

**POVERTY AND CHILDREN IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA
GSL PHILIPPINES
PORTFOLIO**

Laura Rodríguez Lancheros
MA Intercultural Studies

Dr. Kwi Yun
Professor

**Nyack College, Alliance Theological
Seminary**

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Values, Norms and Religious practices in Filipino culture

- **Values**

- o **Family:** In Filipino culture family has a very important place in society. It is usual to find extended families living together, this was something I saw in my visit to Anjelyne's family. About twelve people were living in that house, grandma, uncles, aunts and cousins all living together. Another important aspect in terms of family, that was mentioned during the lectures is that children are expected to take care of their parents starting at a young age. An example was observed when some of the kids went to Jellibee and took some rice and chicken home for their family.
- o **Barkara:** Another important unit in Filipino culture is the Barkara, it is a group of friends that can be consider family, where the principal value is loyalty. The Barkara according Dr Jiji can be more important than family. In some cases, the Barkara is a bad influence for the individual, an example of this are the kids that are part of Hope Home, the Social Worker shared with us how many times they scape to go back to their Barkaras. In other cases, the Barkara is a good influence for the individual, this is something I observed and heard from the staff at G 1:27, they were so grateful to have a Barkara where they help each other to be better and lift each other up.
- o **Xenocentrism:** A preference for everything foreigner. Dr Jiji explained to us that Filipinos value everything from outside "if it is foreigner is better". This xenocentrism contributes to poverty in the country, because there is not interest for supporting national resources or products.

- o **Personalism:** Dr Jiji explained this concept like follows
“performance is judged by our personal relations to the people involved rather than their objective performance.” In other words, performance is valued or judged based on the relationship one has with the other person.
- **Cultural Norms - The expected behavior**
 - o **Respect for elders:** In Filipino culture there is a specific way to refer to older people. If it is a woman one should call her “Ate” and if it is a man “Kuya”. This was something I experienced since the first day, all the kids called me “Ate Laura” and even the teachers that were younger than me called me like that. Because of this respect to elders, it is normal for them to ask everyone’s age. This respect is not only perceived on the way younger people call older people, it is also related to the responsibility children have toward their parents and the obedience to elders without questioning.
 - o **Conflict:** The value of “harmony with nature and with other people” has a high place in Filipino culture. Therefore, conflict is avoided rather than resolved. No one can get mad at another person, that is considered rude. In the lecture Dr Jiji explained like “No true, just fun.” This norm is a fundamental piece in Filipino culture. It defines the way people relate to one another; at the same time, it constitutes one of the greatest challenges for transcultural work. This is going to be explained in the “transnational practice” section below.
- **Religious Practices**
 - o **Split level Christianity:** The Philippines is a religious country, over 90% of the population are Roman Catholic. One of the most important celebrations in the country is the “Sinulog” a festival dedicated to Santo Niño (Baby Jesus). At the same time

animistic practices are present in the daily live. That is why we talk about split level Christianity.

It was impressive to see how religious they are, specially because we were there during the preparation for Sinulog. People everywhere wearing shirts, practicing for the parade, and every place we visited had an altar with a statue of Santo Niño (Figure 1). An example of the combination of religion with animistic practices are the crosses most of them put in the door of their homes (Figure 2), they do that to protect their homes from bad spirits.



Figure 2 Santo Niño



Figure 1 Crosses on the door

- o **Tension between religion affiliations:** In the Philippines there is a high tension between Catholics and Evangelicals (they call them the Newborn). Because of the high influence of Catholicism in their culture, people who decide to be Newborn face tension specially in their families and barkaras. This is something the youth in Olive Grove church shared with us.

Similarities and Differences with Colombian Culture

Colombia like the Philippines was conquered by the Spanish, from the colonial period both countries adopted aspects of the Spanish culture into

their own. Catholicism was one of the main aspects Spanish transplanted into every country they conquered; this is why until today Catholicism is also the official religion of Colombia. However, the level of religiosity and the tension between Catholics and evangelicals is not as high in Colombia, compare to the Philippines. Animistic practices combine with religious rituals or beliefs are common in Colombia, specially in rural areas.

In Colombian culture family plays an important place in society and it is also expected for children to take care of their parents, however in my opinion this aspect is stronger in the Philippines. Other two aspects that we have in common are personalism and the tension between Catholics and Evangelical.

RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE

One of the aspects of the culture that was mentioned during the lectures was “corruption”, in my opinion this aspect is directly related to the Personalims that is present in the culture. Personalims puts relationship before experience or knowledge, therefore people in high positions in society will help their own family or friends to be in high positions, this reality contributes to the gap between poor and rich in the country, it also forces people in poor areas to embrace in activities like prostitution.

An example of this reality is the story of one of the girls from Good Shepherd, her Dad has a disability and cannot find a job, the government did not help them. In the midst of this situation, this girl started to offer her company to men on Facebook to get some money and help her Dad. Though what she offered was company and not sex, she was forced to do it. Not having enough opportunities to work, not having connections with people in power force people to embrace other “easy ways” to receive money. Therefore, preventive programs like G 1:27 are very important, because it helps the kids to understand that there are other options, to dream big and

work hard to accomplish those dreams, to understand the purpose for what they were created.

RESEARCH - ANJELYNE'S FAMILY

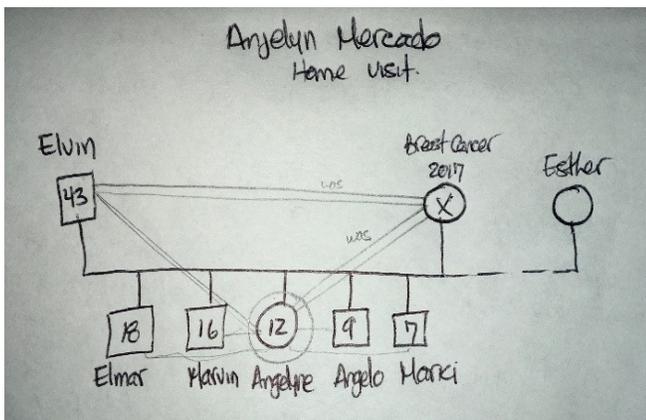


Figure 3 Genogram Anjelyne

The second day we were in the Philippines we had the opportunity to go out with a group of girls from G 1:27. Anjelyne was part of my group and one of the things that made me wanted to know more about her and her family was that she mentioned her mom's death.

During my visit to her home I was able to know a little more about her, her father and part of the grieving process they have gone through. I was able to share a meal with them and ate corn rice.

Here are some of my finding during this visit:

- Anjelyne is the third of five children, she is the middle child and the only girl. Her relationship with her father and brothers is overall good according to her father. Sometimes she argues with her brothers, but her dad affirmed "it is just joking".
- Elvin (Anjelyne's father) affirmed that he is proud of her daughter, he said she is smart and so talented at sports, she is athletic, and she likes Math. She is relational and loves spending time with her cousins. She enjoys running, playing basketball and volleyball.
- When Anjelyne is at home she does homework, helps doing laundry and cleaning.

- According to Elvin, Anjelyne is shy only when she is in front of a big audience. In this aspect I observed that she tends to be shy when she is starting to get to know people, like the first day we went out she was talkative.
- Elvin mentioned that it is unusual to see Anjelyne cry “she has a smiley face... She cried when her mom died, it was hard for all of us”
- She will get mad at her brothers when they “joke with her too much”, but it usually does not last long. She obeys her Dad for the most part, she is “good girl, easy to teach and does not have a bad attitude”. Her Dad mentioned that sometimes she does not obey her grandmother.
- According to Elvin, Anjelyne has her mom’s face and heart, and his happiness, patience and character.
- One of the things I observed during my visit was a picture of the family on the wall, that gave me the opportunity to talk about Anjelyne’s mom. Elvin shared how hard it was for him to lose his wife, this is how he described it “I was very down, I wanted to die... but when I looked at my children I realized I could not leave them alone, I need to be strong for them”.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION



Glory Reborn Organization was created in 2013 to “provide compassionate and holistic care to marginalized moms and babies of Cebu”¹.

¹ Glory Reborn Organization website. About us. <https://gloryreborn.org/about> consulted February 2020

They have helped almost 6,000 moms since they started, most of these moms come from the dumpsite community.

During our visit to this organization we interacted with Mai Mai the Social Worker and Hillary the founder. It was encouraging to hear Hillary's story, how God called her to be there and how she decided to obey. An important aspect of this organization is their holistic approach, they not only want moms to be physically healthy, they want them to be emotionally and spiritually healthy as well.

How do they do this?

- The social workers are in charge of the outreach and home visits to decide who is going to stay with them for the whole process or refer to other organizations. They want to see commitment in the moms and families to receive holistic help.
- They offer high quality and professional care during pregnancy and delivery. It is important to highlight that most employees in the clinic are Filipino. This aspect shows their interest for empowering the local community to work hand by hand.
- Some of their programs are pregnancy and newborn health classes, pregnancy micronutrient supplementation, labor and delivery, postpartum care, newborn immunization, lactation support, HIV Screening, and home visits.
- The social workers and medical professionals work together, they offer counseling and have a room specifically to pray for the moms and their families.
- Once the patients have given birth there are some home visits to make sure mom and baby are doing well and in some cases referral to other organizations for aftercare.

Biblical Foundation of International Mission Organizations

Though there was not a particular Bible verse mentioned during our visit or in their website, it is clear that this organization started in God's heart. God's heart for the marginalized inspired Hillary to move to the Philippines, study medicine there and then started this clinic, to bring hope and good care to the people that has been forgotten, those that have no access to good medical services. Hillary's obedience to the Lord has inspired many people around her, one of them is Mai Mai who has understood that more than a social worker she is a follower of Jesus, that her job as a social worker is her way she serves the Lord by loving the people she works for and shearing Jesus with them.

TRANSNATIONAL PRACTICE - THE CASE OF G 1:27

Every interaction between different cultures involves challenges, new learnings and opportunities. In this section I will present G 1:27 as an example of transnational work, the interactions between an American worker Pastor Rick and the Filipinos who are part of his staff.

1. International worker's perspective:

1.1 The process

Pastor Rick interactions with Filipino culture started in 1996 when he went to Cebu in a missions trip, he went back to the Philippines every year since. These short term trips allowed him to understand the Filipino culture, later on he married Jiji a Filipino woman and in 2006 they moved to Cebu.

Since the beginning Rick has partner with the locals, he recognizes the importance of empowering the local community to be leaders of transformation. When he started G 1:27 Tutoring Program, he worked hand by hand with a local teacher forming leaders by giving older kids the responsibility of tutoring the younger ones, as well as the opportunity to work and save money for their future college. Today in the G 1:27 Homeschool he can see the results of years of work, now his staff, the

teachers at school are some of those girls who came to the tutoring program when it started.

1.2 Challenges

Through the years communication - Confrontation and conflict resolution, has been the number one challenge in Rick's interactions with the locals. Though they have spend many years together and he understands that this aspect of not confrontation or conflict resolution is part of Filipino culture, it is still difficult for him to communicate with his staff in a way that will not be offensive to them when there are things that need attention or change.

1.3 Helpful Methods

As I asked Rick what has been helpful to him when working in a transcultural context, he said perseverance has been the key. From my interactions with him I can see that other helpful methods have been empowering the locals and values like love, Compassion, Gentleness, Kindness, Patience, humility, flexibility and adaptability.

2. Filipinos' perspective:

2.1 Process

I had the opportunity to talk to three of the teachers at G 1:27 homeschool. All of them have known Pastor Rick for over ten years since they were in his tutoring program. They received support for their college through G 1:27, part of it was the savings they had from their time helping in tutoring. Their interactions with Pastor Rick and other Americans have been constant during the last 13 years, this has given them an idea of American culture and values.

2.2 Challenges

Interestingly when I asked about the challenges when working with people from another culture, they said cultural differences, particularly confrontation has been the principal challenge they have faced.

“We Filipinos if there is a conflict, we don’t talk about it, if we don’t do what we are supposed to do we feel our boss is scolding us.”

2.3 Helpful Methods

Some things that have helped them improve those interactions have been: relationships with other Americans that help them understand their culture and “Ate Jiji”, though she is a Filipino woman she has lived in the US and is married with Ps Rick, having her there has helped the teachers understand why Ps Rick acts or communicates in certain ways and how important is to see that when he corrects them is because he wants the best for them.

3. My experience

In a personal level, some of the methods that were helpful to engage with the kids and staff of G 1:27 were: being present, listening to their stories, learning from them, playing with them, loving them and serving together.



PERSONAL GROWTH

1. How has this trip expanded your life horizon?

When I think about this trip, I cannot believe I was in the other side of the world, having the opportunity to be so far away from home and feel at home was amazing. It though me that home is where God calls me to be, it is where HE is. It expanded my live horizons by reminding that there are not frontiers in God's love, that He loves everyone and that there is not place too far for Him to show His love through people who have decided to obey Him, people like Pastor Rick and



Jiji, like Hillary at Glory Reborn, but also people like Dr Yun who loves this place and its people, like Rejen, Judy and Jessele who have decided to stay at G 1:27 and love the new generation of girls that as them are being transform by God's love and grace.

2. How has this trip influenced the purpose of your life?

This trip was a confirmation of God's calling for me to the Nations, it inspired me to keep walking in this direction, to obey His Great Commission to GO into the world and preach the Good News to everyone (Mark 16:15), to keep trusting that He who has called me will continue to provide everything I need.

3. What have you learned about yourself during this trip?

- I learned that God has given me an ability to connect with people from different cultures, I still need to learn how to steward that gift and use it for His glory.
- I learned that it is difficult for me to confront other people.