The funds sent back by the OFWs to their families back in the Philippines represent for many the main reason for leaving in the first place. Money generated by

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<sup>215</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

<sup>216</sup> Claudette S. Malana, “OFW Children: Wanting for More Attention”, *Development Research News* 26, no. 2 (March - April 2008): 2, accessed February 28, 2014, <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/drm/pidsdrn08-2.pdf>.

overseas employment symbolizes the way by which each family's dreams or life goals may be achieved. In the experience of some OFW families, money does indeed enable them to realize what they aim for. "The quality of our life is better. We now have our own house. We can give some gifts to relatives. *Mabibili ang mga pangangailangan ng mga bata* [we are able to afford the needs of the children], like schooling in private schools; the next level is college education." "*Nakatulong na makapag-aral ang mga anak* [It allowed the children to study]. *Nakatapos na ang tatlo* [Three have already finished]. Eldest, vocational; third child is an engineer; second child finished a degree in psychology; the fourth, a computer degree (IT); and the youngest is still in college." For one family, money sent by the husband/father has definitely improved the quality of their life; "*Malaki ang ipinagbago dahil nakapag-aral ang mga anak*" [It made a huge difference because the children were able to go to school]." For some others, money per se brought in by being an OFW did not turn out to be the panacea they envisioned it to be. "I think it helped a lot but mom said that, over the years, \$400 wasn't enough anymore." "I need to control the inflow-outflow of finances, proper management when others tease me '*mayaman ka na ngayon* [you are now rich].' It is hard to know what to do with money, *mga babayaran* [we have many bills to pay]." Some use budgeting as a tool for keeping track of expenditures. One mother and her young son manage to live on 15% of her husband's income. While he remits 85% of his earnings, 75% goes toward repayment of debt related to the cost of becoming an OFW. A number of families recognize the need to formulate an exit plan that would permit the OFW to come home to the Philippines permanently, perhaps to retire, while in some way maintaining their improved standard of living. They would appreciate help learning about options open to

them on how to save, and then investing their savings, as in setting up a business. “We are thinking of how to invest for our old age days.” “I am thinking of investing in condominiums so that when his job is finished, we have income generating investments. I want to help my husband by having my own business.” “Savings are mostly/always used in unexpected situations/emergencies.” “*Kinukulang din minsan* [Money is tight once in a while].” “We need seminars in church on financial management.”<sup>217</sup>

### **Left-Behind OFW Families’ Suggestions for the Church**

Feedback provided by the heads of the OFW families reveal that, taken as a whole, they see their churches as having many positive characteristics. As one respondent remarked, “church members and pastors are always cheerful. They smile and greet you every time you meet them and it feels like you have a very big family despite the absence of loved ones since they are working abroad.” When given eight features of the church (pastoral staff, preaching/teaching/bible study, worship/music, prayer ministry, fellowship, training/seminars, small groups, and child/youth ministry), those in the top three ranked most often as number one are: (1) preaching/teaching/Bible study, (2) fellowship, and (3) prayer ministry and pastoral staff (tied).

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<sup>217</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.



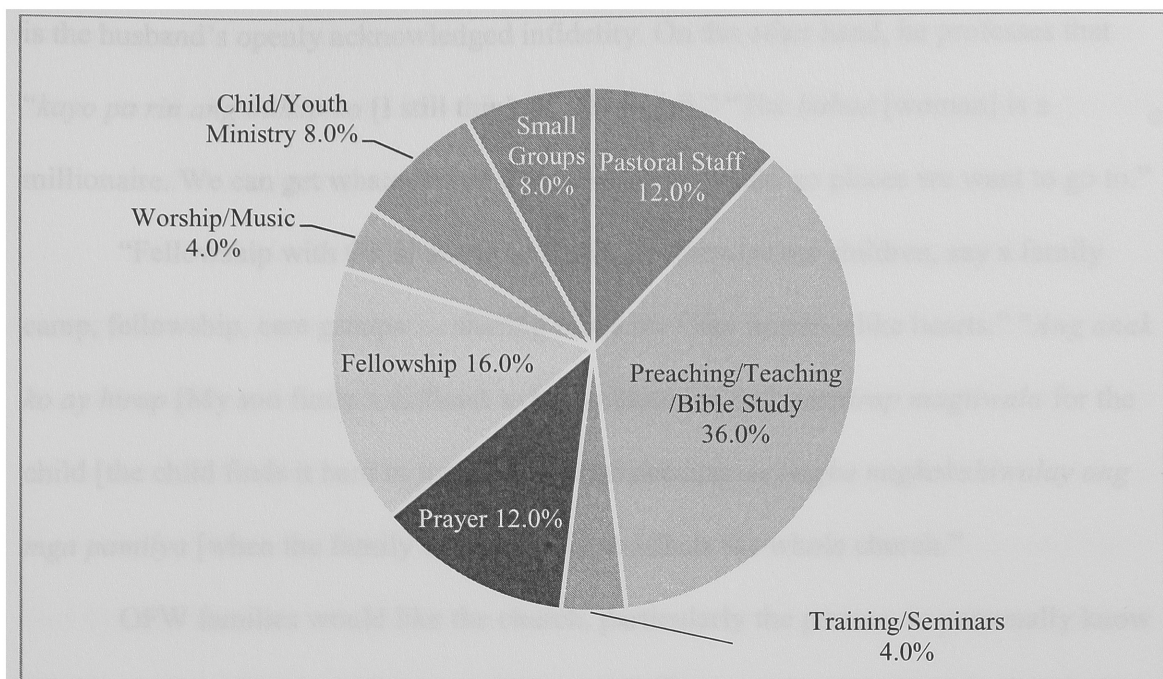


Figure 25. Aspects of the Church Ranked First as “the Best Part that You Like Most About Attending Church.”

Parents with young children are pleased that churches offer different age-appropriate groups that provide fellowship and discipleship. “Sunday—*malaking bahagi ang tulong ng church* [Sunday represents a major portion of the church’s help].” Nonetheless, there are proposals to improve their experience in and with the church. They would also like the church to organize “more parenting seminars,” opportunities for the families to get together, and counseling and guidance services. Churches should also be prepared to assist OFW families find help outside when cases arise where help is needed that exceeds the limits of what they can provide. In one instance of infidelity, the left-behind wife/mother is able to get help for the children, but not for herself. She feels that she “can’t talk to anyone.” Her husband’s infidelity still weighs heavily on her heart and mind. “I need professional support ... wish to talk to a psychologist doctor.” On one hand

is the husband's openly acknowledged infidelity. On the other hand, he professes that “*kayo pa rin ang iniisip ko* [I still think of all of you].” “The *babae* [woman] is a millionaire. We can get whatever we want to buy and could go places we want to go to.”

“Fellowship with OFW wives will help ... likewise the children, say a family camp, fellowship, care groups ... sharing times for “like minds—like hearts.” “*Ang anak ko ay hirap* [My son finds it difficult to be] without his dad; *mahirap magtiwala* for the child [the child finds it hard to trust].” “Special needs arise *pagka nagkakahiwalay ang mga pamilya* [when the family breaks apart]; it affects the whole church.”

OFW families would like the church, particularly the pastors, to personally know them by name. “Constant visitation and prayer.” The same is true with regard to their family members who are working abroad. The church should know them too and minister to them. “Get to know members (OFWs) so they can advise ... a ministry to send messages and notes of encouragement to OFWs; a longing that OFWs are remembered; awareness of their needs, networks and that they are prayed for.” When OFWs are about to leave or have returned, whether for the first time or the last or anytime in-between, a pastor or staff member from the church usually visits and prays for the OFW or even attend the *despedida* [farewell] or *bienvenida* [homecoming or welcome] parties. “If pastors would be physically present for an OFW is best.” The left-behind spouse would appreciate ministry to the OFW even more. “When my husband is in Manila, I like him to be fed with the word of God one-on-one. There are many temptations out there.” “Programs for OFWs, especially when the one who is abroad will come home for vacation. When they are home—*aalagaan din sila* [care for them too]—*tutok sa* [focused on the] special needs of the OFWs returning home; invest in them also.” They see

technology as a tool that can be used to bridge the distance between the OFWs and their home church. “It will be nice to have a church web site created where the church service will be aired so they can participate at the same time.”

OFW families would like to see the church take the initiative of establishing a ministry specifically designed for OFWs and their families. “Creation of a ministry for them *para matutukan at* [that is focused and] intentional, especially those with low wage earners abroad and illegal OFWs.” “I think there should be a ministry for OFW families.” Furthermore, they also wish to know and fellowship with other OFW families and feel that the church should ideally be the organizer of such opportunities for getting together. “Fellowship not once but monthly.” They need a support group for mutual encouragement. A word of caution is given. Any OFW ministry set up by the church should be a serious, committed endeavor. “*Sana hindi* [Hopefully, it will not be] *‘ningas cogon’*”<sup>218</sup> for the launching of the OFW ministry. May it not just be talk . . . when someone is in need or burdened—*iniiwasan naman* [they are avoided]; may it not be for personal convenience . . . there is too much rhetoric but they run away from duty.” “Based on many instances of broken OFW families, *sa* visitation *at kung lalapit sila* [during visitation and if they initiate contact]—*puwede makatulong ang church* [the church can help]. To those who seek help—*matutulungan sila* [they can be helped]—*mahirap minsan di pansin* [it is hard, sometimes they are ignored].” “*Busy na po ang mga pastors sa dami ng duties nila* [The pastors are already busy with so many duties].

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<sup>218</sup> “*Ningas cogon*” is a Filipino idiom which refers to the tendency of beginning a task or project with great enthusiasm and perhaps even fanfare, but thereafter interest quickly nosedives and the task never reaches completion. “*Ningas*” means to spark or start burning. “*Cogon*” is a grass that burns brightly but briefly.

*Sana mai-assign sa mga officers ang ibang ministries* [Perhaps other ministries can be assigned to officers].”<sup>219</sup>

### Summary

Families left behind usually go through a time best described as “difficult” with the departure of an OFW member. The norm of having an intact family is disrupted by the loss of a valued member. The result is a period of disequilibrium characterized by feelings such as fear, worry, loneliness, or sadness. The remaining family members resort to various coping mechanisms, some negative (such as substance abuse or materialism), and some positive (such as prayer or involvement with church support groups). Marital, parental, and financial issues are major concerns. Communication, a shared faith, and mutual trust contribute to a positive OFW family experience. OFW families would like to perceive the church as supportive of them, equipping them with biblical teaching that they can use in their lives, with leaders who personally know, visit, and care about them.

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<sup>219</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Survey Responses from Pastors and Staff on Church Programs for OFW Families**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents another look, beyond the earlier overview, into the findings gleaned from the research survey and interviews of the pastors and lay staff members with regard to how their respective churches relate to the left-behind OFW families among them. (Please refer to “Interview Protocol for Acting Heads of OFW Families” and “Interview Protocol for Pastors or Church Workers Directly Involved in Ministry to OFW Families” in Appendices B and C, respectively.)<sup>220</sup>

All surveys and interviews in the four churches were conducted identically, and used the same questionnaires for the acting heads of OFW families and the church workers, as applicable. However, responses garnered, whether written or verbal, did not result in uniform data from the participants due to differences in interpretation of terminology and assumptions about the need for and composition of OFW ministry. The data revealed may therefore not always be complete for all the churches and families.

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<sup>220</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May 2013.

## Description of Individual Church Results

### Church A

Church A does not have a separate structure purposed specifically for ministry to OFWs and their families. They do however employ an informal structure through which OFWs and their families are covered by the same programs and resources available to all who regard Church A as their home church, “including prayer for those who are departing.” The pastors and church staff who took part in the research have a combined total of 15 years of ministry experience with this congregation. Three contemporary worship services are held every Sunday—two in the morning, with time for Bible study in between, and one at night, plus one on Friday nights twice a month. Small groups play a key role in member care. In this way the worship services accommodate Filipinos from different regions and major language groups of the country. There are also three separate groups for the youth, classified by age from the pre-teens to teens to those in college.

It is estimated that roughly half of the 10 to 12 OFW families in the church are in need of some form of help. Issues cover parenting, marriage, resource management, and spiritual matters; but church leaders consider parenting left-behind children as the most pressing need of their OFW families. However, in general the families “seldom” initiate contact with the pastors to ask for aid.

Conversely, given the absence of a formal OFW ministry in the church, programs and services that could be particularly helpful to OFW families are not especially publicized among them, and neither is anyone even informally responsible for looking

after them. Leadership sees the small number of OFW families in the church as a major consideration in determining the justification for implementing a formal OFW ministry. One church leader agreed that “the church should include OFWs in its ministry.” However, another pointed out that “we have yet to see a real contextual need. So far we are not too aware of the needs of their families because most of our members are non-OFW families.” “If there are enough families to minister to, then we will create a more intentional and structured program, such as support groups for both emotional and financial management.” Should the church decide to set up an OFW ministry, it is believed that “ministering to OFWs should not be treated as just a way of gathering data or just an objective that needs to be achieved. It should be truly sincere and not superficial.”<sup>221</sup>

### Church B

Church B has three Sunday morning worship services and one in the evening. In addition, there are also midweek evening services and an early morning Saturday time for prayer. Training in leadership is also available, with seminars on various topics, such as hermeneutics and theology, held on a regular basis through the year. There are groups for children, teens, young adults, adult men, adult women, seniors, and a deaf ministry that meet regularly. Furthermore, there are volunteer opportunities for campus ministries with

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<sup>221</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May 2013.

local schools, both on the elementary and high school levels. Discussion guides for facilitating small group meetings are posted regularly on the church's website.

Two pastors and the lay head of the OFW ministry were interviewed. They had, as of the interview dates, a total of 30 years involvement with Church B. The Membership and Pastoral Care Pastor and the OFW Ministry Coordinator constitute the two-person Core Team of the OFW Ministry, while the Missions Director oversees the ministry as a whole. Church B has 50 to 100 OFW families; 5 to 15 of them were known to church leaders as in need of help at the time the interviews were held. In describing the manner by which families initiate a request for help, the leaders responded using these words: "suppressed," "as needed," and "call or text message or social network." According to these respondents, family relationships represent a major concern of OFW families in their church. These include marriage issues for the spouses and parenting/nurturing for the children, plus spiritual matters for the whole family. Their OFW ministry, for OFW families, consists of member care and training in missions, evangelism, and leading small groups. Member care takes many forms, including small groups, prayer, counseling, an OFW Camp for families, and a "welcome/sendoff ministry" for the OFWs.

Church B recognizes the value of having ties with outside organizations that share their vision for OFW ministry. They have partnered with the Global Filipino Network and the OFW Ministry Desk of the Philippine Missions Association in the process of forming their own OFW ministry.

The OFW ministry of Church B is considered to be "still in its preparatory and launching stage" a year after its official start. Succinctly stated, their dual yet



complementary goals are ministry **to** OFWs and their families (“to provide proper member care for tentmakers [goers] and their family members, OFWs and their family members”), and ministry **by** OFWs and their families (“to send tentmakers”).<sup>222</sup>

### *Ministry To OFW Families*

Ministry to OFWs is counted as part of member care; “we do not consider OFW ministry as a separate or single entity. It is our desire and prayer that this be adopted by the wide church.”<sup>223</sup> Church B has the added benefit, in addition to the pastors’ ministry, of having “those whose family members are also OFWs and those whose families are already intact or complete [with returned OFWs]” also serving the left-behind OFW families, under the supervision of the OFW Ministry Coordinator and in turn the Associate Pastor responsible for membership. This is practicing the priesthood of all believers as described in 1 Peter 2:5-9.

The vision is for the church as the family of God to care for and love one another. Members “are all working together with all the existing ministries within [Church B] including the OFW Ministry. That’s why we hold once a month membership meetings to give updates, testimonials, comments, suggestions on those ministries with the purpose of uniting to one common goal as stated in our church Mission Vision.” Those who serve must have a “heart for ministry, and [undergo] basic training like witnessing, evangelism,

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<sup>222</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May 2013.

<sup>223</sup> Church B OFW Ministry Desk Coordinator, e-mail message to the author, March 7, 2014.

counseling, and ... leading a small group.”<sup>224</sup> Prayer, counseling, and small group meetings are some specific ways by which OFW ministry is implemented.

### *Ministry By OFW Families*

To Church B, ministry by OFWs is an outgrowth of not only the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), but also of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) and the church’s own vision statement. This vision embodies community discipleship and empowerment resulting in church multiplication. It is a Christ-centered approach that sees Christian OFWs as “potential missionaries/tentmakers ... for cross-cultural missions” and as “a potent prayer and mission force in the countries where they are situated.”<sup>225</sup> The church’s member care functions as the seedbed for preparing OFWs and their families through discipleship. The central person who makes the whole ministry run smoothly is the OFW Ministry Desk Coordinator who serves with the guidance of the Associate Pastor (Membership and Pastoral Care Pastor) and draws passion for this ministry from years as an OFW in the past. Parenting and spiritual growth represent the major areas of concern with regard to their OFW families.

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<sup>224</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May 2013.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

## Church C

The Administrative Pastor and another pastor minister to OFWs and their families. Together, the two pastors have a total of 8 years of service at the church. With an average Sunday worship attendance of close to two hundred, the church has 11 OFW families, all of which were at the time considered in need of help in some form. The “pastoral staff and elders” take care of ministry to left-behind OFW families. As perceived by the pastors, the major issues that OFW families face cover mostly emotional and spiritual health and parenting concerns. Church C offers discipleship and counseling programs to OFWs and their families within the congregation as part of the programs available to all members and adherents. In instances such as illness or unemployment, OFWs and their families avail themselves of help from the church in the form, for example, of prayer, counseling, or monetary assistance. Those in need prefer to use “SMS or phone calls” in order to contact someone among the pastoral staff in asking for help. The pastors also reach out and minister to the faraway OFWs by way of, in their words, “constant communication, encouragement through emails, greetings, counseling, and prayers.”<sup>226</sup> Based on the need involved, Church C has on occasion partnered with other churches within their denomination for OFW ministry; additional information on this was not received despite efforts.

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<sup>226</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May 2013.

## Church D

The Administrative Pastor, the Director for Member Care, and the Head of the Widows' Ministry took part in the study. They have been with the church for a cumulative total of 37 years. Church D is located in a suburb within the Greater Manila Area. It is the largest among the four churches in the study's sample group in terms of average worship attendance with 1,500 to 2,000 per week. Worship services in English and Tagalog are held three times each Sunday, twice in the morning, and once in the late afternoon. It has no firm data regarding the number of OFWs and their families within the church, although the Administrative Pastor estimated that there were more than 10. In like manner, Church D has "no programs or resources specifically earmarked for OFW families." The church offers a variety of "ministry groups, Bible study and discipleship groups [that] are family oriented which include" groups for children, youth, single mothers and widows; all groups are meant "for mutual care and encouragement." Church leaders "try to connect members and OFW families in the church through small groups and the various ministries that they can be involved with." Ministry to OFW families is performed by "almost everybody because [Church D] is a family-oriented church and a healthy community for every family." There is no specialized OFW ministry; it is "not well-defined, but to my knowledge, OFW families who have known the Lord" minister to OFW families in the church. Church D "ensures lines are always open to communicate with OFWs and to all our people through internet, Facebook, and other forms of communication. They [can] always [use the] church website any time to communicate with us to ensure that everyone is connected with one another. Through modern

communication facilities, OFWs can contact our church pastors and leaders any time of the day 24/7 for counseling.”<sup>227</sup> Help with matters dealing with the marital relationship and the parenting of left-behind children are priorities for the church in ministering to OFW families.

### **Major OFW Issues from the Perspective of Church Leaders**

Pastoral and lay staff members, based on their perception as servant-leaders of the churches, were asked to name the top 5 major issues that OFW families face where they serve. Dilemmas related to parenting, such as discipline, juvenile delinquency, lack of a father image, and leadership in the home, constituted 36.2% of the total. The emotional toll exacted by the absence of the OFW family member ranked second at 21.3%, followed by difficulties encountered in the marital relationship at 17.0%. Loneliness was the single most common negative feeling reported. Matters that pertain to marriage included lack of communication or miscommunication, infidelity or broken relationships. Given that most if not all of the inimical emotions are due to marital problems, combining the two segments, emotional wellbeing (or lack of it) and marriage-related concerns, would result in the lion’s share at 38.3% of all the main issues that confront OFW families. Financial matters include money issues and the need to learn resource

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<sup>227</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May 2013.

management. Spiritual subjects (“spiritual growth” and “spiritual/church life inconsistency”) ranked fifth and substance abuse (“drug addiction/alcoholism”) last.

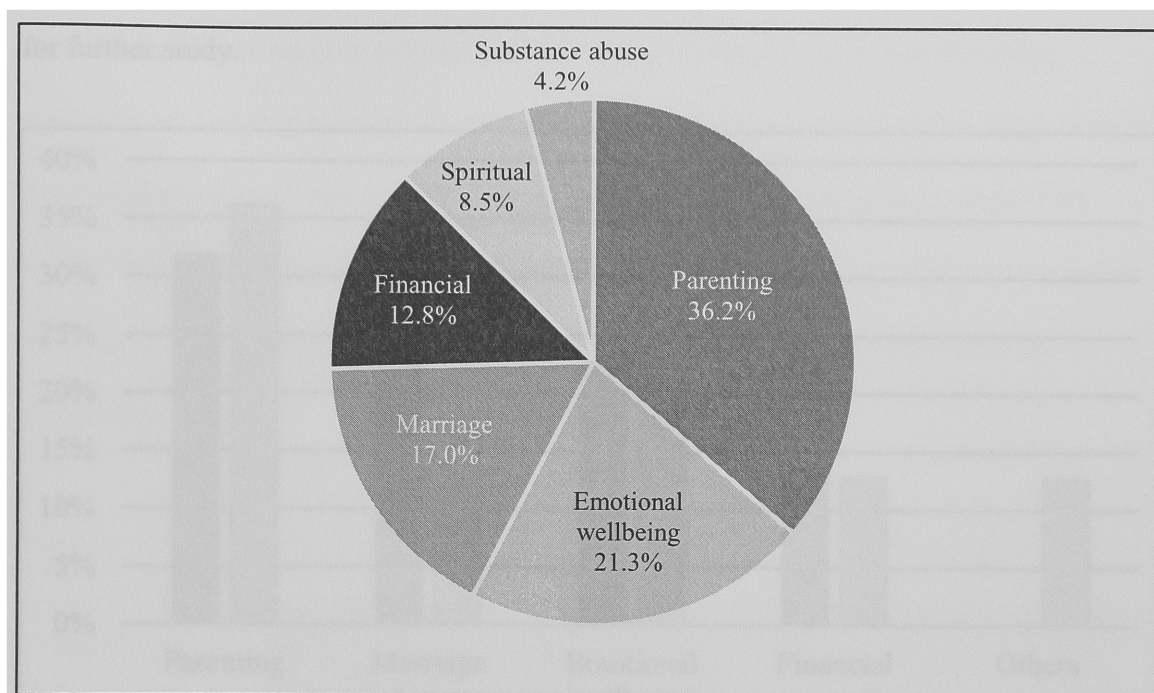


Figure 26. Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspective of Church Leaders.

### **Comparison of Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspectives of OFW Families and Church Leaders**

Responses by both sets of stakeholders, OFW families and church leaders, agreed on the top four aggregations of issues that face OFW families, namely issues on parenting, marriage, emotional wellbeing, and finances. The other issues mentioned exclusively by church leaders consisted of substance abuse (drug addiction and alcoholism) and spiritual concerns (“spiritual/church life inconsistency”). Parenting,

emotional, and financial issues from both perspectives were roughly close in relative weight. Marital issues were nearly twice as prevalent from the OFW families' standpoint as against the church leaders' point of view. Reasons behind this difference can be a topic for further study.

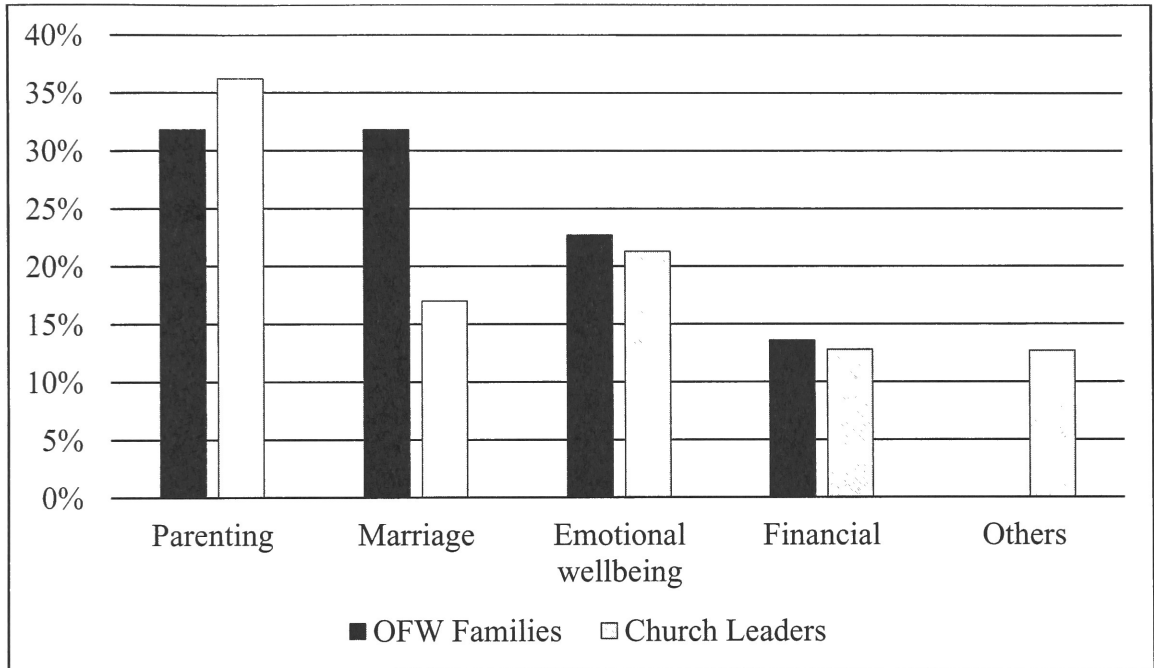


Figure 27. Comparison of Major OFW Family Issues from the Perspectives of OFW Families and Church Leaders.

### OFW Family Issues and Time

The following chart depicts an attempt at portraying a possible correlation between major issues that left-behind OFW families experience and the time periods (in 5-year spans) of separation from the OFW family member. The chart indicates, for example, the prevalence of parenting issues for the first ten years, followed by a sizable

drop in the third quinquennial period. It is, however, inadvisable to draw any definitive conclusion based on this chart due to its limitations, including: (1) a limited sample size, (2) the fact that the questionnaire, which provided the raw data, was not designed to classify data based on time periods, and (3) correlation does not necessarily imply a causative relationship between the two variables of issue and time. Further, interviewees' emotional states may relate to either parenting, marriage, or some other unspecified issues. The part of the bar chart for the period of 16-20 years refers to only one response each that relates to parenting and marriage issues, respectively, and can therefore be misleading.

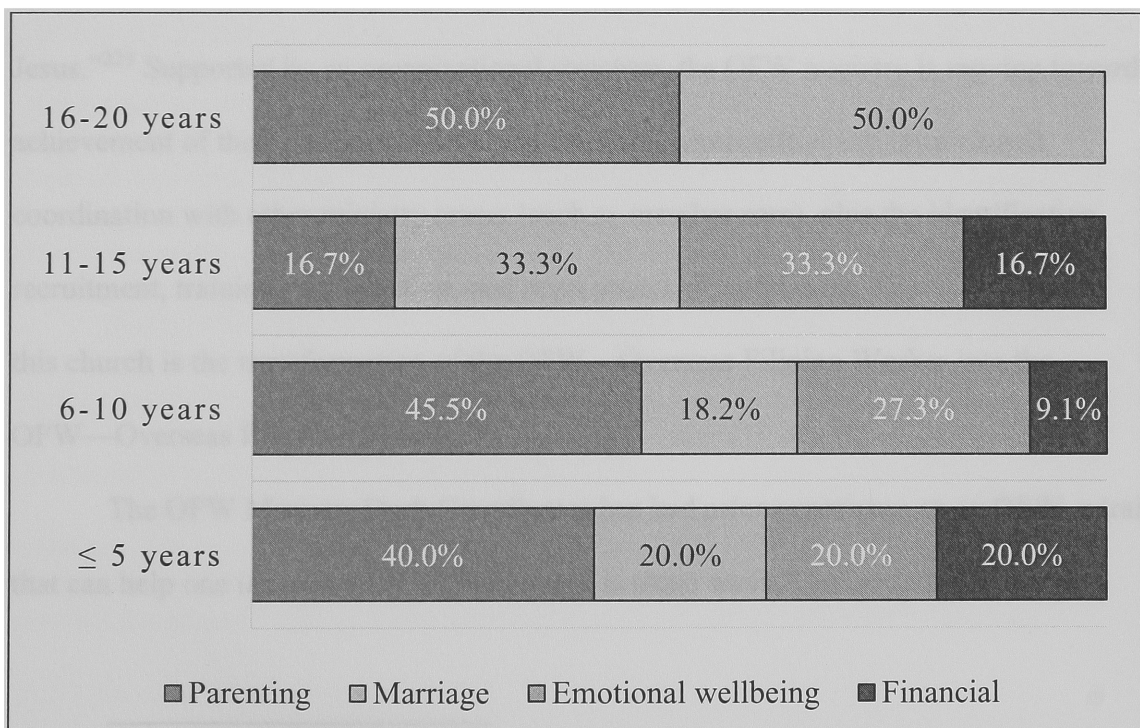


Figure 28. Major OFW Family Issues Correlated with Years of Separation From the OFW.



## Findings

Only Church B has an OFW ministry designed especially with OFWs and their families in mind. The ministry has a twofold purpose. The first is member care for this segment of the church body, including discipleship and spiritual growth. The second involves development of a mission-oriented mindset (with the help, for example, of the Kairos Course)<sup>228</sup> so that they can be active participants in fulfilling the Great Commission as missionaries/tentmakers.

The established OFW ministry is continuously undergoing evaluation and refinement. Its purpose statement is as follows: “Caring, Empowering and Building OFWs and their families in pursuit of transformed living and excellent service in Christ Jesus.”<sup>229</sup> Supported by an organizational structure, the OFW ministry is moving toward achievement of their goals including ministry team composition and intra-church coordination with other ministry teams (such as member care), plus the identification, recruitment, training, mobilization, and deployment of tentmakers. The overall aim of this church is the transformation of the OFW—Overseas Filipino Worker into the OFW—Overseas Filipino Witness.<sup>230</sup>

The OFW Ministry Desk Coordinator has had prior experience as an OFW, a trait that can help one identify with OFW families in some ways. The empathy of one who

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<sup>228</sup> “About Kairos,” Kairos: God, the Church and the World, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.kairoscourse.org/course-descriptions>.

<sup>229</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May, 2013.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

ministers help and healing based on a shared pain has an extra dimension that makes it different from and perhaps deeper than, compassion alone. Jesus exemplified the perfect “wounded healer.” It would be ideal if OFW ministries could have personnel who have known first-hand what life is like as an OFW or OFW family. A staff member from another church echoed a similar line of thought: “Ministers for OFWs should have experienced being an OFW to be able to fully relate to the one ministered to.”<sup>231</sup>

In the case of Church B, the desire to have an OFW ministry existed for years before it materialized. Clearly, intent is not enough. It took a firm conviction directed by God for the ministry to become reality.

Leaders of the rest of the churches in the study intimated that OFWs and their families are important to them. Further, they also believe that, despite lack of a ministry within their respective churches meant specifically for OFWs and families, from their point of view they already take care of this segment of their congregations through all the church resources currently available to every member and adherent.

Kelly O’Donnell and Dave Pollock’s model for member care can serve as a starting point for considering approaches to OFW ministry.<sup>232</sup> Designed with missionaries in mind, the O’Donnell-Pollock model encompasses the totality of ideal member care. It consists of five concentric circles with “Master care” (“care from and care for the Master” acting as the core and foundation of all other forms of care.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Interviews with pastors and other church staff, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, March-May, 2013.

<sup>232</sup> Kelly O’Donnell, ed., *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library Pub, 2002), 16.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

“Master care” is followed by additional layers of care as the circles expand outward: 2<sup>nd</sup>—self care/mutual care (peers), 3<sup>rd</sup>—sender care (mission agency), 4<sup>th</sup>—specialist care (pastoral, logistical, etc.), and 5<sup>th</sup>—network care (“international member care networks”).<sup>234</sup>

A way of translating this into OFW ministry is to see, still with God at the center, the spheres in (2<sup>nd</sup>) the OFW and OFW family, (3<sup>rd</sup>) the church, (4<sup>th</sup>) specialist care (counselors, lawyers, social workers, etc.), and (5<sup>th</sup>) international organizations that serve OFWs. This OFW care model (Appendix E) offers some advantages in that it can function with existing resources, it is feasible with both general and specialized approaches to OFW ministry, and it is flexible enough to adapt to different church conditions such as in terms of congregational size and socio-economic composition.

The question still arises as to whether or not every evangelical Protestant church in the Philippines should have an OFW ministry. Every church has to answer this for itself. Various areas of consideration will have to come into play. How many existing or prospective OFW families are in the church? What resources for OFW families are accessible around them? What resources do they already have or can be developed within the church itself? What mission and vision do they have for their church’s outreach to OFW families?

*Blessing OFWs to Bless the Nations: How to set up an OFW Ministry in your Church* is a handbook written by Ana M. Gamez, a former OFW and currently a missionary to Japan sent by her home church in the Philippines.<sup>235</sup> “This book shows how

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<sup>234</sup> Kelly O'Donnell, ed., *Doing Member Care Well*, 16.

<sup>235</sup> Gamez, 53-58.

a local church, denomination or pastoral fellowship can set up an OFW Ministry Desk that will teach them to prepare, send, and care for their OFW members and the families they leave behind.” The book lists a number of advantages that can accrue to a church should they set up an OFW ministry:

1. Edification of OFWs and their families
2. Enrichment of relationships among OFW families
3. Engagement of other church members to serve the Lord
4. Equipping of OFWs for cross-cultural witnessing and disciple-making
5. Evangelism opportunity for OFW families
6. Education of church members on tentmaking missions
7. Expansion of the church’s involvement in global missions
8. Empowerment of other churches to set up their own OFW Ministry Desk<sup>236</sup>

A hymn written by Kurt Kaiser from 1969 that was popular with church youth groups stated that “it only takes a spark to get a fire going.”<sup>237</sup> It was about sharing one’s faith and how a single act of sharing God’s love can have a major ripple effect on other people. The same principle applies to imparting a God-given vision and passion for OFW ministry. It could start with one person, whose heart has been touched by God with a burden for OFWs and their families, sharing that burden with the leaders of the local church, perhaps presenting the need and the vision before the church governing board. Even when limited resources may stand in the way, seeing with eyes of faith may open possibilities of cooperating with others.

It is well and good for churches to strive for addition of an OFW ministry to their programs and services, but the reality is that it may not be a feasible proposition for all.

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<sup>236</sup> Gamez, 53-58.

<sup>237</sup> “Pass It On,” Hymnary.org, accessed May 10, 2014, [http://www.hymnary.org/text/it\\_only\\_takes\\_a\\_spark\\_to\\_get\\_a\\_fire\\_goin](http://www.hymnary.org/text/it_only_takes_a_spark_to_get_a_fire_goin).

Churches should first seek God's guidance in setting priorities for the use of their resources. Where God leads, God provides, though possibly in ways that may differ from what people expect. It is conceivable that God may lead churches to put together their capabilities and form a partnership for OFW ministry that can end up larger than the mere sum total of its parts, and that would yield more fruit than one solitary church can produce were it to try and set up its own limited ministry. Another possibility is for the denominational district, conference, or association to establish a centralized OFW ministry to serve churches under its regional oversight.

### **OFWs, the Church, and the Future**

The impact of the overseas Filipino phenomenon in Philippine society today is wide and deep. An estimated 10.5 million Filipinos were overseas by the end of 2012 as permanent, temporary, or irregular migrants.<sup>238</sup> Assuming that each person abroad represents a household in the Philippines, an average of 4.6 members per household<sup>239</sup> implies that roughly 48.3 million Filipinos are affected by migration. This in turn is

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<sup>238</sup> "Commission On Filipinos Overseas: Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos as of December 2012," Office of the President of the Philippines: Commission on Filipinos Overseas, accessed March 13, 2014, <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2012.pdf>.

<sup>239</sup> "Household Population of the Philippines Reaches 92.1 Million," Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistics Office, August 30, 2012, accessed March 11, 2014, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/household-population-philippines-reaches-921-million>.

equivalent to nearly half, at 45.7%, of the estimated Philippines population as of mid-2013.<sup>240</sup>

The Philippine economy has performed so well recently that it is currently regarded as one of the top four new emerging economies in the world<sup>241</sup> and has seen its credit rating raised.<sup>242</sup> Nonetheless, at least for the foreseeable future and for as long as the Philippines is unable to provide its citizens the opportunities they seek for themselves and their children, the “culture of migration” that currently prevails will continue. In a 2006 paper, Maruja Asis stated that the government’s “target to send a million workers every year [which has since been surpassed] is a telling indicator that migration will be an important part of the country’s future development plans and prospects.”<sup>243</sup> The ramification is clear—churches, as part of their task to look after the ones whom God has placed in their care, should seriously consider and welcome the chance to meet them at their point of need and, beyond that, to equip and prepare them to be witnesses for God’s kingdom. It is an urgent task that demands attention.

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<sup>240</sup> “East and Southeast Asia: Philippines,” Central Intelligence Agency: The World Factbook, March 4, 2014, accessed March 13, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html>.

<sup>241</sup> Michael Schuman, “Forget the BRICs; Meet the PINES,” March 13, 2014, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://time.com/22779/forget-the-brics-meet-the-pines/>.

<sup>242</sup> Clarissa Batino and Cecilia Yap, “Philippines Wins S&P Upgrade as Aquino’s Changes Seen Enduring,” Bloomberg, May 8, 2014, accessed May 9, 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-05-08/philippines-wins-s-p-upgrade-as-aquino-s-changes-seen-enduring.html>.

<sup>243</sup> Maruja M.B. Asis “The Philippines’ Culture of Migration,” *Migration Information Source* (January 1, 2006): accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/philippines-culture-migration>.

## Summary

The participating churches approached OFW ministry in different ways, influenced by how they conceptualized the form taken by that service. Most perceived OFW ministry as an activity already going on as part of the day-to-day care provided or available to everyone in the church. They do not discern any marked difference in ministry to OFW left-behind families and to regular families without OFW members under the church's regular programs or member care. However, one community of faith sees the OFW families among them as a group that has unique features and therefore unique needs. In the last chapter we will look at the meeting point of two realities, namely, OFW families with their needs and the churches' responses to those needs.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the positive impact that a transnational outlook makes in the way a church conceives of and practices OFW ministry. Practical recommendations are made that would enable church ministries to touch effectively OFWs and their families at their points of need. Long-term absence by OFWs from their families have protracted effects, and the pain could be chronic though repressed. This is where the church can help by sharing the love, grace, and peace of God. The vision for OFW ministry in the church must be inspired by the Spirit of God, even as the vision itself branches off to inspire scholars to pursue other related fields of inquiry.

### **Correlation Between**

#### **OFW Family Needs and Church Ministries Provided**

OFW families in the study have shown a wide array of needs. While basic needs may share a commonality among all people, varying circumstances and combinations thereof result in unique permutations of what individuals and family units may consider essential needs.



Food, clothing, and shelter are primary essentials of human beings for survival. The same is true for OFW families. After the basic needs are met, interview results mention in addition educational needs for the offspring and financial security for the family, specifically for the couple in retirement. Geographical distance brings about a gap or rupture in the family expressed in strained or even broken relationships. The spouse left behind feels forced to become a single parent. Young children may understand, to the extent allowed by their level of maturity, the reasons for a parent's departure and absence, but the mind does not always grasp what the heart can neither fathom nor accept. Parenting issues constitute the lion's share of the problems that OFW families face, and include discipline and the lack of appropriate role models for children in their formative years. Marital problems expressed in the findings have ranged from misunderstandings or miscommunications to outright betrayals and infidelities.

The churches in the study provide discipleship and care for the OFW families as part of their overall ministry to all. Only one has a separate ministry set up with the sole purpose of focusing on OFWs and their families. Data indicate that most OFW family heads place priority on friends and relatives when choosing whom to approach when seeking help. Most have confidants or close relationships with others in the church that they turn to first. When they do look church-ward for aid, making requests known face to face with the pastoral staff is not a preferred route. Instead, they prefer a more distanced approach.

The major issues that confront the OFW families call for corresponding forms of ministry by the local church that would best meet the families' felt needs. Parenting issues would require the church to provide, for example, teaching on the biblical

principles for disciplining, training, and raising children into godly men and women, supported by teaching seminars on issues relevant to age-related stages of moral, cognitive, affective, and physical development. Marital issues could benefit from teaching on biblical principles that, for example, govern the relationship of a married couple, how to communicate effectively, how to resolve conflicts in a constructive manner, or how to forgive one's spouse. A counseling ministry should proactively seek to lift up the emotional health and wellbeing of OFW families; churches should help make accessible to OFW families the services of counseling professionals when needed, perhaps even providing a sliding scale of subsidies to help defray the cost. For financial needs, an emergency fund managed by the church may at times be a godsend for OFW families in dire straits. Even better would be programs for imparting financial literacy, thus giving OFW families the tools necessary for managing their pecuniary resources responsibly, wisely, and biblically. The church should also be cognizant of the ways by which the element of time influences issues that OFW families face from pre-departure of the OFW to initial separation to eventual resolution of emotional trauma or lack thereof.

The question that arises then pertains to that distinguishing feature that differentiates OFW ministry from that meant for the whole church. What features of the OFW families' needs necessitate and justify a distinct and concerted approach to OFW ministry?

## **A Shared Vision by Churches for OFW Ministry**

Every church has a philosophy of ministry, explicitly stated or implied by practice. Whether prescribed by a larger body such as a denomination or developed on its own, this philosophy or the way the church sees and understands its role as the body of Christ and witness to the world around it, serves as the standard that guides its congregational life on earth.

In the first diagram (Figure 29), the local church views its ministry with a local perspective. Its immediate milieu strongly flavors the church's definition and scope of ministry. Even missions and the work of the church in other places are viewed in ways colored by its localized approach to seeing its world. OFW families are seen as part of the congregational tapestry. They are provided access to the same programs and resources as the rest of the body. The extent to which these resources succeed in helping them is in turn influenced in part by the initiative that OFW families take in seeking where assistance may be found. Meanwhile, the local church strives to care for the OFW families and the OFWs themselves as best they can within the framework of their perspective.

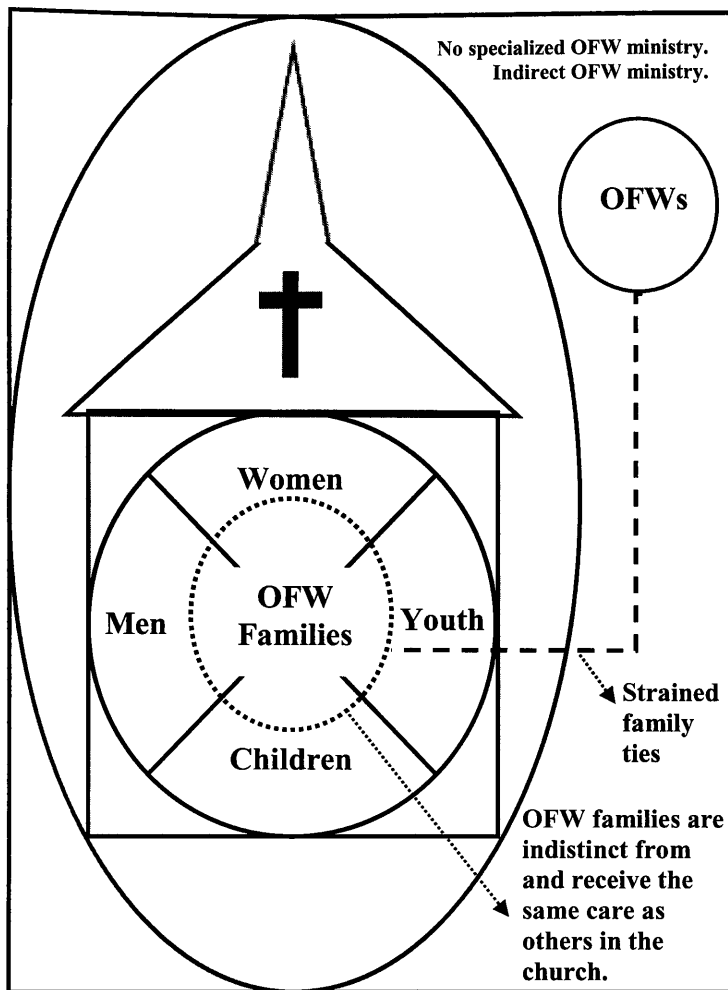


Figure 29. Local Church with Local Perspective of OFW Ministry.

The next diagram (Figure 30) depicts the transformation of OFW ministry perspective as a result of having a broader outlook. In the second scenario, left-behind families are recognized as a unique part of the body of Christ with their own unique needs. An OFW ministry organized and run within the structure of the church is geared especially toward this distinctive group of members. The OFW family is seen deliberately as still a unit; the emphasis is on maintaining the family's inherent unity that distance does not have to dim. The church's goal is to help the family heal, recover, and /or maintain its strength as a unit through holistic ministry. As the family grows in

spiritual maturity, the members become better equipped to triumph over whatever life brings, and they are properly equipped to share their faith with others.

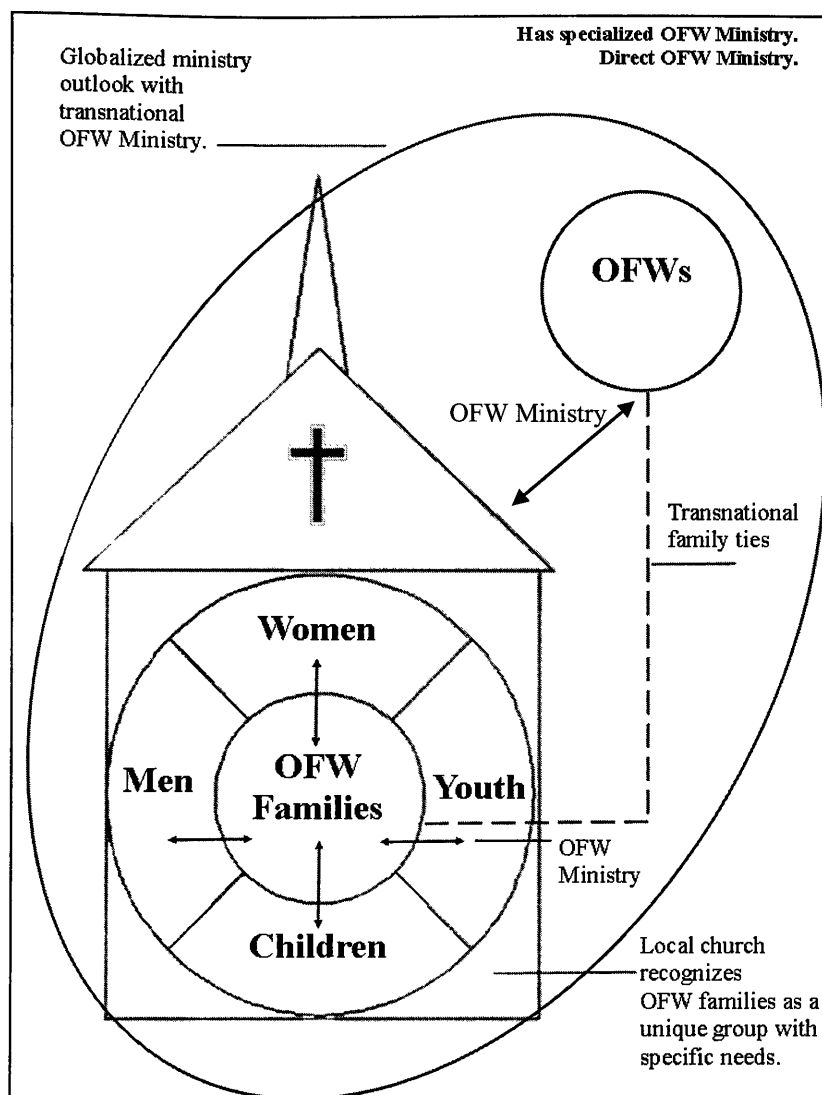


Figure 30. Local Church with Transnational Perspective of OFW Ministry.

## **Practical Recommendations for Reconciling Needs and Ministries Offered**

OFW ministry can be interpreted and implemented in two ways. The first is ministry provided by the church as member care for the OFWs in its midst and the families they leave behind at home. The majority of churches in this study practice this as part of the general member care available to everyone in their congregations. The second approach involves envisioning ministry by OFWs and their families as missionaries and/or tentmakers in accord with the Great Commission.

A third way, emerging from the interviews held, was that of OFW ministry rendered by OFWs to other OFWs, and by left-behind families to fellow left-behind families. This form of ministry puts into practice the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.<sup>244</sup>

Looking after members and adherents is an integral part of the task that churches and pastors are charged with. As Jesus informed Peter,<sup>245</sup> ministry involves a holistic approach by the shepherd to feeding and tending the sheep. While the situations that churches find themselves in may differ and pastors may have individual perceptions of the needs present before them, one thing that the OFW families have made clear in the study is their desire for the church to create an OFW ministry especially designed for them, one that, based on their responses and comments during the interviews, would have a diversity of features.

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<sup>244</sup> 1 Peter 2:9.

<sup>245</sup> John 21:15-17.

It should have the pastors taking an active part in knowing them, the OFWs and their families, on an individual and personal basis. This would require regular visitation by the pastors that would facilitate personal contact. Families want to be treated, not only by the pastors but by the whole church as well, with respect and dignity. OFWs are often seen by those around them as moneyed people, but they do not wish to be considered as cash machines, not even by their church. What many, who have their hands out, fail to take into account is the fact that OFWs have to take care of the needs of their own families, for whom most OFWs have sacrificed and even suffered just to be able to send home their meager earnings.

OFW families would like to have a support group of others like them, peers who feel the emotions that weigh them down when they send off loved ones at the airport and then come home to an apartment or house with an aching sense of emptiness greeting them at the door; others who wait eagerly for the next phone call or video chat or the rare homecoming or even a short vacation; others who wonder when the next remittance will arrive while bills are waiting to be paid and they are not sure who to turn to for help in the meantime. OFW families look for a support group that can fellowship with them regularly, pray for and with them, or share their joys at celebrations and sorrows when bad news comes.

OFW families would also appreciate age-appropriate support groups for their children. Provision of childcare, for example during the time that worship services are held, would be helpful. Others need a male figure in their young sons' lives while fathers are working overseas. No one can truly take the place of the father and this is not the aim of this endeavor, but a godly adult role model can contribute to the growth and

maturation of children especially during their formative years. This is where carefully chosen, divinely anointed leaders for young people can play a significant role in the lives of left-behind children.

The Philippine government through the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) conducts Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars as a means of preparing emigrants for their imminent move to another country. For prospective migrant workers, the Workers Education Division of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration gives regular, no-fee, and country-specific Pre-Employment Orientation Seminars with the following objectives:

1. To provide information on labor and employment conditions, migration realities and other facts on overseas employment.
2. To adequately prepare participants into making informed and intelligent decisions about overseas employment.<sup>246</sup>

While the CFO also offers the Peer Counseling Program for emigrant children aged 13 to 19, there is no counterpart program for the young children who will likely be left behind by soon-to-be OFWs. This is a window of opportunity for churches to have older or even adult children who have grown up with absent OFW parents share what they have experienced, how they coped, and the way that faith helped keep them strong.

Counseling is usually regarded as a given among the duties of the pastor in tending the flock. Several respondents in the study voiced their need for counseling. A number go to confidants and friends when they need advice or even financial help. However, no matter how well-meaning friends may be, advice that they give can be

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<sup>246</sup> “Pre-Employment Orientation Seminar,” Republic of the Philippines: Department of Labor and Employment - Bureau of Local Employment, accessed March 18, 2014, [www.ble.dole.gov.ph/congress/Track3.pp](http://www.ble.dole.gov.ph/congress/Track3.pp)



colored by their own life experiences which may not necessarily be right or godly.<sup>247</sup> In cases where the pain is so deep and the damage so severe that further help is needed beyond the training and giftedness of the pastor, churches can proactively set up a referral system wherein arrangements are made ahead of time with professionals to make mental health care accessible and affordable.

Respondents further clamored for additional instructional events in the form of seminars. Possibilities range from the spiritual (for example, how to live the victorious Christian life in a non-Christian environment) to the relational (for example, conflict resolution and forgiveness in marriage) to the practical (for example, how to manage your finances—from budgeting to investing).

Ministry to OFWs, wherever they may be, should be intentional. Those who return, whether on vacation or permanently, need visitation. Reaching out to OFWs in their countries of work is feasible with the assistance of technology. Respondents have suggested the use of the internet for maintaining contact between pastor/churches and the OFWs. The World Wide Web provides opportunities for virtual worship, teaching, and fellowship through, for example, chat rooms or video chats. Worship services webcast live can enable OFWs to take part and, if recorded, allow OFWs to keep up to some extent with the life of the church regardless of time zone differences. It is not enough that OFWs can reach pastors and vice versa, but churches should also provide the tools that

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<sup>247</sup> Andrew G. Marshall, “Don’t Share Your Marital Woes with Friends - They Will Talk You Into Divorce,” *Daily Mail (London)*, October 10, 2012, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2215867/Dont-share-marital-woes-friends--talk-divorce--tips-saving-marriage-relationship-counsellor-Andrew-G-Marshall.html>.

OFWs can avail of to feed their spirits and equip them in turn to minister to others around them.

### **Casting a Vision for OFW Ministries in the Church**

The question remains of why there exists the need for a separate OFW ministry in the first place. What is that quality which makes OFW families and their needs different from the needs of non-OFW families? What element acts as a common thread through their life stories that would justify a specialized ministry for them? Non-OFW families experience errant children too, likewise miscommunication between spouses, or loneliness, or broken relationships. One consideration is implied in the label that the world has placed upon them; they are “left-behind.” The connotation is negative. The use of a popular online search engine for the phrase “left-behind families” gave 265 million results; 4 of the top 5 results referred to families and children left behind by those in prison.<sup>248</sup> A search for synonyms of “left behind” as an adjective yielded terms such as the following: forgotten, forsaken, abandoned, erased, lost, gone, and consigned to oblivion.<sup>249</sup> Not only are the connotations negative, the label makes “left-behindness” the trait that defines their identity. It becomes who they are supposed to be in the eyes of the

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<sup>248</sup> “Left Behind Families,” Google, accessed March 26, 2014, [https://www.google.com/search?q=left+behind+families&oq=left+behind+families&aqs=chrome.69i57j0l5.3692j0j7&sourceid=chrome&espv=2&es\\_sm=122&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=left+behind+families&oq=left+behind+families&aqs=chrome.69i57j0l5.3692j0j7&sourceid=chrome&espv=2&es_sm=122&ie=UTF-8).

<sup>249</sup> “Left Behind,” Thesaurus.com, accessed March 26, 2014, <http://thesaurus.com/browse/left+behind>.

world. As they accept the name, they find their difficult circumstances reifying their identity.

The author is, however, hard put to come up with an alternate term for the OFW families who remain in the Philippines while family members leave to work abroad. “Left-behind,” while possessing negative connotations, is concurrently also quite an apt designation for them. It is widely used in both the country’s media and academia. Terminology is a complicated and even, for some, emotional issue. It is what society can offer right now. What matters most though is that emphasis be given to the positive, the ties that bind the family together, and the best tie is faith in God shared by the family.

### **Understanding the Challenges of Transnational OFW Ministries**

Ultimately, it all stems from the departure and absence of the OFW, a long-term emptiness from their lives measured usually in terms of years and not months. For some, it is merely a temporary interruption to their life as a family. For others who either continuously renew or maintain their OFW status with different employers and even different countries where they work, there is a transnational element marked by the OFWs’ permanent absence that has a more forceful and life-changing impact on the lives of everyone involved. OFWs who can bring their families with them are usually limited in number to those who are highly-skilled and in demand, meaning that they are those who have high incomes. Many OFWs are unskilled workers who are restricted by the demand for their services and the low wages they earn. For people like them and their

families, semi-permanent or prolonged absence leads to constant stress and worries and questions. One respondent had this to say: “*Sa kabuuan ng buhay, maraming pinagdaanan, nakatingin sa kawalan* [In life overall, I have experienced many things, sometimes I just stare into the distance]. Another aspect also *ang pera hindi napupulot* [money is hard to earn]. When I think of the news from foreign lands—hostages, Korean tension, Arab Spring—I cried when he left.”<sup>250</sup>

The global and the transnational have become an intimate part of the life of the Filipino family. When a part of the body hurts, the whole body suffers, and it is the responsibility of the whole to minister to the part that is hurting.<sup>251</sup> It is important to remember that the part that hurts is the whole family, not just the ones in the homeland but also the OFW who remains an integral member of the family. This is ministry that entails a holistic approach, that requires a holistic mindset, and which in turn employs an understanding of the transnational reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Filipino family.

A typical perception of OFW ministry is to see it as the provision of care to OFWs and their families. As evident in the preceding pages, OFW ministry is more than that. Member care is certainly part of OFW ministry, but this also can be understood as ministry by OFWs and their families. Further, ministry by OFWs and their families can be directed to both non-OFWs and OFWs, Christian and otherwise. OFW ministry can be one more way of fulfilling the Great Commission. OFW ministry that is marked by Christian witness is holistic in its pairing of, on one hand, social, material,

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<sup>250</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

<sup>251</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

mental/emotional, and economic help with, on the other hand, training and practice of discipleship and evangelism. These are not mutually exclusive but, rather, complement each other.

The same principle should hold true for churches. It is rare for a church to be so sufficient that it could not benefit from the help of others. In accord with the Filipino *bayanihan* spirit,<sup>252</sup> churches and parachurch organizations can pool their strengths and multiply their effectiveness in ministry through a practical demonstration of the unity of the body of Christ. Partnership is very much a Filipino cultural trait. Every church has its own set of strengths and weaknesses; an area where one is strong could be where another church is weak. By coming together in partnership, churches can not only achieve unity in purpose, but also likely attain improved effectiveness in ministry through the pooling of gifts, talents, and assets. Partnership among churches could be one clear and genuine instance where the total is indeed greater than simply the total of its parts. Furthermore, it is a biblical principle rooted in the Trinitarian nature of God.<sup>253</sup> This applies not only to churches within a locality or the country but transnationally as well through linkages and joint projects.

It is long past time for all Christians to think in terms of the whole world and not just locally. As mentioned earlier, long-term separation is a key causative characteristic

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<sup>252</sup> *Bayanihan* is a Filipino word that refers to a “spirit of communal unity and cooperation.” “Bayanihan,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology, accessed March 27, 2014, <http://groups.csail.mit.edu/cag/bayanihan/bayanword.html>.

<sup>253</sup> Enoch Wan and Kevin P. Penman, “The Why, How and Who of Partnership in Christian Missions”, *Global Missiology* 3, no. 7 (2010): 1, accessed April 25, 2014, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/61/178>.

of the difficulties experienced by OFW families. It is a chronic condition that damages the families who become identified as those left behind. It is therefore the church's imperative task to reconsider ministries to OFWs and OFW families in light of the ongoing family status of permanent separation.

### **For Further Follow-up**

The results of this study may be tested and verified through additional research using, for example, a sample from another region (such as Region IV-A, the Southern Tagalog mainland, which accounted for the largest proportion [18.1%] of OFWs in 2012)<sup>254</sup> and/or employing a larger population sample. Relevant topics for consideration as worthy of further research could include the following:

1. What is the state of OFW churches abroad, especially in locations with large concentrations of OFWs such as Hong Kong, Dubai, and London?
  - a. How many are there? How many OFWs are involved? What motivates them to participate? What do they look for in an OFW church?
  - b. What forms of ministry to the OFWs do these churches provide?
2. What is the history of evangelical witness among OFWs by OFWs where they work and live?
  - a. What training, if any, did they receive for what they are currently

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<sup>254</sup> "2012 Survey on Overseas Filipinos," Republic of the Philippines, Philippines Statistics Authority, National Statistics Office, September 4, 2013, accessed October 12, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/2012-survey-overseas-filipinos>.

- doing? What kind of training was it? Where or how did they get the training?
- b. What lessons learned from their experiences are useful for training others?
3. What evangelical OFW activities are going on in limited-access countries?  
(This is a sensitive topic that must be treated with great care.)
    - a. What are the results of their Christian activities? Why?
    - b. What training, if any, did they receive for what they are doing?
  4. What are the existing non-profit, non-governmental organizations (evangelical, other church-related, and secular) that seek to help OFWs and families while they are abroad?
    - a. Do they have affiliated counterparts in the Philippines? Who? Where?
    - b. What services do they provide? At what cost? Who do they reach?
  5. How can local churches in the Philippines and OFW churches abroad form partnerships and serve OFWs together?
    - a. Are there any existing partnerships right now? Who? Where?
    - b. What lessons, based on their experience, can they teach?
  6. How can evangelical OFW partnerships link with other like-minded diaspora groups (such as the Chinese, Koreans, and Africans) and cooperate for world evangelization?
    - a. Are there any existing connections right now? Who? Where?
    - b. What cross-cultural considerations are critical to Kingdom-building cooperation?

7. How can OFWs reach locals where they work and live?
  - a. What gifts, talents, or personal qualities can give them a head start in cross-cultural evangelism?
  - b. What additional cross-cultural training would they need for increased effectiveness?

### Raising New Questions

Ministry is service rendered for the glory of God. It also functions as a witness to the world for its eyes are constantly upon God's people, waiting for them to fail and falter. Filipinos commonly regard OFWs as a moneyed class of people. Unfortunately those in churches too have been influenced by this misperception. As one of the respondents said, "*marami ang humihingi* [many people ask], they think I have much money and when I refuse, they easily get mad at me. Many of our acquaintances have high expectations from us financially."<sup>255</sup> Churches must carefully examine themselves first and honestly answer the question, "What is our reason for having an OFW ministry? Do we expect anything in return for the help that we give them? What are the boundaries that we must never cross? When will our wanting to do what is right become wrong?" Leadership plays a critical role in guiding the life and ministry of a church. Everything must be based on God's revealed Word, for without it, chaos ensues and evil reigns.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Interviews with the acting heads of left-behind OFW families, Greater Manila Area, Philippines, April-May, 2013.

<sup>256</sup> Proverbs 29:18.



## Status of Left-Behind OFW Families

A report issued by the Philippine government for the end of 2012 counts 10.5 million Filipinos as living and/or working in 218 countries and regions throughout the world. They ranged, for example, from 3.5 million in the United States to 23.4 thousand in Norway to 8 in North Korea.<sup>257</sup> OFWs for 2012 numbered 2.2 million. Although current data is not available, data from 1988 to 2004 indicate that an average of 61.2% of all OFWs were married men and women.<sup>258</sup> Applying this to the 2.2 million OFWs for 2012<sup>259</sup> yields a total of 1.3 million married OFWs. Roughly a third (32.9%, based on the average from 2003 to 2012) were classified as laborers and unskilled workers,<sup>260</sup> a group that as a rule lack the privilege and/or capability of bringing their families with them to live abroad. Assuming that each laborer or unskilled worker represents a separate household and based on the average size of a Filipino household (4.6 or roughly 5 members who translate to 2 parents and 3 children),<sup>261</sup> the outcome is an estimate of at

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<sup>257</sup> “Commission On Filipinos Overseas: Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos as of December 2012,” Department of Foreign Affairs: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration - Commission on Filipinos Overseas, accessed March 16, 2014, [http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/2012\\_Stock\\_Estimate\\_of\\_Filipinos\\_Overseas.pdf](http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/2012_Stock_Estimate_of_Filipinos_Overseas.pdf).

<sup>258</sup> “Tables: Table 12: Share of OFWs by Civil Status (In %), 1988-2004 Labor Force Survey,” Philippine Migration and Development Statistical Almanac, accessed March 14, 2014, [http://almanac.ofwphilanthropy.org/component/option,com\\_docman/task,cat\\_view/gid,105/limit,5/limitstart,60/order,name/dir,DESC/Itemid,10/](http://almanac.ofwphilanthropy.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,105/limit,5/limitstart,60/order,name/dir,DESC/Itemid,10/).

<sup>259</sup> “2012 Survey on Overseas Filipinos,” Republic of the Philippines, Philippines Statistics Authority, National Statistics Office, September 4, 2013, accessed October 12, 2013, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/2012-survey-overseas-filipinos>.

<sup>260</sup> “Index of Overseas Filipino Workers Statistics,” Republic of the Philippines, National Statistics Office, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.census.gov.ph/old/data/sectordata/datasof.html>.

<sup>261</sup> “Household Population of the Philippines Reaches 92.1 Million,” Republic of the Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistics Office, August 30, 2012, accessed March 11, 2014, <http://www.census.gov.ph/content/household-population-philippines-reaches-921-million>.

least 0.4 million wives and husbands left behind, who at the same time became de facto single parents, and 1.3 million children with at least one parent absent from their daily lives. The Philippine government has not issued a definitive count of how many children are left behind by OFW parents. Attempts made by other parties to approximate the number have ranged from 1.1 million<sup>262</sup> to 5.25 million<sup>263</sup> to 3-6 million.<sup>264</sup>

For as long as the country is unable to provide employment opportunities to its people as they endeavor to provide a decent life for themselves and their families, the probability is high that a culture of migration will continue to prevail in the Philippines as a “life change strategy.”<sup>265</sup> Consequently, a sizable portion of the population will remain affected by the departure and absence of significant others in their lives. It was noted in an earlier chapter that up to half of all people in the Philippines could have a family member working/living in another country. In Filipino culture, the concept of the family is not limited to the nuclear members with the usual father, mother, and three offspring, but can extend to include adult children, adult siblings of parents, and grandparents. A

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<sup>262</sup> Victorina Zosa and Aniceto Orbeta Jr., “The Social and Economic Impact of Philippine International Labor Migration and Remittances” (Philippine Institute for Development Studies Discussion Paper Series No. 2009-32, Makati City, Philippines, November 2009), 35, accessed August 15, 2013, <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps0932.pdf>.

<sup>263</sup> F. K. Coronel and F. Unterreiner, *Increasing the Impact of Remittances on Children’s Rights in the Philippines* (New York, NY: Policy, Advocacy and Knowledge Management (PAKM), Division of Policy and Practice, UNICEF, August 2008), 8, accessed August 20, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Philippines\\_Increasing\\_the\\_Impact\\_of\\_Remittances\\_on\\_Childrens\\_Rights.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Philippines_Increasing_the_Impact_of_Remittances_on_Childrens_Rights.pdf).

<sup>264</sup> “Migration and Children: A Need to Fill Information Gaps in Order to Guide Policy Responses,” United Nations, accessed September 4, 2013, [http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/turin/Turin\\_Statements/JESPERSEN.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/turin/Turin_Statements/JESPERSEN.pdf).

<sup>265</sup> John Aggergaard Larsen, Helen T. Allan, and Karen Bryan, “Overseas Nurses’ Motivations for Working in the UK: Globalisation and Life Politics”, *Work Employment and Society* 19, no. 2 (June 2005): 349-368.

multi-generation household can form a unit that lives and functions as one family. An OFW can therefore take on the responsibility of providing not only for his or her family, but also an assortment of siblings, nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. At times circumstances may cause this to be necessary, but in other cases it is based on another mindset, a culture of dependence. A documentary about the effects of remittances on Filipinos left behind in particular and society in general states that:

Given the scarcity of employment opportunities in the Philippines, family members left behind often begin to self-identify as hopeless and helpless victims of circumstance. To compound this dilemma, these family members receive remittances, which is an enticing prospect at first but results in very little motivation to seek employment themselves. The huge disparity between upper and lower class is to be denounced, especially because it works to the bone those with very few possessions while stripping the wealthy few of their grasp of reality. This fate need not play itself out in the Philippines, America, or elsewhere.<sup>266</sup>

However, a study conducted by the International Labour Organization concluded that the alleged culture of dependence created by reliance on remittances is unfounded. “The common fear that OFWs have made their household members lazier is not supported by data and must therefore, at least for now, not be counted as a major cost of the OFW phenomenon.”<sup>267</sup> The perception nonetheless remains among the people including those in the government. A Philippine government functionary proclaimed at an international meeting that a “culture of remittance creates a culture of dependence

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<sup>266</sup> Ted Unarce, “Mendicant Society: A New Form of Social Illness?” (video), July 6, 2012, 1:09, accessed March 15, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAFLEc8\\_rp0..](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAFLEc8_rp0..)

<sup>267</sup> Geoffrey Ducanes and Manolo Abella, ILO Asian Regional Programme on Governance of Labour Migration: Working Paper No.8 -Overseas Filipino Workers and Their Impact On Household Employment Decisions (Bangkok, Thailand: International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, January 1, 2008), 11, accessed March 15, 2014, [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_160579.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_160579.pdf)

back home [in the Philippines].”<sup>268</sup> Meanwhile, a blog by a former OFW included this piece of advice:

Do not let your relatives believe that you are making tons and tons of money abroad. A lot of people would offer themselves to be your dependents, mark my word. Or worse, it would be your fault if the son of your cousin was not able to enroll because they don't have money. They would think you have tons of money but you didn't help. Therefore, your fault. Some might even consider your salary as theirs. I had a coworker back in Libya who was only 2 months with the company when his sister called asking for money to pay her debt. It turned out that his sister bought appliances from a Bombay [an Indian] and was hoping her brother could pay for it. His sister and brother-in-law had no permanent work. And then, there was his aunt, also asking for money because her son was in the hospital, again.<sup>269</sup>

### Conclusion

Overseas Filipino Workers are viewed by economists as a form of revenue-generating resource that the country exports for revenue generation, particularly much-needed international reserves. Demographers see OFWs in terms of statistics such as population growth, geographical distribution, and age structure. The left-behind family is commonly understood to mean the typical nuclear unit of parents and children.

According to the constitution of the Philippines, “The State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and

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<sup>268</sup> Imelda M. Nicolas, “Role of Financial Inclusion Policies for Remittances” (remarks delivered by the Cabinet-rank Secretary Imelda M. Nicolas, Chairperson, Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) Office of the President of the Philippines at Plenary Session VIII: Remittances and Financial Inclusion: From Financial Literacy to Investments Model of the GLOBAL FORUM ON REMITTANCES 2013, Bangkok, Thailand, May 20-23, 2013,), 5, accessed March 15, 2014, [http://www.ifad.org/remittances/events/2013/globalforum/resources/Nicolas%20\\_8\\_1.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/remittances/events/2013/globalforum/resources/Nicolas%20_8_1.pdf).

<sup>269</sup> Blad, “Advice to First Time OFWs,” First Time OFW (blog), August 4, 2012, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://firsttimeofw.blogspot.com/2012/08/advice-to-first-time-ofws.html>.

actively promote its total development.”<sup>270</sup> In Filipino culture, as observed earlier, the circle widens to contain not only the primary household but also the secondary that includes everyone else in the extended family. From a positive point of view, it could be interpreted as a reflection of very close family ties. From a negative slant however, the same closeness could breed a culture of dependency. The focus of ministry to left-behind families nonetheless remains on the immediate family of spouse and children and, if required by circumstance, others in the same household or under the same roof. Evangelical Protestant churches are called to a higher view and deeper understanding of OFW identity and ministry needs, and see OFWs and their families as God would see them. This is the criterion that would differentiate OFW ministry by the churches from all else offered by the Philippine government and non-governmental agencies and organizations.

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<sup>270</sup> Republic of the Philippines Constitution, art. 15, sec. 1.

**Appendix A****ASSENT FORM****MINISTERING TO FAMILIES OF  
OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs)**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rev. Andy Ponce from Asbury Theological Seminary concerning the Philippine Protestant churches' ministry to families in their congregations who are separated from OFW (Overseas Filipino Worker) spouses or parents. With your consent, you will be interviewed by the field assistant, \_\_\_\_\_.

While there is no monetary remuneration for taking part in the study, we would offer to send you a digital version of the finished study upon your written request. Our desire is to help churches and pastors become better prepared to meet the needs of families that are separated from loved ones working abroad.

For purposes of confidentiality, we will use pseudonyms in the entire study. Your signature below will indicate that you understand why the study is being done and that you are willing to be part of it. Please let the field assistant know if you have questions and concerns.

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH. GOD BLESS YOU!**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B

### Survey Questions

#### Interview Protocol for Acting Heads of OFW Families

All research records that may identify participants will be kept PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL; access will be strictly limited.

OPTIONAL: In case we need to follow up something in your answers, please provide the following contact information. By filling in this information below you agree to being contacted only in case there is need for clarification.

Name:

Home phone/cell phone:

Email address:

#### 1. Biographical information:

- Age:
- Gender:
- Status
  - ⊕ Married
  - ⊕ Single
  - ⊕ Separated
  - ⊕ Divorced
- Occupation:
- Church and You

⊕ Name of church:

⊕ Member?            YES            NO

⊕ How often do you go to church? Almost every Sunday

⊕ How has your relationship with the church changed since your OFW family member left?

⊕ Does your family currently feel that the church is a welcoming place for OFW families?            YES            NO

# Has your faith in God grown stronger since you have been part of this church?  
YES NO

# Does the Bible help you grow and be better able to cope with life issues since you have been a part of this church?  
YES NO

# Does the fellowship at this church help you grow and be better able to cope with life issues since you have been a part of this church?  
YES NO

# Please rank from 1 to 9, with 1 the best part that you like the most about attending church.

Pastor/Pastoral Staff	
Preaching/Teaching/ Bible Study	
Worship/Music	
Prayer	
Fellowship	
Training programs/Seminars	
Small Groups	
Child/Youth Ministry	
Others:	

# Who usually goes with you to church?

Your:	Number:
Sons	
Daughters:	
Parents	
Grandparents	
Sisters	
Brothers	
Others:	

# What can you suggest to make the church more helpful to OFW families?

▪ Comments:



2. Information about the OFW family member:

- Age:
- Relationship:
- Country of employment:
- Occupation:
- Years away from family:
  - ⊕ During present employment:
  - ⊕ Total years as OFW:
- Number of years that the OFW initially planned to work overseas before returning permanently to the Philippines:
- In your opinion, would you find it more difficult if the OFW family member had undocumented status than if s/he had legal status when asking the church for help for family needs?
 

YES NO
- Would undocumented status of an OFW member affect how their families receive help from the church when the congregation considers which OFW families to assist?
 

YES NO

3. Children in the family:

M/F	AGE	AT HOME?
M/F	AGE	AT HOME?

## 4. Communication between family and OFW:

	Please rank from 1 to 6 (with 1 the most often used and 6 the least often used)
Letters thru regular mail	
Email	
Video/Voice chat thru internet	
Texting	
Phone calls	
Others:	

- Who usually initiates contact?

## 5. For Spouse to answer::

- How has separation in terms of geographical distance affected your relationship with your spouse?
- Please express any new or different emotions you feel now that your OFW family member is absent from the family?
- How do you cope with those emotions?
- Do you feel you are successful in dealing with those emotions?  

YES
NO
- What are the issues that arose because of changes in the family when your OFW family member left?
- Which issues are you getting help for? How?
- Which issues are you not getting any help for? Why?
- What issue is the most challenging among the changes in the family when your OFW spouse left?
- Comments:

## 6. Finances:

- What percentage of the OFW's income is sent to the family?

- What percentage of the OFW's income is used to pay off debts incurred due to expenses of becoming an OFW?
- How have the remittances of your spouse changed your family's quality of life?
- How well do you feel able to manage the remittances you receive from the OFW family member?
- Do you have a budget that you follow?
- What kinds of help do you need in learning how to manage money?
- What goals or dreams would you like to see become reality using money from remittances? Are you saving to help you achieve those goals? How?
- Comments:

#### 7. Parenting:

- How has departure of their mother/father affected the children? How do you and your family cope with these issues? Did you try to solve them yourself? If yes, what was the result? If no, who or where did you seek help from?
- How well do you feel equipped to handle these?
- What kinds of help can you use in learning how best to meet the challenges that face your children?
- Which issues related to your children are you not getting any help for? Why?
- Comments:

#### 8. Getting help for the family:

- Are you comfortable looking for help regarding family needs?
- Where do you go for help?
- Have you asked for help from the church? Specify?
- Specify whom in the church did you approach for help? Sino? Close friends only

- Did you receive help? YES / NO What kind?
  - What kinds of help do you get from other people in the church?
9. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being very helpful), how would you rate the helpfulness of your pastor or church?
  10. How can your pastor and church improve in helping you with your family issues caused by separation from an OFW loved one?
  11. What other comments do you have regarding the needs of the OFW family?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH. GOD BLESS YOU!

## **Appendix C**

### **Survey Questions**

#### **Interview Protocol for Pastors or Church Workers**

##### **Directly Involved in Ministry to OFW Families**

1. Contact information:
  - Name:
  - Position/Title:
  - Length of ministry at current church
  
2. Church information:
  - Church name
  - Denomination (if not indicated in the name)
  - Church address:
  - Church phone number: Church email
  - Church web site
  - Average weekly attendance (all services):
  
3. Ministry to OFW families: (OFW families are defined in this study as those left behind in the Philippines by OFW family members who are working in other countries.)
  - What resources or programs does your church offer to OFW families in the church? How long has the church been offering these forms of help to OFW families?
  - Does the church make known to its OFW families what resources are available to them through the church? How?
  - For the OFW themselves. What forms of ministry does the church currently perform for the OFWs in foreign countries?
  - Based on your experience, what are the top 5 major issues that OFW families have due to separation from spouses or parents? Please rank from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most frequent to 5 the least.

- Among these issues that you have just mentioned, which ones are priorities of the church in ministering to OFW families?
- Within the church, who are involved in ministry to OFW families?
- Whom do they report to?
- What training do they undergo before being actively involved in ministry to OFW families?

#### 4. OFW families:

- How many OFW families are in your congregation?
- How many OFW families---either members or attendees--have asked for help from the church or church representative in the last 12 months?
  - ⊕ Whom among the staff of the church do they most often approach when they need help?
- How easily do OFW families take the initiative when seeking help of any kind?

#### 5. Helping those in need:

- What requirements, if any, are in place in determining who qualifies for help?
- Who decides which families will be helped? Do you know of help in any form extended to OFW families outside the church, from groups, organizations or Christian ministries?

#### 6. Looking back:

- What review system evaluates the success or failure of ministry to OFW families?
- What challenges has your church encountered in ministering to OFW families?
- How did you respond to these challenges?
- Other comments?

## 7. Passing it on:

- What lessons has your church learned in ministering to OFW families?
- What suggestions can you give other churches who might desire to minister to OFW families?

## 8. Networking:

- Do you network or cooperate with other churches within your denomination, other denominations, or other organizations in ministering to OFW families?  
YES Why? NO
- How many do you network or cooperate with in ministering to OFW families?

	In your denomination	Outside your denomination
Number of churches		
Number of other organizations		

- If so, how do you gauge the success or failure of such cooperation?
- How often do you evaluate the advisability of continuing the networking or cooperation?
- Other comments?

## 9. Looking forward:

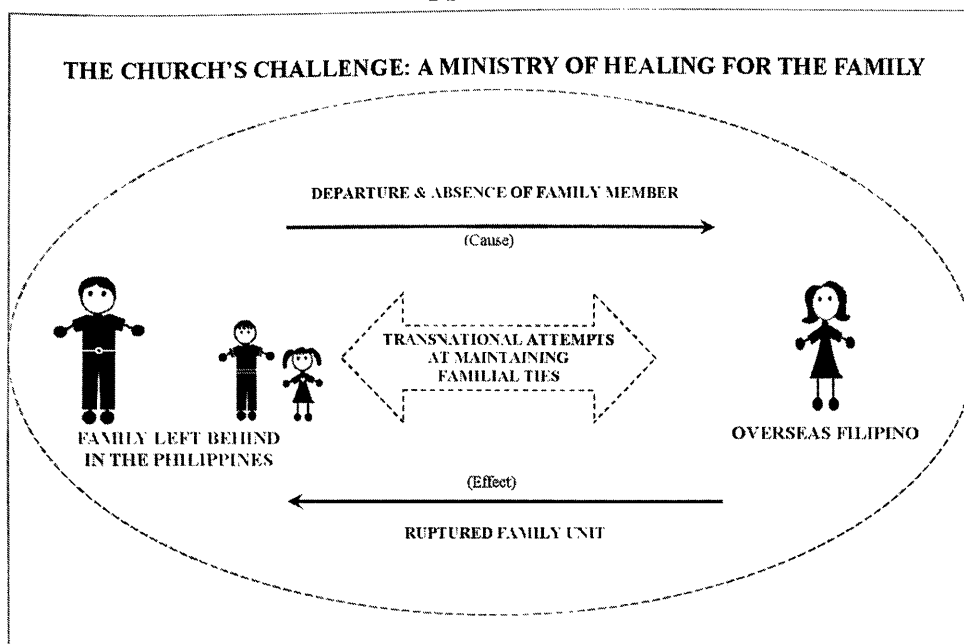
- What changes within the next 5 to 10 years do you foresee in terms of the needs presented by OFW families?
- What changes within the next 5 to 10 years do you foresee in your church in terms of your networking or cooperation with other churches and/or other organizations?
- How will such changes within the next 5 to 10 years affect your church's ministry to OFW families and how should your church prepare to meet those needs?

10. Does your church or organization prioritize the ministries to OFWs and their families within the local church or organization? If Yes, how?
11. What roles or duties do volunteers have in your church's ministries to OFW families?
12. How does your church recruit, train, and encourage volunteers in ministries to OFW families?
13. What resources or ministries does your church offer to the actual OFWs who are overseas?
14. What other comments do you have regarding ministry to OFW families? -

THANK YOU VERY MUCH. GOD BLESS YOU!



## Appendix D



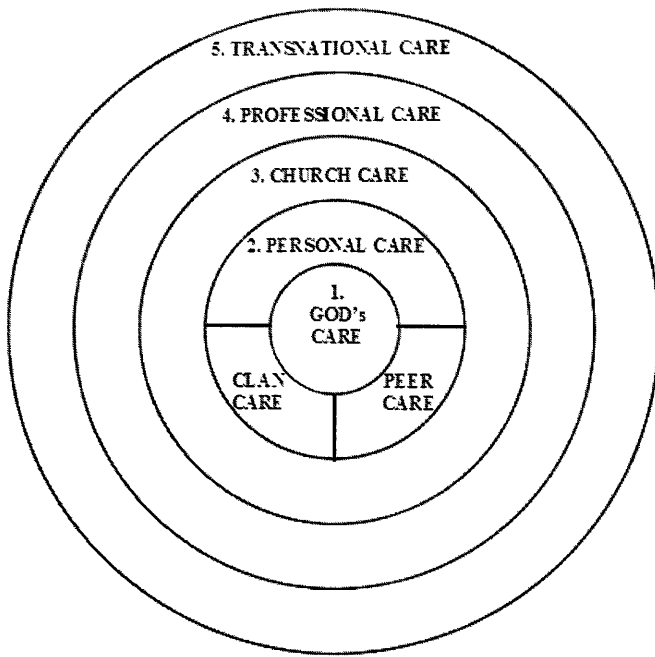
### Notes:

1. The oval represents the family, with its individual members, as a unit. The fragmented line stands for the brokenness of separation that characterizes the family of the OFW.
2. The average OFW is predominantly, albeit by only a slight margin, male with a male-to-female ratio of 1.09 (as of 2011).<sup>271</sup> However the mother is chosen to depict the OFW in order to reflect the fact that in recent years women have been gaining in numbers.<sup>272</sup>
3. The double arrow signifies the attempts by the family to maintain ties through such means as, for example, e-mails, phone calls or by video chats. The broken line means that nothing can replace the actual presence of the OFW on a permanent basis.
4. The faded mother figure portrayed with the family corresponds to the result of everyone's transnational efforts to sustain a sense of her presence with them and at the minimum to alleviate the pain induced by separation.

<sup>271</sup> "Number and Percentage Distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers by Sex and Region: 2010 and 2011," Republic of the Philippines National Statistics Office, accessed October 30, 2012, <http://www.census.gov.ph/sites/default/files/attachments/hsd/specialrelease/Tab2.pdf>.

<sup>272</sup> "The Pinoy Diaspora: Where Do Our OFWs Come From and Where Do They Go?" National Statistical Coordination Board, accessed November 27, 2012, [http://www.nscb.gov.ph/sexystats/2012/SS20120516\\_ofw.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/sexystats/2012/SS20120516_ofw.asp) and "Number and Percentage Distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers," National Statistics Office.

## Appendix E

**OFW CARE MODEL<sup>273</sup>**

5. Philippine government through labor attachés assigned to embassies, Bilateral Labor Agreement countries,<sup>274</sup> international Non-Governmental Organizations—Christian or secular
4. Lawyers, Medical Doctors, Counselors, Philippine government agency contacts
3. Pastors, church staff, volunteers, members
2. Self, family—immediate and extended, friends, colleagues
1. Creator

<sup>273</sup> Inspired by “A Best Practice Model of Member Care,” © Kelly O’Donnell and Dave Pollock. Source: Kelly O’Donnell, ed., *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library Pub, 2002), 16.

<sup>274</sup> One objective of a Bilateral Labor Agreement between labor-sending and labor-receiving countries is “promoting the protection and welfare of workers.” [Stella P. Go, “The Role of Bilateral Labor and Similar Agreements in Asian Labor Migration: The Post-Crisis Context” (PowerPoint presented at the ADBI-OECD Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia: Recent Trends and Prospects in the Post-crisis Context, Tokyo, Japan, January 18-20, 2011), accessed April 14, 2014, <http://www.adbi.org/files/2011.01.18.cpp.sess2.2.go.asian.labor.migration.pdf>.] An example is the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Labor and Employment, Republic of the Philippines and the Ministry of Labor, Republic of Korea on the Sending and Receiving of Workers under the Employment Permit System of Korea,” signed on May 30, 2009. [“Bilateral Labor Agreements,” Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, April 14, 2014, accessed April 14, 2014, [http://www.poea.gov.ph/lmi\\_kiosk/labor\\_agreements.htm](http://www.poea.gov.ph/lmi_kiosk/labor_agreements.htm).]

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