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Breaking the Bread, Sharing the Wine: Religion as Culture and Community in the Civic Life of Filipino-Americans

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**Breaking the Bread, Sharing the Wine: Religion as Culture and
Community in the Civic Life of Filipino-Americans**

by

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Dedication

For Emily Chan Salazar Cherry, my love, support, and inspiration through life and study

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Breaking the Bread, Sharing the Wine: Religion as Culture and Community in the Civic Life of Filipino-Americans

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At nearly 2.5 million people and growing via native birth and immigration, Asian American Catholics are an important part of the demographic transformation of American Catholicism. Among the Asian groups making the greatest impact are Filipino-Americans who are the second largest Asian American population and represent the second largest source of Catholic immigration to the United States, second only to Mexico. Woefully understudied, little is known about Filipino-Americans and the ways in which Catholicism impacts their community. Drawing on ethnographic data collected in Houston, Texas as well as survey analysis of the Social Capital Community Benchmark survey, this study explores the dynamic relationship between religion and civic life among first-generation Filipino-Americans. Contrary to what may be anticipated from the social scientific literature on Asian American Catholics in general, Filipino-American Catholics participate in civic life to the same degree as Protestants, if

not more. Although the Filipino-American community may currently face internal concerns that can detract from civic participation, religion plays an important role in overcoming these obstacles and mobilizing active civic lives. Focusing on four sets of extensive religious resources: 1) religious institutions, specifically the Catholic Church, 2) involvement in church through active weekly attendance, 3) involvement in church through other activities not associated with regular attendance such as Bible studies, and 4) involvement in religious groups such Couples for Christ and Palitaw that are not affiliated with a church, the findings of this study point to Catholicism as a dynamic and vibrant faith that bridges the spaces between culture, home, and civil society. It also highlights the more intimate and intensive resources found in these home devotional and prayer groups that inform and shape not only how Filipino-Americans define community but build it and engage it in the United States and the Philippines simultaneously.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

These Catholics are faithful to the observance of their religion, they are fervent and zealous in the belief of their doctrines. Yet they constitute the most republican and the most democratic classes in the United States (Tocqueville, 1994: 1:29).

Filipinos are deeply spiritual people...nowhere is one's spirituality tested more than in the situation of being an immigrant in this country [United States], especially a new immigrant trying to make sense of life that has been uprooted and disconnected from that which is familiar, nurturing, and accepting (Burgonio-Watson, 1997: 326).

On a Saturday morning shortly after 8 A.M., Dan, a first generation Filipino-American in his late thirties,¹ wakes up early and urges his family to get ready for the day ahead. After a late-night household prayer meeting, Dan and his wife Lita are exhausted but inspired. Weary from a long week of work and left with only the precious few hours of the weekend to get household chores done and spend quality time with their three children (Josie, Tess and Mathew), the Cruz family struggles to find the time to do anything else. However, as Dan and Lita describe this morning,² like many of the hundred plus Filipino-Americans I observed and interviewed, they are genuinely energized for their weekend of community service and believe that their efforts make a real difference.

Dan and Lita are devoted Catholics and members of the charismatic renewal movement Couples for Christ (CFC). They feel spiritually obligated to feed the poor and help their community. Quoting their conversations on scripture from their weekly

¹ The term Filipino-American is used throughout this study to depict a people that are literally dual nationals in the truest sense. Despite the fact that a host of terms are used by Filipinos in the United States to describe themselves depending on where they live, where they were born, when they might have immigrated to the United States, and depending on who is asking, Filipino-American is the most widely used and captures the transnational character of the people (see Posadas, 1999; Espiritu, 2003).

² The following account is based on interviews with the Cruz family and observations of their work at a community soup kitchen and half-way house in Houston, Texas. Out of respect for the family's wishes, their names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

household prayer meetings, Dan and Lita insist that there is a connection between the message of the Gospels and the significance of their own community service, “[it is] a heartfelt reflection on the role of Christian families in God’s plan for humanity and it sticks with you the whole week long.” Dan and Lita see their civic life as an extension of their religious life. As parents of young children, Dan and Lita also hope to inspire their kids to follow in their footsteps by involving them in both their religious lives and their community work at Fishes and Loaves, a local non-profit soup kitchen and halfway house. Dan describes the work at the soup kitchen as, “a special way of teaching our children compassion for others” and he believes that the work exposes the kids to the “other realities of life.” Despite what he feels are clear benefits for everyone involved, Dan also acknowledges how chaotic the mornings can be, “it is quite a feat just to get there.”

Once at Fishes and Loaves, the Cruz family unloads the car and helps other volunteers from various backgrounds prepare the day’s meal. It is not exactly a home cooked meal but it is warm and made with loving intentions. On Sunday the lunch is served after Catholic mass but on Saturday the food is simply blessed and most bow their heads in thanks for a warm meal as the volunteers pray and sing. Some of those who come to the kitchen come as life-long people of the street, others are newly homeless or simply down on their luck for the month. Whatever the case may be, Dan tells me that he often wonders what it must be like to be in their place or what brought them to this point. Lacking the courage to ask or fearing to offend someone, Dan does not question anyone but expresses privately just how moved he is by this work, “it’s humbling... they totally depend on God’s providence [and] everyday for them is a challenge to stay alive.”

Although the work at the kitchen does not provide near enough to solve the problems of homelessness in Houston, Dan is fulfilled, “even in some small way we’re glad to be able to do something and for myself, it feeds my spirit—literally!”

Feeling a sense of accomplishment, the Cruz family helps clean the kitchen with other volunteers then loads up the car to begin the hour drive home. Summing up the day, Lita and Dan offer that, “we are not just members of one community, one home, but servants of the Lord who must heal poverty wherever it exists...” Suggesting that things are far worse in the Philippines, Dan also points out to his children that,

We have an obligation to serve both here and there... this is our home [United States] but so is the Philippines and through Filipinos, God will show the world what he can do. Here we serve food to the poor but in the Philippines we are rebuilding a nation through the poor.

Dan and Lita acknowledge that their children are far too young to fully understand the message but they hope the seeds of care for all of humanity are being planted just the same.

On another Saturday morning in Houston, Lyn, a retired first-generation Filipina-American in her early sixties, has been standing in her kitchen for hours making *hopia*, a Filipino pastry sweet made of green mungo beans. It is a busy day for Lyn as she prepares well over fifty pastries for the San Lorenzo Center’s fundraising dinner and dance at 8 P.M.³ Like Dan and Lita, Lyn is a devout Catholic. She is not a member of Couples for Christ but she is a member of another Catholic renewal group called *Palitaw*.⁴ Lyn is not feeding the homeless with her *hopia* nor is she volunteering at a soup

³ The San Lorenzo Center is named for the first Filipino Catholic saint Lorenzo Ruiz. The center is essentially a Catholic community hall for dancing and special celebrations in the area.

⁴ Palitaw is named for a special Filipino sweet traditionally prepared once a year at Christmas. The group uses the name as a symbol for something special, rare, and Filipino.

kitchen. For Lyn, taking care of her oldest son's children, singing in the church choir, and helping out with projects at the parish church in addition to events at the San Lorenzo center are a full-time affair in and of themselves.

Taking out another batch of hopia, Lyn emphasizes how she does not have time for charity work but offers, "I do what I can to help, it isn't much... I don't volunteer or anything like that." Most Americans, however would consider much of what Lyn does as works of charity and volunteerism. Whether it is baking for a community fundraiser or working on a parish project, Lyn leads an active civic life. And she feels spiritually obligated to help, "I give money when we have it, just a dollar here and there...and [I] pray the rosary daily in hope that God will answer the prayers of those in need." Although Lyn sees her civic life as an integral part of her religious life, she does not really think of her efforts in civic terms. As Lyn describes it, "I'm just doing my part to help, that's what God asks us to do..."

Throughout our conversation in the kitchen we are interrupted by the ringing of Lyn's telephone. Lyn is unable to pick it up while in the heat of cooking but pauses to listen to each message as they are being recorded. At first the calls pose a bit of a distraction, but they quickly become the focus our discussion. One call in particular, a bit more formal than the rest, was from a representative of the Houston-Galveston Catholic Archdioceses calling to remind Lyn, although not by name, to vote in the coming election. As the representative put it,

I am calling you, as a good Catholic, to remind you that the coming election is an important one—the issues of immigration and gay marriage are central to the teaching of the Church...the future of the country depends on your vote, the ability of the Church to attend to the poor many of whom are immigrants depends on you, and the future of the family, a union sanctified by God as a model of

community, is being threatened in the coming election. Please vote, it is your civic right and your duty as a Catholic.

Looking at Lyn for an explanation, she states that this was the first time she had ever received a call like this from the Church. Somewhat surprised she offers, “I usually vote but every year people are telling me that the issues are more and more important—they are making it more moral vote than politics” Taking out the last batch of hopia, Lyn leaves me with one final thought before she excuses herself to run errands for the fundraiser,

you know I vote because of my faith on certain issues but religion has been the cause of so many problems. Just looks at the Philippines, it’s a mess, they use religion but they aren’t really religious...religious people—people of faith—don’t do what they do...

FILIPINO-AMERICAN RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC LIFE

This is a study of religion in the civic lives of Filipino-Americans in Houston, Texas. It is the story of how many devout Filipino-American Catholics build and engage community. And for many Filipino-Americans interviewed, community can mean a small group, the Catholic Church, the parish, the larger city in which they live, and the Philippines simultaneously. At the heart of this study are first hand accounts of Filipino-American lives and the ways in which they think and feel that faith matters to all things civic. Although the names have been changed to provide anonymity to the one hundred plus participants of the study, their words are presented here as a testament of how many Filipino-Americans see their civic life in relation to their practice of Catholicism. After living in the Filipino-American community in Houston and seeing it as an outsider through the eyes of my first-generation Filipina wife of over fifteen years, the story told is

sociological and personal. The analysis it presents is both removed and near to the subject.

The slice of life and community offered in the vignettes above, in many ways, represents a typical Saturday for many post-1965 first-generation Filipino-Americans. Engaged with the community in numerous ways, their stories offer a glimpse at the often unseen but vital relationship between immigrant religious and civic life. In the last two decades immigration and migration scholarship has changed dramatically. Moving from a once static view of one-way immigrant assimilation, recent scholarship demonstrates that migrants can and do maintain ties with their homelands while also becoming active citizens in the countries that receive them (see review Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). For these immigrants, life is a transnational existence that can blur the lines of our understanding of what it means to be good citizens (see review Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). And, as so many social scientists have largely ignored, religion can stand at the heart of this transnational existence.

Studying post-1965 first-generation Filipino-Americans in Houston requires telling the story of a people embedded in transnational religious communities (see Faist, 2000a; 2000b on defining transnational communities). With one foot in the Philippines and another in the United States, they construct lives that honor and reify identities on both sides of the hyphen and shape the civic landscape of both nations (Tuan, 1998). Their story in many ways is a journey of faith. One that reveals itself not just in the active happenings of transnational religious institutions such as the Catholic Church but in a people engaged in a lived religion, an everyday religious life in the streets, in homes,

prayer meetings, and at public festivals.⁵ Catholicism is a dynamic and vibrant faith that bridges the spaces between home, culture, and church life itself. Providing a sense of stability and legitimacy with no need of a passport or other legal documentation (Levitt, 2007), Catholicism facilitates the ability of many religiously engaged Filipino-Americans to forge a type of global citizenry through religious networks that may be confirmed through baptism records but is largely upheld by faith in action.

First-generation Filipino-Americans are a diasporic people. For many Filipino-Americans, religion links their migrant households, prayer groups and home devotionals, congregations and communities to a cultural understanding of faith, family, and a civic life that spans nations (see Levitt 2004: 848). Their lives are shaped and influenced as much by the socio-political contours of their new home in the United States and its unique relationship to the Philippines, as the relationship of church and state in the Philippines itself. Filipino-American religious lives and practices, in general, point to the important ways in which migrant groups and institutions are engaging and in some ways revitalizing civil society across borders. This is a crucial point that is somehow overlooked in much of the debate over the current state of American civic life (Putnam, 2000; Verba, 1995; Lichterman, 2005). And whether religious or not, in a community that is overwhelming Catholic, Filipino-Americans are still effected on many levels by these groups and institutions. Filipino-American religious life, as evident from those in Houston in the opening vignette, also reveals the powerful emotive force that covenants

⁵ Following Orsi's pivotal study of Italian immigrants in Harlem (2002), this study focuses on the power of faith on the more lived side of religion. Like Orsi's Italian case, the role of this lived side of religion has historically played an important role in the community life of Filipino-Americans and still does to this day.

play in binding people to a moral order and compelling their engagement with civil society for what they consider to be the “common good.”

Charting the complex dimensions of first-generation Filipino-American religious lives in Houston, this study returns to Tocqueville, like so many others, to ask a question that has not been sufficiently explored: does the religious life of new immigrants, Catholic immigrants specifically, positively impact their civic lives? And here, civic life, like Filipino-Americans lives in general, is unbound and not limited to an American existence but civic lives that cross borders. Tocqueville once saw Catholic Americans as the most republican and democratic classes in the United States but today is this the case for the civic lives of new waves of Catholic immigrants, among which are Filipino Americans?

Recent scholarship that continues to return to Tocqueville for inspiration has for one reason or another ignored his thoughts on Catholicism. It should be more than apparent however, that Catholicism in light of Mexican and Filipino migration is once again vital to American civic discourse.⁶ Not all Filipinos are Catholic but Catholics make up the overwhelming majority of the Filipino population both in the United States and the Philippines. Over the past four hundred years Catholicism has been one of, if not *the*, most culturally pervasive influences in the Islands. Beyond the enormous cultural impact Catholicism has made, institutionally the Church has served both as a tool of colonial conquest and a buffer between an indigenous population and the cruelties of the Spanish crown. For better or worse, the Church was a source of hegemonic power that redefined and legitimized social relations while molding Philippine society in its own

image. At the same time, however, Catholicism was also the source of Philippine independence, EDSA 1,⁷ a non-violent democratic revolution led by the Catholic Filipinos in cooperation with the Catholic Church and peoples of all faiths. While other religions, particularly Protestantism and Islam, still thrive in the Philippines none have supplanted Catholicism nor will they in the foreseeable future. Hence the emphasis of this study is on the complicated and often puzzling intersection of Filipino-Americans Catholics' religious and civic lives. This study turns to first-generation Filipino-Americans in Houston as Filipino and American, as immigrants and citizens, as peoples of two nations inextricably connected by a deeply religious faith. Focusing on faith and the Filipino, this study sets out to understand the nature of religion in diaspora for Filipino-American Catholics in Houston and what that journey means for their civic life not just in the United States but in a home and a culture that defies borders. Turning to this task, in the following section I begin by situating the complexities of immigration, religion, and civic life in the American context.

SITUATING IMMIGRATION, RELIGION, AND CIVIC LIFE IN AMERICA

In the next fifty years the ethnic and racial composition of the United States is expected to make a significant shift. According to recent Census projections, nearly 50% of the country will be non-white by 2050. Since fertility and mortality are fairly low in the United States, a substantial part of this population change is occurring as a result of immigration. It is estimated that between 1990 and 2005 that 14.5 million immigrants

⁶ Mexico and the Philippines are the two largest sources of Catholic immigration today (see Jasso et al, 2003).

primarily from Asian and Hispanic countries of origin were accepted as legal residents to the United States, a growth rate of nearly one million people a year (see Martin and Midgley, 2006). Subsequently, if Census projections are correct, by 2050 the Asian and Hispanic populations in the country will almost double from 4% of the American population to 10% in the case Asian Americans and a growth from 13% to 25% of the American population in the case of Hispanic Americans.

Immigrants have historically played a major role in shaping American society. This role may prove to be even more dramatic in the coming years. New immigrants, after 1965, are markedly different than immigrants from prior waves. They are racially and ethnically more varied, come from a greater variety of countries, and bring with them a multitude of linguistic and cultural forms that are either new or little known (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000). As these new waves of immigrants introduce greater diversity into the United States, they have also sparked intense debate that increased immigration will cause environmental problems, depress wages and conditions for American workers, and reduce incentives for some industries to modernize (see Brimelow, 1995; Lutten and Tanton, 1994). These fears have only intensified post 9/11 leading many to question the assimilability of new immigrants (in general see Abernathy, 1993; Nelson, 1994). That is, can they or do they want to become American? And will they give back to their new communities and nation as responsible American citizens (see Levitt, 2007).

During much of the 19th and early 20th century the United States was often thought of metaphorically as a melting pot, a social experiment in which immigrants would lose what made them “ethnic” by slowly adopting mainstream values, norms,

⁷ The EDSA 1 Revolution is named after the location of the mass mobilization on the Epifanio de los

beliefs and practices. The reality today, and even then for that matter, is far more complex. The classical assimilation paradigm of scholars such as Gordon (1964) has increasingly been challenged, particularly in terms of how scholars understand processes of immigrant acculturation and structural adaptation (Wildsmith, 2004; Jacoby, 2004; Brubaker, 2001; Arias, 2001; Alba and Nee, 1997; Portes and Zhou, 1993). While contemporary theorists who support the more general assimilation framework still hold to the idea that new immigrants will become less “ethnic” the longer they are removed from their ancestral homeland, scholars increasingly suggests that immigrants do not lose their culture rather mainstream society absorbs it over time (see Alba and Nee, 1997). Those who support the segmented assimilation perspective, on the other hand, suggest that there are multiple trajectories that shape and inform the assimilation process, a case in which immigrants may become more “ethnic” in regards to some cultural practices such as religion and more “mainstream” in other cultural practices simultaneously (see Kivisto, 2005; Brubaker, 2001; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Warner and Wittner, 1998; Warner, 2005). To this point, however, the case of Filipino-Americans has largely been ignored leaving these debates virtually unexplored among one of the nations most vibrant and growing immigrant populations.

Social scientists increasingly acknowledge the fact that migration does not require immigrants to cut ties with their homeland (Portes, 2003; Jacoby, 2004; see review of the literature, Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). And this is important to the Filipino-American context. Whether the focus of our analytical attention is on familial, social, economic, or political phenomena, cultural practices and processes transcend borders on different

Santos Avenue in 1986 that led to the toppling of the Marcos regime.

levels bridging nations, communities, and even cultures themselves (Grasmuck and Pressar, 1991; Schiller and Glick, 1992; Basch et al, 1994; Guarnizmo, 1997; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Itzigshon et al 1999; Faist, 2000a, 2000b; Kivisto, 2001, Levitt, 2001, 2004, 2007; Portes and Zhou, 1993, Portes, 2003). While some question the extent and frequency with which these transnational lives occur (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004; Dahinden, 2005), culture is still one of the most salient factors social scientists must come to terms with if they are going to understand the impact of current immigration on both sending and receiving countries.

Among the numerous cultural forms that are salient in migrants' lives are the wealth of diverse religious beliefs and practices they carry with them to their new homes. This diversity is not limited, however, to variation across religious traditions but diversity within religious traditions as well. One of the largest anticipated changes in the American religious landscape is expected to occur in the restructuring of American Catholicism through Asian and Hispanic immigration (Lien and Yang, 2004; Warner, 2005; Jasso, 2003; Jenkins, 2000; Levitt, 2007). At nearly 2.5 million people and growing via immigration and native birth,⁸ Asian Americans Catholics are an increasingly important part of this demographic transformation (Warner, 2005; Jasso et al 2002; 2003).⁹ Among the Asian groups making the greatest impact on the Church are Filipino-Americans. Filipinos represent the second largest source of Catholic immigration to the United States, second only to Mexico, and this figure is expected to increase as young Filipinas,

⁸ The *Asian and Pacific Presence* estimates that 83.0% of Filipino Americans (1.54 million), 29.0% of Vietnamese Americans (0.33 million), 17.0 % of Indian Americans (0.29 million), 12.3% of Chinese Americans (0.30 million), 7.0% of Korean Americans (0.07 million), and 4.0% of Japanese Americans (0.03 million) are Catholic (see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) 2001 *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*. Washington, DC: USCCB).

the overwhelming majority of whom are practicing Catholics, enter the country to meet the demands of another American nursing shortage (Coonan, 2008; in general see Choy, 2003).¹⁰

Since religious institutions and religious adherents have had an historic and unique relationship to American society (Tocqueville, 1994; Putnam, 2000), it is not surprising that scholars have increasingly pointed to the impact religion has on new immigrant lives (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Warner, 1998; Jenkins, 2000; Carnes and Yang et al, 2004; Haddad et al, 2003). Focusing on recent immigration from East and South Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Latin America, these studies have demonstrated the varied resources that religious communities can provide their immigrant members. Whether it is in the form of facilitating the settlement process or providing material and personal aid in times of need, religion is shown to be a salient part of immigrant identities and a valuable psychosocial resource for adjusting to and surviving in a new country (Warner, 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Bankston and Zhou, 1996; Hurh and Kim, 1990; Min, 1992).

Despite the valuable insight these studies and others provide us, two overlapping and key dimensions remain under theorized and documented, 1) the impact religious life has on the civic life of immigrants, particularly Asian Americans who account for about 26.4% of the American foreign-born population and 2) the impact religion has on the transnational ties these migrants forge across borders and civic arenas. This is a surprise considering the amount of social scientific research pointing to the importance of the

⁹ Mooney (2006) argues that immigration is changing the shape of Catholic Church. She also notes that as a result of this transformation the Church is reasserting itself as a “prophetic voice” in society.

relationship between religion and civic participation (Park and Smith, 2000; Verba et al, 1995; Djupe and Grant, 2001; Peterson, 1992; Wald et al, 1993; Ellison, 1992; Morris, 1984; Harris, 1994; Ellison and Sherkat, 1995; Beyerlein and Chaves, 2003; Ayala, 2000; McVeigh and Sikkink, 2001). It is also surprising that few have explored these dimensions within the Filipino-American case given its projected population growth and the historical importance of Catholicism both in the Philippines and in their American communities.

For whatever reasons, and this is particularly true of immigration and migration scholarship, social scientists have largely overlooked the role religion plays in mediating, fostering, and sustaining the civic life of migrants in more than one country (see Levitt, 2003 for a review of scholarship to this point). Tocqueville once remarked that Irish immigrants were some of the most obedient and democratic citizens in the United States. For Tocqueville, a large part of their success in American democracy was Catholicism itself. Nearly two centuries after Tocqueville's observations on the impact of religion on American civil society, social scientists are left wondering if this relationship is relevant in current discussions of new immigration, particularly in the case of Filipino-Americans Catholics.

Civic life constitutes a host of ways people participate in civil society. Whether one defines civic life¹¹ as political engagement such as voting, non-electoral actions such as signing a petition, community involvement such as charity work or in the present study

¹⁰ It is estimated that Western demands have drained the Philippines of 85% of their trained nurses (Coonan, 2008).

¹¹ I avoid the term civic engagement here, largely because of the numerous ways in which it has been defined with little consistency; it is a problematic term to say the least, one which galvanizes people along lines I seek to blur in the present study.

all three arenas, very little is known about the effects of religion on the civic participation of Asian American Catholics. And even less is known about the civic and cultural ties they maintain with their homelands.

Recalling the vignettes that open this chapter, first-generation Filipino-Americans such as Dan, Lita, and Lyn are engaged in a civic life that spans civic arenas and national borders. Far more complex than the categories of measurement found in surveys, Filipino-American civic life expresses care and concern for others that often blurs the lines of what social scientists think of as civic engagement. For the Filipinos in these ethnographic accounts, civic life is a spiritual obligation to not only realize the rights and responsibilities of citizenship but take action for what they perceive to be a greater good (Wuthnow, 1995; Williams, 1999). While most Americans would suggest Lyn is civically active, she would not use these terms nor would she see her efforts as anything but helping. Lyn does not see herself as a volunteer or a model citizen but a good Catholic struggling to help her community through baking, singing at church functions, and donating what little she can to parish projects. Surveys may inadvertently miss this point and hence the more cultural understandings of what it *means* to volunteer in the Filipino-American community are lost. Surveys also fail to capture the emotive power religion plays in shaping how Filipino-Americans see civic life and are mobilized to it. The work of Dan and Lita at the soup kitchen, as an example, may be seen outright as volunteerism but there is far more to their civic life. Serving food for them is part of God's plan. This covenant challenges them to not only to feel for humanity but to act. And acting is not always a local affair.

If social scientists limit their focus on where these acts of volunteering occur, in the United States, they might miss a larger picture that stand at the center of the Cruz family story. While Dan and Lita take time on Saturdays to help out at Loaves and Fishes, they are equally engaged in the Philippines sending money and even taking “family vacations” back to the Islands to build homes for the poor. It is this complex story and role of a vibrant Catholicism in it that situates many Filipino-American civic lives in Houston. Before discussing the aims and broader contours of the study, the following sections provide an overview of Filipino-Americans and outlines where their civic lives and religious lives as Catholics may present a unique puzzle in the social scientific literature.

FILIPINO-AMERICANS, AN OVERVIEW

Filipinos have lived in the United States for over 200 years, one of the oldest Asian immigrant groups in the country. Filipinos first came to the United States immediately after the American acquisition of the Philippines from Spain in 1898. It was not until the passage of new immigrant legislation in 1965, however, that their numbers began to dramatically increase thrusting them into the wider American racial plain (Posadas, 1999). Today Filipino-Americans are the second largest Asian American group and the largest Asian American Catholic community. They are also one of the fastest growing ethnic populations in the country,¹² but they are one of the least visible and one of the least studied (Warner, 2005; Agbaayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995). It would appear that there are simply not enough Filipino-American scholars or those interested in

Filipinos to garner many sociological studies. Whereas Filipino-Americans draw more attention in Asian American Studies due in large part to greater number of Filipino scholars in the field, here too the study of Filipino immigration and settlement remains oddly outside the mainstream. Many Asian American scholars lament this invisibility not just within their own field but in American history and the media as well (Morales, 1987). When Filipinos do make it into the news or mainstream publications, it is often an expose on a local scandal in California or an informational update on the chaos of life and politics in the Philippines.

Largely ignored in the religion and new immigrant literature as well, Filipino-Americans pose a unique puzzle. Filipinos represent both new and historic immigrant waves of various socio-economic backgrounds, a model minority on the one hand and perpetual foreigners on the other.¹³ They are Asian Americans but the least Asian of all Asians by their own accounts but still victims of American xenophobia and racism (Posadas, 1999; Hagedorn, 1991; Tuan, 1998). Early waves of Filipino immigration experienced intense prejudice and discrimination and today many Filipino-Americans still feel the ill effects of American racism (Cordova, 1986; San Juan, 1997; 2000; Posadas, 1999; Root, 1997). The historical relationship of Filipino-Americans to the United States as both colonial subjects and citizens is also unique among post-1965 immigrants. And as Catholics their story and the study of their civic life is somewhat

¹² It is estimated that Filipino Americans will number over two million by mid-century and as such may surpass Chinese Americans as the largest Asian ethnic group in the U.S (see Bonus, 2000).

¹³ As a group, Asian-Americans have historically been portrayed as a model minority capable of overcoming disadvantages through ethnic and cultural traits that predispose them to be successful both economically and in educational attainment (Ecklund, 2005b; Peterson, 1966; Sowell, 1981; Bell, 1985; Osajima, 1988; Okihiro, 1994; Woo, 2000). Subsequently, being lumped in with other Asians has resulted in Filipino-Americans being the smallest Asian cohort in the University of California system despite being

problematic to the civic engagement literature. Understanding this, social scientists must paint a broader picture of Filipino-Americans seeing them as perhaps the most western of all Asians but ever still the victims of American racism. They are estranged but in community. They are a people in Diaspora torn between two countries. Many Filipino-Americans are also deeply religious and active in their parish churches but still remain invisible to many even within their own churches. While the average American may not know much about Filipino-Americans they are a vibrant a part of civil society in the United States. Situating their story is not just an exercise of history and biography but one that redefines how social scientists view civic life today in America and beyond, a world increasingly freed of borders despite the resiliency of the nation-state.

Civically Engaged Catholics

Catholics have been viewed with suspicion since the beginning of their arrival in numbers. Catholics, especially during the time of Tocqueville's observations, were considered tolerable but disturbingly different. They were seen as clannish, subversive, and were believed to hold extra-constitutional commitments to the Pope. And their families were larger, their school system was seen a threat to American values, and their clergy were disturbingly unmarried (see Greeley, 1977).

Today, any differences between Catholics and other Americans, particularly in civic life, are viewed by social scientists more along lines of structural differences in their religious institutions and not through the lens of American xenophobia. Looking at the acquisition of civic skills, Verba et al (1995) suggest that being Protestant of any

the largest Asian group in California with comparable levels of high school academic success (Okiihiro,

denomination promotes civic life while being Catholic is a hindrance. Drawing on the case of Hispanic Americans, Verba et al believe that Catholics are less involved in their church as a direct result of the hierarchical structure of the Church. Protestants on the other hand are more involved because of the smaller size of their congregations, the democratic structure of their churches, and lay participation in church matters. More recent studies, however, suggest that the role the Catholic Church plays in the civic lives of Hispanic and Latino Americans does not support Verba et al's claims (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001; Diaz-Stevens, 2003; Diaz-Stevens and Stevens-Arroyo, 1998; Espino, Leal, and Meier, 2007). Nor do more transnational studies that have increasingly demonstrated the strength and resiliency of Catholic religious networks across borders (Levitt, 2003). Jones-Correa and Leal (2001) for example challenge Verba by stressing that churches, regardless of organizational structure, act as powerful civic associations that facilitate the flow of political information and subsequently lead to political recruitment. Menjivar (2003) on the other hand notes that differences do in fact exist between Salvadoran Protestant and Catholic churches. Although in both cases Menjivar found that the churches equally supported new immigrants and connected them to their community, they did so, on a different scale. Protestants were more homogeneous and focused on a smaller ethnic or regional group while Catholics were more diverse and concerned with uniting all people in the parish through an extended communitarian ethic.

Among the sparse studies addressing the Asian American case, Ecklund and Park (2007) suggest that Asian American Catholics: 1) do not participate in civic life to the same degree as Protestants, 2) may currently face internal community concerns that

1994; Almirol, 1988).

detract from civic participation outside their parish, and 3) may not adequately receive teachings of community service from the Catholic Church (Ecklund and Park, 2007:242). Cherry (forthcoming) finds that Protestant Asian Americans are more likely to vote and be interested in politics than Asian American Catholics, but in terms of other community measures such as participating in a community project or neighborhood association they find that being Protestant is not a significant predictor of civic participation. The staying power of Verba's argument in much of the literature may be a plausible reason for which Catholics have been under studied until more recently, but recent studies suggest that the Catholic Church and its hierarchal structure is not a hindrance to civic life. One thing is made clear, the issues surrounding the civic life of Asian American Catholics are far from resolved.

Looking at volunteering specifically, differences in volunteering rates by Asian American ethnicity may be attributed to a combination of religious factors, specifically participation in church beyond attendance, and other socio-economic factors that operate in different ways by religious denomination (Ecklund and Park, 2005). Differences in gender participation were not found to be a factor among Asian American Catholics while Asian American Protestant volunteering rates were higher among women. Ecklund and Park (2005) also found considerable differences in the ways in which education and income influenced volunteering between Asian American Catholics and Protestants. For some, these divergent paths are a product of history and liturgy, a matter of differing social ethics. Tropman (2002), for example, suggests that there is a Catholic ethic that social scientist should seriously consider in comparison to Weber's more famous

Protestant ethic. Like Menjivar (2003), Tropman (2002) suggests that Protestants are more individualistic while Catholics are more caring and community oriented.

A PUZZLE

Turning attention specifically to Filipino-Americans, they are not civically inept (see Lien et al, 2004). Should this be surprising? Outside of high Filipino-American voting rates, the social scientific literature on civic participation suggests that Filipino-Americans, as Asian Americans and devoutly Catholic, are somehow dually doomed (see Ecklund and Park, 2007). While in reality the opposite may be true, to this point there is not a clear picture in the social scientific literature on the role of Catholicism in Filipino-American civic life. Tocqueville, perhaps bias in his assessment, believed that Catholic immigration was important to the future of American democracy and played a key role in American civic life. If this is still the case, what should social scientists make of the civic contributions of Filipino-Americans today? Focusing on both the communal and political side of civic life this study asks, does Filipino-American religiosity, Catholicism specifically, facilitate or impede participation in politics and subsequent integration into local, national or transnational community life? What roles do institutional and non-institutional religious resources play in this process? And lastly, what roles do emotion and spiritual covenant play in bridging these resources within moral orders and visions of a good society?

Studying Filipino Americans in Houston and Beyond

This study started as an ethnography of the Filipino-American community in Houston, Texas but evolved into being something more. During the first two years of data collection, a local snowball sample of roughly thirty two couples carried me both literally and figuratively across both state and national boundaries. The people I interviewed, and in some cases lived with, helped me understand the intricate relationship between their religious life and involvement in civil society. What they revealed was not solely about civic life in Houston, Texas but a broader community that connected me to Dallas, New Jersey, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and the Philippines themselves. This somewhat unexpected turn led to several methodological complications but resulted in an expansion of the study's scope not just theoretically, but also in the mobilization of secondary data sources that shed further light on the patterns I was finding in the ethnographic data. This is a study of Filipinos in American Diaspora—families and friends whose lives are inextricably connected across borders both imagined and fixed. Although I can not claim that the results are representative of the Filipino-American experience nationwide, to my knowledge this study paints a broader national and international picture than what currently exists.

I also can not claim that Houston is representative of other Filipino-American communities. In fact there are reasons to believe that it is not.¹⁴ Houston poses a unique case, one selected for its peculiarities as a strength not a weakness. Houston is a fairly

¹⁴ According to Lein and Carnes (2004), there is a great deal of regional variation in the religiosity of Asian Americans. Compared to the pilot data of the National Asian American Political Survey (NAAPS), data collected on Houston by Klineberg (see 2004) indicates that religion draws greater public support and is more visible than West cost sites such as Los Angels targeted by the NAAPS.

new Filipino Community but is growing at a rapid rate.¹⁵ Unlike the West coast, Houston lacks the historical foundations of pre-1965 Filipino immigration including the establishment of Manila towns. While the age of the Manila towns, for the most part, has come and gone with the passing of many first-generation pre-1965 immigrants (Lee, 2005), these historical roots provide a context for post-1965 Filipino immigrants on the west coast that are not intact in Houston.

The linkages with the past that exist in the Houston situation are more fluid and in many cases come as an inheritance brought to the area from other regions of the country or directly from the Philippines themselves. Of the families and young couples that formed the core of my snowball sample, the majority resettled in Houston from either the east coast or west coast, and all others were more recent immigrants who entered the country through Houston to be reunited with family and friends who once resided in these other areas. As a “new immigrant” or less established community, Houston serves as an excellent case for studying post-1965 immigrant civic life (Ebaugh and Cafetz, 2002; Hernandez, 1997; Yang, 2002).

FILIPINO-AMERICAN IN HOUSTON

Since the changes made in the occupational provisions of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act,¹⁶ the Filipino-American community in Houston has grown. Today, the

¹⁵ According to Census projections, the Filipino-American community in the greater Houston area is expected to grow from roughly 8% of the Asian American population to near 20% in the next twenty years (see Harris and Fort Bend County projections, www.census.gov).

¹⁶ The 1965 Immigration Act repealed previous national and ethnic quotas and established several new criteria for immigration including a provision for professionals, scientists, and artist of “exceptional ability.” Filipino immigration flourished post-1965 as engineers and medical professionals filled shortages in the American labor market.

Filipino-American population in the Harris and Fort Bend county areas, Houston and its surrounding suburbs, is roughly 21,509 people (see the 2003 American Community Survey Profile). A large part of this growth, as noted above, came after 1965 and can be attributed to the growth of the Houston Medical Center. Findings from the Houston Area Survey suggest that Filipino Houstonians are well educated, 78% hold college or professional degrees. They have also established over 1,203 businesses, many of them health related, and employ nearly 8,000 people with connections to other Filipino-American companies on the West coast (see 1997 Economic Census, Minority and Women Owned Businesses). With an extensive knowledge and experience in multiple Filipino-American communities and as post-1965 immigrants themselves, Filipinos-Americans in Houston are largely well networked with other Filipino communities throughout the United States and abroad. Unlike Filipino-American communities on the west coast with more established waves of immigration prior to 1965, Filipino-Americans in Houston largely have no established template or local histories to draw from in building and sustaining their own community. Outside of sheer innovation, what many Filipinos in Houston turn to is the memory of how community was built in another home and their personal experiences in the groups and institutions that are central to their religious lives. Houston thus provides a perfect site for understanding how a local community is built from scratch and the role religion can play in not only forging these bonds but bridging broader civic arenas.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study employs a mixed methodological approach. I started this research as an ethnographic case study of the Filipino-American community in Houston but quickly discovered the stories Filipinos were telling me needed to be situated in a more national context. As Filipino-Americans discussed their civic life in Houston in contrast or comparison to other places they had lived, I began to question how the Houston case fit into the national Filipino-American experience. To answer this question—at least in part—I conducted quantitative analysis using the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (details below) in order to gain more generalizable insights into the relationship between their religious and civic life. However, given the relatively small Filipino-American sample in the SCCB survey, the rigorous qualitative work conducted in Houston, Texas was invaluable. In order to fully understand the relationship between religion and civic life for Filipino-Americans required getting face-to-face with respondents, conducting in-depth interviews over extended periods of time, and actually living with respondents over long weekends. It was only in this context that the emotive force religion plays in the lives of many Filipino-Americans could be observed and experienced up close, something few social scientist have done (see Lichterman, 2005).

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted in the Houston area with members of the Filipino-American community in order to provide a deeper account of the personal motivations and various resources that facilitate their civic life. These interviews were also used to explore the meanings derived from these engagements within the broader context of how Filipino-Americans define faith and community. Over a four year

period, 75 face-to-face interviews were conducted from a sample drawn primarily from post-1965 first-generation Filipino-Americans and their children who were also first generation or 1.5ers depending on the age at which they left the Philippines.¹⁷ The gender of the respondents is 48% female and 52% male. Typically, interviews lasted two hours but in the case of my core sample, 32 couples who were members of Couples for Christ and Palitaw, additional follow-up interviews were conducted either by phone, email or instant messaging throughout the study. Participant observation and analysis of group documents and materials formed a vital part of situating these interviews, as did extensive knowledge being brought to the analysis from 15 years of informal participation and observation in Palitaw.¹⁸

Palitaw and Couples for Christ were selected specifically as cases that shared similar attributes but on varying levels. Couples for Christ households in Houston, like Palitaw, are comprised of roughly 25 people or less per household group. However, Couples for Christ is a rather large international organization. In Houston CFC has twelve households of roughly 25 people compared to just one household of the same size for Palitaw. In 1981, CFC was started in Manila, Philippines by eight Catholic couples as a new approach to evangelizing married people. Developing into a broader Christian family life program, by 2004 CFC blossomed into a worldwide ministry of one million adherents in 134 countries becoming a major charismatic force for the renewal of Christian family

¹⁷ By 1.5ers I am referring to first-generation Filipino-Americans who while born in the Philippines immigrated to the United States at an early age and were primarily raised in an American context. All respondents were over the age of 18.

¹⁸ As the spouse of a first-generation Filipina-American living in the Houston area whose family is active in both St. Catherine's and various religious fellowships (both Palitaw and CFC), I came to the project with a certain amount of inside knowledge and was permitted unprecedented access to the community.

life for Filipinos in diaspora (www.couplesforchrist.org). By sheer size alone, CFC is unique in its scope and the spread of its institutional transnational networks.

The religious group target sample was selected for several reasons. Initial interviews with Filipino-Americans who frequently attended local Houston Catholic churches revealed a high proportion of people who were members of numerous and overlapping religious groups which stand outside of Church authority. Although many of these groups report the name and establishment of groups to their local priest, the Church plays no role in officially directing what goes on in these groups nor are they officially chartered by the Church.¹⁹ Looking across these groups, two types emerged: 1) small home devotional prayer groups that have no official organizational structure or an established social ministry and 2) larger home devotional groups that meet in several households and have established organizational structures as well as an articulated social ministry. In the case of smaller groups, the emphasis of the members appeared at face value to be intimate and personal much like the groups Wuthnow (1994a; 1994b) has studied. These groups also appeared to be inwardly focused and not focused on community engagement. In the case of the larger groups, the emphasis of members likewise appeared at face value to be intimate and personal but unlike the smaller groups the larger organizational structures appeared to facilitate more community focused projects among a broader network of people. Attempting to capture either extreme as a measure of what may be occurring in groups across this spectrum, Palitaw was selected as an example of the smaller type groups while CFC was selected as an example of the larger type groups.

In addition to the 75 face-to-face interviews, I conducted two group interviews, essentially focus groups. Each group consisted of 15 people (a total of 30 people) and the interviews lasted roughly two to three hours. Like the larger interview sample, the groups consisted of first-generation Filipino-Americans and their children (all over the age of 18). However, the gender of these respondents is more heavily female, 58% female and 42% male. Both of these groups were drawn from a snowball sample of Filipino-American Catholics and were used to bring together and further access information I was getting from individual face-to-face interviews. They also provided open forums through which I could discuss how I understood broader patterns in their religious and civic life versus the way they perceived them. In many ways these focus groups led to some of my most important discoveries and helped to bridge glaring gaps in my initial analysis. From these focus groups I also returned to my target religious groups sample for follow-up interviews and conversations.

Outside of the focus groups I also engaged in 63 shorter conversations on-line through instant messaging and blogging with members of Filipino-American list servers and Yahoo groups. Although these conversations may not be considered interviews in the traditional sense, they provided candid discussions that in many ways were not possible with many face-to-face interactions. Building on the insights of Ignacio (2005) who has pioneered the study of the Filipino community on the internet, I used these conversations as a way of shaping and informing my face-to-face interviews. These exchanges also served as an important virtual backdrop to participant observation and a means to read how Filipino-Americans were editorializing the events and issues I was exploring.

¹⁹ In some cases larger groups such as Couples for Christ have sought and garnered Vatican approval but

Similar to Ignacio's findings, I discovered that Filipino-Americans use these cyber interactions as a very real way to construct and reinforce a sense of community and identity with other Filipinos across the globe. Like the 103 more traditional interviews, these conversations were analyzed using well established and tested guidelines for qualitative analysis (see further Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979).

QUANTITATIVE DATA

The Social Capital Community Benchmark survey provides a rare opportunity to examine the intersection of Filipino-American religious life on various forms of community volunteerism. The SCCBS was conducted late in the year 2000 among a sample of 29,233 respondents of which 3,003 were selected from a random nationally drawn sample and 26,230 respondents were drawn from a sample of 41 local communities. The national sample contains an over-sampling of Black and Hispanic respondents to total at least 500 blacks and 500 Hispanics in all. This required screening to identify households with black or Hispanic residents: Several hundred additional blacks (288) and (294) Hispanics had to be identified and interviewed beyond the interviews with blacks/Hispanics occurring naturally in the national survey. This screening was conducted randomly across the Continental U.S.; areas of higher concentration were not targeted in this design. Although the community sample was not selected randomly, the communities are diverse regionally and represent a wide range of population sizes from which respondents were selected randomly through sponsoring organizations. Each sponsoring organization decided what specific area(s) were to be

even here the Church acts as an outside voice and holds no authority in what the groups do.

surveyed, how many interviews to conduct, and if specific areas or ethnic groups were to be over-sampled. In most cases, the survey area was one county or a cluster of contiguous counties; some of the community samples are municipalities and others are entire states. Most of the community surveys used proportionate sampling, that is, no over or under-sampling of sub-areas or population groups. Most of the samples range in size from 500 - 1,500 interviews (for a complete list of communities surveyed along with each survey's sponsor, sample size and geographic definition see Putnam, 2000).

The overall response rate was 17.2 percent for the National sample and 27.4 percent for the Community surveys. When the response rate is adjusted for incidence of eligibility, the rates were 28.7 and 28.9 percent for the National sample and Community surveys, respectively. The adjusted cooperation rate represents the "number of eligible respondents who chose to participate and completed an interview" (Social Capital Benchmark Survey: Methodology and Documentation. Feb17, 2001) and were 41.6 and 42.3 percent for the Community surveys and National samples, respectively. The Filipino-American sub sample is relatively small (N=116). Unlike other national studies conducted with significantly fewer numbers, however, the SCCBS provides a sufficient number of Filipino-Americans for running multivariate procedures.²⁰

²⁰ The National Asian American Political Pilot Survey (NAAPS), conducted by Pei-te Lien in 2000 and 2001 was initially considered as a data sources for this study. It is one of the most promising data sources on Asian-Americans with a Filipino American oversample of 266 respondents. However it only contains two measures of religiosity, church attendance and religious preference. It is also restricted primarily to political engagement and as such does not offer the measures needed to survey the wider spectrum of Filipino-American civic life sought here.

Table 1:

**Comparative Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of
Filipino Americans across the 1990 Census, the NAAPS and the SCCBS**

	Census	NAAPS	SCCBS
Age (average)	31	36	36
Female (%)	54	48	60
Citizen (%)	70	79	75
Education (%):			
High School Grad	16	16	9
Some College	27	28	32
BA	39	45	34
Income (%):			
Less than \$20K	12	10	9
\$20K- 30K			11
\$30K- 39,999	16	15	
\$30K- 50K			21
\$40K- 59,999	25	33	
More than \$50K			39
More than \$60K	35	31	

The sample size presents several limitations to multivariate analysis including the extent and breadth to which interactions may be tested. As a result I am more concerned here with the broader patterns that may be found across several dependent civic measures rather than the results of any single measure. That is, the general patterns that may suggest what types of religious resources influence civic participation versus differences in any one civic finding. The data also do not provide a means to test differences between Protestant groups nor does it allow for a comparison of immigrant versus native-born Filipino-Americans. Following the recommendation of Putnam 2001, weighted data were used in all analyses; the weighting variable (FWEIGHT) is based on pre-weighting and demographic balancing and was applied to the entire data set in order to compensate for imbalances in the two samples, the national sample and the community sample.

Study Overview

The remainder of the study is divided into six main chapters not including the concluding chapter and appendix. Organized around the complicated intersection of Filipino-American religious and civic life, this study situates first-generation Filipino-Americans both historically and biographically. Mobilizing ethnographic data on the Filipino-American community of Houston, Texas, I set out in the following chapters to chart the religious forces that inform and shape how many Filipino-Americans define community. At the same time, I highlight the resources that mobilize their participation in civil society and spiritually bind them to their communities through acts of faith. Focusing on four sets of religious resources: 1) religious institutions, specifically the Catholic Church, 2) involvement in church through active weekly attendance, 3) involvement in church through other activities not associated with regular attendance such as Bible studies, and 4) involvement in religious groups such Couples for Christ and Palitaw that are not affiliated with a church, I point to the voices of the Filipino-American community in Houston and important new survey findings that shed light on the understudied but vital role of religion in the civic life of Filipino-Americans.

Chapter two, *Faith and the Filipino*, historicizes the Filipino-American Diaspora and the context in which religion has been a salient marker of community and civic life both in the Philippines and in the United States. The chapter also points to the curious neglect of religion as a key variable in the analysis of the Filipino-American community by social scientists. I theorize not only why the neglect has occurred but suggest how it might be righted. Chapter three, *Upon this Rock*, builds on the historical context of the previous chapter to identify the religious resources that are important to many Filipino-

American lives, both in Houston and beyond, and theorizes how this religiosity, both institutional and lived, impact their civic lives across borders.

Chapters four, five, six, and seven divide Filipino-American civic life into two arenas, political participation and community involvement. Although the division is somewhat unnatural and represents a level of distinction many Filipino-Americans in Houston would not consciously make themselves, the chapters attempt to disentangle the two arenas not as a means to force categories or define levels of civic life but simply as a way of splitting topics and issues that are important to Filipino-Americans. Chapter four, *Churched Politics*, outlines some of the key political and social issues that are important to the Filipino-American community. The chapter also explores how religion influences Filipino-Americans views on these issues in the context of a renewed Catholic spirit. Chapter five, *Matters of Faith*, builds on the issues and concerns outlined in the previous chapter and charts where and how religious resources impact Filipino-Americans political activism in the United States and beyond.

Chapter six, *One Church, One Catholic Community*, explores the nature and definition of community for Filipino-Americans and highlights the role of Catholicism in molding many Filipino-American visions of a good society. The chapter also highlights the importance of redefining how scholars see community life for new immigrants and suggests that a sizable part of the literature on civic engagement is missing the bigger picture. Chapter seven, *To Give Care*, focuses on the complicated issue of defining and subsequently understanding Filipino-American civic life. The chapter compares how the social scientific literature on civic life characterizes volunteering and formal community engagements versus the Filipino-American case in Houston which may be unique. It also

emphasizes the fluid dimensions of civic life in diaspora and how community, in its broadest transnational sense, can be built in more than one home.

The concluding chapter draws together the various points made in the previous chapters synthesizing the findings. It reviews what the study tells us about the Filipino-American community in general and suggests how a better understanding of this particular ethnic context can further the study of the civic lives of other post-1965 immigrants in the United States and across borders. The lives of the first-generation Filipino-Americans shared in this study challenge our understandings of the impact of religion on immigrant civic life. Their stories and the survey data that contextualizes the patterns of their religious and civic involvement, expands the scope of what social scientists consider *civic engagement*. And it calls into question *who* is engaged, and redefines the geographic boundaries of *where* new immigrants are engaged. The title of this study, *Breaking Bread, Sharing the Wine*, embodies an understanding of faith and community as intimate and shared, institutional and lived. It is a reminder that religious life can be civic life. It is also a reminder that religion can exert a powerful emotive force that mobilizes a people in diaspora around issues and problems that effect their lives in a home with no true borders.

Chapter 2: Faith and the Filipino, a Catholic Legacy and a Curious Neglect

Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa kayang pinanggalingan ay hindi makararating sa kanyang paroroonan---

He who does not [know how to] look back at his past [where he came from] will not reach his destination (Filipino Idiom).

Whatever one may think of Spain's dominance in our country [the Philippines] for three centuries, we cannot deny that a strong legacy it left behind was the Catholic Christian religion... again, we may entertain different and even conflicting assessments of that legacy but we will have to accept that it has influenced—rightly or wrongly, superficially or deeply—the vast majority of our people. (On the centennial of Philippine Independence, Sai, 1999: 58)

In December of 2003, the Asian Business Association in partnership with Wells Fargo Bank, Filipinas Magazine, IW Group, Inter Trend Communication and Dae Advertising organized a seminar for prominent businesses in California entitled “The Growing Importance of the US Asian Market: Focus on Filipino Americans, The Best Kept Secret.” The seminar was put together at the request of local business groups to help non-Filipinos understand Filipino culture and gain better access to a growing but under-reached American ethnic market. While at first the seminar may seem to have nothing to do with the relationship between Filipino-American religiosity and civic life, it reveals a very telling story about the historical importance of Catholicism and family for many in the Filipino-American community.²¹ It also demonstrates the strong connection many Filipino-Americans have to Filipinos in the Philippines themselves, so much so that the speaker does not even distinguish between the two.

²¹ The account of the seminar given here is taken from the article in the Filipino Express on-line; all quotes come directly from this source (see France, 2005: www.filipinoexpress.com).

The seminar began with a basic overview of the Philippines and its geography. Turning quickly to a discussion of culture, Viana France, a Filipina writer for *Filipinas Magazine* and the lead speaker, added a word of caution to the people at the seminar,

Textbooks say that the Philippines is composed of 7,100 islands. The truth is, no one knows exactly how many there are at any given point, it depends on the tide. So it is with Philippine culture. There are so many different influences that come into the mix that a homogenous culture is hard to define and I am not going to even attempt to do so.

France's point is clear. Philippine culture is diverse and nearly impossible to define in singular terms. However, in reviewing some of the colonial influences that have shaped the Philippines, France offered that, "to understand what all this colonization has done to us as a people, imagine what it is like spending 400 years in a convent followed by 50 years in Hollywood." Alluding to the powerful influence of Catholicism in the Philippines introduced during Spanish rule, France also highlights the unique bond that was forged between Filipinos in the Philippines and the United States during American rule. For France, this colonial history explains some of the culture contours of the Filipino-American community. It also explains, as France puts it, "[why] we wear the latest sexiest Victoria's Secret lingerie to bed but under the pillow we hide a rosary."

Given the relatively short amount of time allotted for the seminar, France readily admits that she needed to make some sweeping generalizations about Filipino-Americans. France hoped that participants would walk away from the talk with a rudimentary understanding of the more "psychographic contours" of Filipino culture, as she put it. More importantly, she also hoped that marketers would gain an understanding of some key dos and don'ts in marketing to the Filipino-American community. Glossing over many of the intricacies of Filipino cultures and providing a simple mnemonic for

understanding the Filipino-American community, France suggested that, “to become a quick expert on Filipino culture all you have to do is remember our top four influences—the four F’s in Filipino: Family, Face, Faith, and Fiesta.”

Starting with family, France described that for Filipinos, “Family comes before the individual.” Family is a universal value for many in the Filipino-American community. Filipino-Americans celebrate life vibrantly and publicly with their family. And here family refers to the *barangay*, an extended family that encompasses more than biological relatives and engenders deep commitments that are forged for life. As France described it,

The concept of the most successful member of a family taking care of all the rest follows the Filipino when he migrates to America. He is expected to share his newfound wealth with the family back home and he does. You’ve heard how we send back over \$5 Billion dollars in remittances each year and about our infamous balikbayan box [literally, a returner’s box], our cultural care packages. . We send somewhere like a whopping 500,000 boxes back home every year. And what do we fill them with? Products only a culture seriously afflicted with colonial mentality could love: Dove soap, Wesson oil, Reebok Shoes, Charmin toilet paper, Pantene shampoo, and yes, we admit it—Spam!

More than mere economic obligations, family bonds are the foundation around which all else revolves for many in the Filipino-American community, including religious rites of passage. As France continued,

At baptisms, confirmation and wedding ceremonies, prominent friends are recruited to serve as godparents forever binding them to the welfare of their inaanak or godchildren. In the Philippines, it is not uncommon for a smart Filipino parent to get a friend doctor, lawyer, or dentist as a godparent for their child ensuring free services for life... added to that is the relationship created by two godparents.

Again, godparents are not necessarily biological relatives but they are no less a part of the Filipino understanding of family nor are their obligations any less than those of other

direct relatives, “binding them to rituals of giftgiving and socializing,” as France explains.

Turning to the other three Fs, France first suggested that most Filipinos attempt to avoid public confrontation at all cost, what France calls “saving face.” Managing face, however, does not distract from living vibrant public lives. Highlighting this is the pageantry of Filipino-American festivals and fiesta that play an important part of Filipino social life. France described that there is always something going on in the Filipino-American community but also points out that if you really want to find a Filipino, “going through his Church is a very good way.” Fiesta is important but so too is the location where fiesta often occurs.

Of all the Fs, faith, and Catholicism more specifically, are what France sees permeating all facets of Filipino life and culture. Religion is important to many Filipino-Americans and the Catholic Church in many ways serves as the institutional hub of their community. Relating this to members of the seminar in the context of Spanish colonial history in the Philippines, France offered that, “Four hundred years is a very long time to spend in the convent and no wonder we haven’t quite shaken the habit if you forgive the pun.” Continuing, France concluded that,

Faith is the 400 pound gorilla in the room of the Filipino social structure. At least externally, we faithfully observe all Catholic holy days, rituals, and feast days mixed with our own folk rituals. The Catholic Church is a big influence not only on our spiritual life but in our politics and economic affairs.

Although social scientists have largely ignored this fact, what was made clear to the marketers at the seminar was the importance of Catholicism to the Filipino-American community. Largely oversimplifying the picture, France’s description serves a good

general overview of some of the key influences that many Filipinos-Americans themselves see shaping their lives nonetheless.

Faith and the Filipino

Filipinos, in general, are a deeply religious people and they are overwhelmingly Catholic. In the Philippines, 86% of Filipinos claim to be Catholic (see Social Weather Survey 2001). This identification is not in name only. More than half of all adult Filipinos (52%) report attending church at least once every week if not more, the Pope is still widely considered one of the most trusted and idolized figures in the country, and Philippine Catholicism stands as one of the most traditional and conservative adherents to an older form of Catholicism (Social Weather Survey 2002). Compared to the more liberal views of Catholics in nations such as Ireland, Germany, Spain, the United States, Poland and Italy, Filipinos reported that they would like the next Pope, the current Pope Benedict XVI, to be *less* open to change in the Church, to *oppose* priests getting married, and to be more focused on *religious* issues than what life is like for the ordinary person (see Social Weather Survey, 2002). Although comparable statistics do not exist for Filipino-Americans, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops estimates that roughly 83% of Filipino-Americans are Catholic (USCCB, 2001). All indications from ethnographic accounts of Filipino-Americans in Houston suggest that many are equally active in their religious life and just as conservative in their Catholic views.

Whether in the Philippines or in diaspora, faith serves side-by-side with the family as the foundation for Filipino community life. And again, for Filipino-Americans community can mean a small group, the Catholic Church, the parish, the larger city in

which they live, or the Philippines simultaneously. This point has somehow eluded scholars. Echoing the quote that begins this chapter, I argue in the following pages that social scientists cannot understand the complexities of Filipino-American religious and civic life without looking back at the past and understanding the historical context. It is only by looking at this history that one might better understand not only how the Catholic Church, what France lovingly refers to as a “400 pound gorilla,” became so heavily embedded in Filipino social structure. It is also through this history that scholars may better comprehend how a lived religion, a dynamic and vibrant faith, bridges the spaces between community, culture and institutional religious life to influence and inspire civic lives that transcend borders.

CURIOUS NEGLECTS

Contemporary debates over religion, including both its saliency and the nature of its scientific study, have often divided scholars. Religion has typically been subsumed under the broader umbrella of culture or reduced to a proxy of some other variable and often been overlooked in social scientific analysis (see review Ellison and Shirkhat, 1999). Recent scholarship studying international migration has increasingly righted this neglect (Levitt et al, 2000; Cage and Ecklund, 2007) but the causes and issues surrounding this omission still plague the field. Warner (2005), looking specifically at immigration scholarship in the United States, suggests that the problem is methodological. The majority of these studies focusing on immigration use survey data collected by American government agencies which are legally not allowed to ask questions about religion. This is certainly a limitation but given the fact that the majority

of case studies on specific immigrant groups such as Filipino-Americans have largely been ethnographic and hence more qualitative, this is not the sole cause. Kivisto (1992) on the other hand suggests that the number social sciences interested in religion have not reached critical mass in the social sciences. This too makes a great deal of sense but if religion is such a critical part of the migrant experience, as the social scientific literature increasingly suggest, then studying religion should not be a matter of interest but a deductive subject of importance. Both Yoo (1996) and Warner (2005) suggest there is also an anti-religious bias among some scholars in ethnic studies departments who study their own immigrant groups. These scholars may recognize the importance of religion in immigration and migration studies but choose to ignore it or downplay its importance. This is not because they are anti-religious themselves, although this may also be the case, but because religion is either not considered important or is closely associated with imperial conquest.

Turning to the Filipino-American case, it is difficult to ascertain why such a curious neglect persists. Perhaps the reasons are the ones suggested above, but one cannot deny that many Filipino-Americans are deeply religious and that religion plays an important role in their community. After nearly three hundred plus years under Spanish rule and four hundred years as a Catholic nation, Filipino culture has been greatly influenced by the legacy of colonial Catholicism (Min, 2002; Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1991). Yet among the few studies of Filipino-Americans, Catholicism is a curious neglect. Religion is not absent from the statements and opinions of many Filipino-Americans interviewed and published in articles and books, but it is an omission in the analyses (Gonzales III and Maison, 2004 serves as one of the few examples where

this is not the case). Even in the best of works which seemingly get the broader Filipino-American picture correct, scholars flat out ignore their respondents when they tell them religion is important to their lives.

Looking at Espiritu's *Filipino American Lives* (1995) as an example, of the thirteen interviews around which the chapters are built, ten refer to religion either casually or in several cases explicitly as a vital part of Filipino identity and community life. In chapter one, Juanita Santos describes how her son Michael did not think her move to downtown San Diego was a good idea and that she should move to Carlsbad. Juanita's response to Michael suggestion to move to Carlsbad was, "I'll die there... how can I go downtown [in Carlsbad]? Here, the church is only two blocks away" (Espiritu, 1995: 49). On the very next page in a section Espiritu labels *Teaching Michael About Filipino Culture*, Juanita further highlights the importance of religion in her life and points to it as a source of pride for her identity as a Filipina,

When Michael was six years old, we all went to the Philippines. We brought him to our hometown in Ilocos. I showed him churches built by Augustine friars and said, "Michael, look at this plaque. It was built in the 1500s. So you see, we were Christians even before the United States was discovered" (Espiritu 1995: 50).

While most of Espiritu's interviewees are not as overtly religious as Juanita, at least judging by what Espiritu reports in her work or perhaps what she asked them, religion is clearly present and should be a greater part of her analysis.

Building on the rich ethnographic data of *Filipino American Lives*, Espiritu crafted perhaps one of the most well received books on the Filipino-American community, *Home Bound* (2003). Here too religion is missing in Espiritu's accounts. Responding to this neglect one critic of the book suggests that,

Espiritu does not acknowledge how the macho, heterosexual construction of the Catholic religion has also effected Filipino American Women in their relation to family and home. Given the discussion of religion in Espiritu's *Filipino American Lives*, this represents a serious omission in *Home Bound*. (Linares, 2004: 261)

Espiritu's book is a much needed work. It is however far from exhaustive in its attempts to capture the entire Filipino-American experience, particularly the religious dimensions.

Oddly, in the acknowledgements that precede the main text of *Home Bound*, Espiritu thanks her respondents for, "warmly welcoming us into the *church* (the italics is mine), into their home, and into their hearts." Clearly Espiritu is not outwardly anti-religious, especially when you consider her sampling methodology. Echoing France's advice at the beginning of this chapter, Espiritu's own snowball sample starts with, and I quote, "a Filipino priest at *our* parish church" (Espiritu, 2003: 18—the italics is mine). While religion is completely absent in Espiritu's analysis, her methodology alone confirms that if you want to study Filipino-Americans, visiting their churches is indeed a good place to start.

Espiritu's work, like many other studies of the Filipino-American community, demonstrates that there is still a great deal of work to be done (for other examples see Bonus, 2000; San Juan Jr., 2000; 2003). Pointing this out, Royal Morales poignantly offers, "the promise of Philipino American Studies, is just that, a promise... it is an unfinished agenda" (Morales, 1987: 124). Part of this unfinished agenda, I would argue, is bringing religion into our theoretical and analytical discussions. Turning to this task, in the following sections I outline the historical importance of religion for many Filipinos in the Philippines.

Dividing Philippine history along three dimensions, I point to several key themes that are important to understanding how religion impacts the contemporary civic lives of

many Filipino-Americans in Houston. These sections do not follow a chronological order but highlight themes that are relevant to understanding the contemporary situation. Specifically, the first section, *a Catholic Nation*, demonstrates how the Philippines became a Catholic nation under Spanish rule. It explores the processes through which Spanish colonial rule led to the Church becoming one of the only community outlets for Filipinos. Likewise it highlights how the priesthood became an important voice in community affairs.

The next section, *the Philippinization of Catholicism*, explores the ways in which Spanish rule reinforced Filipino home devotional life and provided a source of unity among familial clans through a common faith in Catholicism. This section also demonstrates how an insufficient number of priests in the Philippines that could attend to Filipino needs resulted in religious life flourishing outside of churches which in turn gave rise to indigenous community leaders. The last section on Philippine history, *a Catholic Renaissance*, demonstrates how American colonial rule led directly to an awakening in the Catholic Church. It explores the ways the Church responded to a threat of Protestantism by opening the priesthood to Filipinos and getting involved in Filipino community life through education and various projects. Likewise, this sections explains how the EDSA 1 revolution that toppled the Marcos regime further entrenched the Church and Catholicism more generally in Filipino civic life.

Historicizing Faith and the Filipino

Spanish colonialism and the spread of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines are inseparable historical phenomena (Alip, 1950; Anderson, 1969.). The Philippines were a colony of Spain for nearly three centuries but they were also a

mission, and the farthest outpost of the Holy See (Gowing, 1967; Rafael, 1988; Zaide, 1937). Since no material wealth was found in the Philippines, Spanish rule quickly turned to the conversion and control of the Filipino people themselves (Pido, 1985). Unlike its previous colonial endeavors in Central and South America, Spain was not able to superimpose its colonial administration over an existing political structure. The Philippines were not united by a single government prior to Spanish colonization (see Pido, 1985; Alip, 1950). Indigenous Filipino governance was local and lay in the hands of tribal leaders or *datus* (Alip, 1950). Understanding this, Spain turned to the Church to convert *datus* thereby seizing control of their lands. Once *datus* became Catholics they were quickly reminded that there was no greater authority, spiritual or otherwise, than the Pope (Banco, 1997). And this had lasting effects on the relationship between religious faith, the Church, and Philippine society (Rinmonte, 1997).

A CATHOLIC NATION

During Spanish rule of the Philippines (1521-1898) there was no separation of church and state, both custom and law gave direct authority to the Catholic Church in order to support the aims of the Spanish crown (Gowing, 1967). The first contact most Filipinos had with both Spain and Christianity came through the *encomendero* or military prefects and the priests that followed them during tax collection (Anderson, 1969; Rafael, 1988; Reed, 1967). *Encomenderos* were envisioned as lay apostles. In reality their brutal dealings with Filipinos earned them the reputation as “shock-troopers” who cleared the paths of resistance for the priests by destroying all indigenous organizations that posed a threat to the Church and state control (Phelan, 1969). Despite pleas for reform and

concerns over the legitimacy of conversions, the role of priests in the Philippines did not vary much over the three and half centuries Spain ruled the Islands (Rimonte, 1997; Zaide, 1937; Aragon, 1969).

The majority of Filipinos during Spanish rule resented the priests (de la Costa, 1969). Spanish priests were not just religious clergy but bankers, economic advisors to the crown, arbitrators, merchants and a landed elite (see chapters in Andreson, 1969; Gowing, 1967). In 1781, a French observer in the Philippines noted that the power and influence of the friars and their religious orders was so great that they were, “[the] masters of the country and are more absolute in the Philippines than the King is himself” (Gentil, 1964: 140). Despite this, the priests remained the only advocates of the people against the crown and the harsher treatment of the *encomenderos* (Alip, 1950; de la Costa, 1969; Rafael, 1988). When most Filipinos had no where else to turn, the parish priest, where available, served as their sole consul and confidant in matters of the state (Phelan, 1969). To their credit, priests were instrumental in raising an indigenous elite that eventually stood as yet another buffer between the state and local peoples (Phelan, 1969). This did not, however, lead to an increase in the number of native clergy or those in positions of authority within the Church (de la Costa, 1969).

Relatively few Filipinos were ordained as priests and among these none were elected to positions of higher authority (see de la Costa, 1969; Gowing, 1967). According to many Church officials only avarice and sloth would arise in ordaining Filipino priests (see comments by Father de San Agustin 1720 in Gowing, 1967). Some even suggested that Filipinos only wanted to become priests because of the prestige and elevation in living standards it would entail (Gowing, 1967). The only avenues for community power

were indeed through the Church yet many Filipinos wanted to become priests because they felt they were called to do so (Rimonte, 1997; Zaide, 1937; Rafael, 1988). This religious fervor however did not blind many Filipinos to a long history of abuse and an inflexible ecclesiastical structure that had grown increasingly racist despite its spiritual nurture. When opposition to Spanish rule arose in the late 1890s, most Filipinos were not anti-religious or even anti-Catholic but anti-Church and anti-clerical (Ileto, 1979). They sought changes in authority and church structure that would make the Church their own, a process that would eventually further solidifying its position in Philippine society (Rimonte, 1997; de la Costa, 1969; Gowing, 1967).

PHILIPPINIZATION OF CATHOLICISM

Over three and half centuries of Spanish rule, Filipinos grew into a largely devout Catholic population with an earnest zeal for living their faith (Rafael, 1988; Rimonte, 1997; Gowing, 1967).²² The heart of Filipino religiosity for many did not lie solely within the Church but also in the home and broader familial clans (Posdas, 1999; Ileto, 1979; Phelan, 1969). Before the Spanish arrived, Filipino society revolved around the *barangay*, a union or confederation of extended families through which socialization was oriented towards communal welfare (Fox, 1961). All decisions were made for the benefit of the family (Fox, 1961; Posadas, 1999; France, 2004). When the Church began to evangelize in the Philippines the nature of conversion and what it meant was discussed by many Filipinos within this context. It is estimated that between 1565 and 1570 only 100

²² Ileto (1979) describes how Catholicism became an indigenous rallying point for opposition to the Spanish crown from 1840 to 1910. Had Catholicism not become a vital force among many Filipinos this

baptisms were carried out in the Philippines, mostly among women (Phelan, 1969). Even after Legaspi had established permanent Spanish settlements in the Islands, by 1583 there were still less than 100,000 Filipinos baptized (Phelan, 1969). However, conversions took a sharp up turn in 1586, nearly doubling to 200,000 baptisms (Phelan, 1969). At this time, datu came to believe that conversion could cure ailments and they encouraged their barangays to seek out priests (Phelan, 1969; Gowing, 1967).

When baptism became closely associated with curing the sick or a preventative health measure, the Church grew because becoming Catholic was healthy for the barangay (Phelan, 1967; Gowing, 1967). The institutionalization of godparents also further linked barangays to each other and to the Church (Pido, 1986). Church law and tradition required that godparents be assigned and present at these baptisms and confirmations (Phelan, 1967; Pido, 1986; France, 2004). There was a contractual obligation between the godparents and godchild. Should something happen to their parents, the godparents were to assume responsibility of the child's moral education. For most Filipinos, the notion of godparents was simply married to the pre-Hispanic idea of barangay (Pido, 1986; Reed, 1967). For the Church, and Spain more generally, this system also helped to educate and train a Hispanicized native elite through which these alliances and the barangay itself could serve the crown (Pido, 1986; Reed, 1967).

According to the crown, every Filipino had to belong to a barangay (Pido, 1986). Although Filipinos could change barangays whenever they moved, a baptized person could not move from a local village that was under religious jurisdiction to another

would not have been possible. Further evidence of this may be taken from the fact that Filipinos are still very active Catholics today (see Social Weather Survey, 2002).

lacking it nor could she change barangays within the same community.²³ The Philippines were essentially divided along existing barangay lines. However, Spain split up traditionally powerful barangays fearing that *datus* could regain their pre-colonial authority and challenge the state (Fox, 1961).²⁴ What had been introduced as a tool of colonial rule was now a means of indigenous power. And religion had become a unifying force that did not exist prior to Spanish rule (France, 2004, Alip, 1950; Gowing, 1967). Consequently, the barangay grew in strength because of the connective forces of Catholicism and the parish structure of the Church itself. Where the barangays had been historically divided by ethnic and regional differences those tensions were eased by a common faith. Problems that developed between barangays were mediated by the Church (Pido, 1986). This did not end competition or infighting by any means. It did however provide a certain logic and religious rhetoric along which alliances could be made (Pido, 1986).

The lack of a trained clergy who could attend to the needs of a growing Catholic population also left the Spanish with no alternative but to use the Church's resources sparingly or ordain a native clergy (de la Costa, 1969). Since the Church would not consent to raising a Filipino clergy, the average Filipino did not see a priest but maybe two or three times a year, if that (de la Costa, 1969; Gowing, 1967). Attempting to rectify this, priests organized confraternities of lay people, particularly Filipinas, to help meet the needs of Filipino Catholics (Gowing, 1967). The hope of the Church was that

²³ Pre-Hispanic barangays were kinship networks of 30 to 100 families and were the only political entities in existence prior to colonial conquest. Spain standardized the barangays into a set size of around 45 to 50 people that could be counted as a uniform census block. By 1768, of the 6,000 known or registered barangays the size had dropped to under 30 (see Phelan, 1959; Fox, 1961).

religious idealism and devotion could be kept alive in Filipino homes in the absence of the priests (Phelan, 1969). Where the Church could not see or directly control Filipino religiosity, Filipinos made Catholicism their own by marrying their previous beliefs with Catholicism (Rafael, 1988). Common indigenous practices of celebrating rites in connection with the sick and dying were expanded to include the recitation of the rosary and other Catholic devotions. After these devotionals, food was always shared communally further solidifying lay visitation and the centrality of home worship. It is here, in their homes and outside of their churches, that many Filipinos came to own their faith (Rafael, 1988). Understanding this and fearing the influence of Protestantism under American rule, the Church reinvented itself.

A CATHOLIC RENAISSANCE

From 1898 to 1909 the Philippines experienced a radical transformation both religiously and civically. American colonial rule brought with it new civic and cultural influences including the legal separation of church and state (Pido, 1986; Alip, 1950; Deats, 1967). It also introduced Protestantism to the Islands (Gowing, 1967). Consequently, when the United States established its rule and insisted on the separation of church and state, most Filipinos believed that the American government was supporting Protestant missionaries in the same way Spain supported the friars (Anderson, 1969). Protestantism, as a result, did not do fair well in its early years in the Philippines. Protestantism did however exert a considerable influence. Like American administrators and teachers in general, Protestant missionaries became the bearers of a more secular

²⁴ Before Spanish conquest and the spread of Catholicism, datus often served barangays as shaman or

outlook on life in much the same way as Catholic missionaries in the sixteenth century had been carriers of Europe's Catholic religious outlook (Gowing, 1967). Like their Catholic counterparts under Spanish rule, the Protestant missionaries established schools and colleges. However, for all its gains, particularly through the Methodists, Protestant proselytizing contributed far more to the successes of Catholic and quasi-Catholic movements such as the Aglipayans.²⁵

The rise of Aglipayanism forced the United States to get involved in the controversy over who owned the vast parcels of religious property that the Aglipayan rebels had seized from the Catholic religious orders shortly after Philippine independence. Fearing the spread of Aglipayanism and preferring the more pacifying bent Catholicism had on the Islands, American policy quickly supported the Catholic Church in the matter (Anderson, 1969; Gowing, 1967; Clymer, 1986). The move thwarted any further growth of Aglipayanism during the second half of the Taft era and strengthened Catholic authority in the Philippines. The introduction of Protestantism also inadvertently served as a catalyst for a long overdue reform movement in the Catholic Church. One that would eventually help Catholicism retain its position as the dominate religion of Filipinos (Gonzalez III, 2002).

quasi-religious leader.

²⁵ The Aglipayan movement was named for Gregorio Aglipay, a Filipino priest who was excommunicated by the Vatican for inciting rebellion within the Filipino clergy. During the brief period between Philippine independence from Spain and American occupation, Isabelo de los Reyes, a Filipino labor activist, joined Aglipay and founded the Aglipayan Church, also know as the Philippine Independent Church. In 1902 the new church seized Catholic lands, rejected the spiritual authority of the Pope, and abolished the celibacy requirement for its clergy (see Gowing, 1967).

In 1906 the Catholic Church sent in the Redemptorists, the Benedictine Sister,²⁶ the Congregations of San Jose, and the Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart to create a new image of the Church. The Pope also wanted to demonstrate to Filipinos that the *old* corrupt priests were now gone. Frank Laubach, a famous Protestant American missionary at the time, noted that the influx of these new highly trained priests and nuns reinvigorated Catholic schools with young vibrant scholars and sparked a “Catholic Counter Reformation” (see the discussion of Laubach in San Benaventura, 2002). This reformation of sorts stimulated changes in the approach the Church took towards the Philippines, particularly in its civic scope and outreach to the community. It also led to the training of an indigenous clergy that would finally make the Church a Filipino institution (Gowing, 1967; de la Costa, 1969).

Almost a century later, this Catholic renaissance was solidified by the crucial role the Church played in the non-violent toppling of the Marcos regime. When the Church openly endorsed Corazon “Cory” Aquino, the widow of slain Marcos opposition leader Benigno Aquino, she also became the faithful champion of the people (Ackerman and Duvall, 2000). Cardinal Sin, the Catholic archbishop of the Philippines at the time, called Cory a Filipina “Joan of Arc” and a messenger of God in the face of unjust rule (Rodao and Rodriguez, 2001). The power of the 1986 EDSA 1 revolution, however, was not just institutional but a matter of faith.²⁷ As hundreds of thousands of Filipinos crowded the

²⁶ The Benedictine Sister were sent in response to the Church’s desire to bring Filipinas back into the fold (see Gowing, 1967).

²⁷ The name EDSA 1 originates from the main highway in Metro Manila, *Epifanio de los Santos Avenue*, where the bulk of the demonstrations over Marcos’ stolen election from Aquino took place (one being the first of subsequent revolutions).

streets hoisting images of the Virgin Mary and Santa Nino²⁸ into the air, singing hymns, and praying the rosary, Marcos' troops were emotionally moved to join the crowd and Marcos subsequently fled the country (Rodao and Rodriguez, 2001). Today, in part as a result of EDSA 1, the Church plays just as vital a role in Philippine religious and community life as it did during the latter part of Spanish rule. The difference being that the Church is now a Filipino institution. While corruption and chaos leaves many Filipinos like Lyn, quoted at the beginning of chapter one, questioning the place of religion in Philippine politics, Catholicism remains a driving force in the country both inside and outside of the Church. In migration, this vital force is something many Filipinos bring with them to the United States.

Turning to this context, the following sections explore the role of religion in the lives of Filipinos in American both in early migration and after 1965. The first section, *Religion and Filipino Immigration Prior to 1965*, explores how early waves of Filipino-Americans in Hawaii and California experienced intense discrimination and were largely excluded from mainstream American politics and the Catholic Church. It highlights how this exclusion led to Filipino-Americans depending on their barangays and home devotionals and prayer groups for expressing their community and religious life. The next section, *the Philippinization of American Catholicism, a Second Filipino Catholic Renaissance*, demonstrates how the American Catholic Church has undergone an ethnic revolution of sorts. Faced with a major demographic shift and fearing that it might lose the sources of its new growth, American Catholicism since 1990 has reached out to embrace Filipino-Americans, among others, and their devotional practices. This section

²⁸ Santa Nino is the representation of Jesus as a child and a revered object of faith for Filipinos (Castillo,

highlights how the American Catholic Church now depends on Filipino-Americans as much as they depend on it.

Religion in Filipino American Diaspora

The Filipino social critic E. San Juan Jr. notes that Filipinos “are a quasi-wandering people, pilgrims or prospectors staking our lives and futures all over the world” (1997:11). Like the Jewish Diaspora, Filipinos are dispersed from a geographic center but retain a collective memory and mythos about their homeland (see Gilroy, 1993). They often believe that they are not truly welcome in their host nations, and although many do not return to the Philippines permanently from the United States, the belief in an eventual return to their homeland plays a prominent role in their psyche (see Espiritu, 20003). Filipinos also harbor a collective consciousness and sense of solidarity that is built around cultural practices (see Safran, 1991). Dispersed, displaced, and dislocated, what binds Filipinos together is Catholicism (Okamura, 1983). This point, however, is often lost in social scientific scholarship including Espiritu’s discussion of a people *home bound*.

RELIGION AND FILIPINO IMMIGRATION PRIOR TO 1965

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the first wave of Filipino immigrants, the *pensionados*, arrived in the thousands to work in the fields of Hawaii and California. Religion played a central role in their psycho-physiological survival and their efforts to construct Filipino-American communities (San Beneventura, 1999). In Hawaii,

1986).

the sheer number of Filipinos who immigrated, predominately men, served as an advantage in confronting American racism both within and outside of the Church. This did not necessarily make life better but it provided a critical mass through which the community could mobilize and unite in religious celebration (Okamura, 1998). The cultural significance of these celebrations such as the *Misa de Gallo*,²⁹ and the veneration of Santo Nino took on a very culturally specific function for Filipinos in diaspora, one that stood outside of the Church. Filipino-Americans could not celebrate as they were accustomed to in the Philippines. Often victims of American racism in white majority Catholic churches, Filipinos, for the first time in their history as Catholics, were not welcome in the Church. When this was not the case, Filipino specific devotionals were not welcomed in American Catholicism. This largely forced Filipinos to practice their religious traditions in homes and neighborhoods much as the lack of priests during Spanish colonial rule had forced them to do.

A decade later, the Hawaiian Catholic Church opened its doors to Filipino-Americans and supported their celebrations. This came in response to Protestant missionary efforts in the fields, much as the Church had responded to the threat of Protestant missionaries in the Philippines under American rule (Gowing, 1967; San Beunneventura, 1999). As Filipino immigration increased, the Catholic Church in Hawaii could not afford to lose the source of its new grow and looked to incorporate Filipino celebrations (Okamura, 1998). These Celebrations required a great deal of organization and with the full support of the Church they became a focal point for Filipino-American community life. More than adaptive mechanisms, these celebrations also represented, and

²⁹ Literally mass of the rooster, a sunrise mass during the week leading to Christmas. *Misa de Gallo* is also

still do, a collective expression of Filipino ethnicity. They serve to preserve both identity and culture. And they are as much social as religious in nature, an engagement of faith and community that draws on individual Filipinos and Filipino associations (see Okamura, 1998; San Beuneventura, 1999).

This early wave of Filipino immigrants in Hawaii also established various mutual aid associations for young men to connect with each other, pray together, and mobilize support for fellow Filipinos from their hometowns (Okamura, 1998). These hometown associations provided a cultural escape and means to support one another in the absence of family. Today, these associations do not serve the same function for men since families have increasingly been reunited post-1965. These associations still operate, nonetheless, and connect Filipinos in America transnationally to their home communities back in the Philippines. And more religious groups serve a similar function. They donate money for the construction of health centers, power plants, water tanks, and provide a wealth of assistance for schools, churches and local hospitals in their hometowns during times of natural disaster (see Okamura 1983). In return for these charitable contributions, Filipino-Americans were historically, and still are, afforded a certain amount of social prestige as heroes or civic leaders who returned to their home the fruits of their successes in diaspora. This is not, however, the only reason they engage in helping their fellow Filipinos. As Viana France, points out at the beginning of the chapter, mutual aid and remittance today is as much religious charity as it is meeting the expected obligation of *barangay*.

known as *Simbang Gabi* and will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

In California and elsewhere, the realities of American racism were even more devastating than the Hawaiian context (Okamura, 1983; Cordova, 1983). Catholic Churches in places like San Diego, a huge draw for Filipinos who had joined the US Navy during American colonial rule, virtually closed their doors to Filipinos until World War II (Cordova, 1983). Describing his own experience, Emeterio Reyes recalls the first day he arrived in San Diego in 1929,

I asked the [taxi] driver if he can take me to a Catholic church. As soon as we got there, I told him to wait for me because I had a funny feeling I might not be welcome to this church. As I entered the door, a priest approached me and told me that the church was only for white people. That moment, I wanted to cry and die! (quotes in Castillo, 1976)

The Church's commitment to Filipino-Americans was, as Fred Cordova puts it, "one of indifference if not benign condescension" (1983: 172). However, Filipino-American Catholics kept their faith even if they could not fully practice it in the Church. Fearing that Filipinos were converting to Protestantism but not willing to integrate their churches, the American Archdioceses facilitated the formation of Catholic clubs. Just as the Catholic Church during Spanish rule of the Philippines refused to raise a Filipino clergy and turned to laity to keep Filipino faithful, in the United States the Church did the same. Throughout the 1920s, in places like Seattle and San Francisco, these clubs supplied employment bulletins and contacts, aid to the sick, legal support for discharged servicemen, and financial support for all Filipinos in need. They also provided scholarships for young men to attend college (Cordova, 1983; San Buenaventura, 2002).³⁰

By 1956, many Filipinos who had grown increasingly frustrated with their treatment in the Catholic Church began to mobilize priests in the Philippines on their behalf (Burns et al, 2000). Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, the apostolic delegate to the Philippine Islands at the time, wrote the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in Rome to complain that Filipino-Americans were not only largely shut out from “Irish churches” in the United States but being neglected to such an extent that they were turning toward other institutions and associations (Burns et al, 2000).³¹ This exclusion was something Filipinos had grown accustomed to under Spanish rule and was reinforced by American racism in the United States. The religious liberty Filipinos had experienced in the Catholic renaissance during American rule in the Philippines was largely undone in the United States. At the same time, many Filipino-Americans were excluded from mainstream American politics (Bonus, 2000). With no voice in the Church and no representation in American government, Filipinos returned to their homes and associations for both religious and community life. Describing this fact, the Filipino-American cyber social pundit Perry Diaz suggests that,

When the Filipino diaspora started in the mid 1900s, the "barangay mentality" was kept alive in the new settlements of Filipinos around the world. Wary of the influence of their new non-Filipino political leaders, they band themselves into "barangays." They didn't call their groups "barangay." They were probably not even aware that what they were doing was similar to what their forefathers did more than 2,000 years ago along the coastlines of the Philippine archipelago (Diaz, October 22, 2004).

Filipino-Americans turned for support where they had historically, the *barangay*.

³¹ In addition to the Catholic clubs, early Filipino immigrants, primarily men, also turned to quasi Masonic lodges and associations such as the Knights of Rizal as an outlet for civic life (see Burns et al, 2000; Gonzales III and Maison, 2004). Similar patterns of religious and ethnic organization can be seen in other Asian American immigrant communities (see Rudrappa, 2004).

Today, in Los Angeles alone, where there are roughly 800,000 Filipino-Americans, there are at least 400 Filipino ethnic associations (Bonus, 2000). This number does not include religious groups such as Bible studies and devotional circles that have grown post-1965 with an overwhelming increase in the number of Filipinas coming to the United States. The Filipina presence has drastically changed the Filipino-American community. Filipinas have not only united and solidified Filipino-American family life but bring with them a renewed religious vitality. They have also, in many cases, served as the voice of change within the Church itself. Filipinas such as Naomi Castillo in San Francisco have rallied Church leadership to address the pressing concerns of those who feel ostracized and neglected in the institutions that have historically meant so much to them (Castillo, 1986; Gonzalez III and Maison, 2004).

PHILIPPINIZATION OF AMERICAN CATHOLICISM, A SECOND FILIPINO CATHOLIC RENAISSANCE

In the late 1980s, the Assembly for Filipino Catholic Affairs of the Archdioceses of San Francisco, of which Castillo was a key member, brought Filipino leaders together from different parishes to set goals and share their experiences in the Church (Gonzales II and Maison, 2004). Among the most common complaints many Filipino-Americans noted was that Catholicism in America was too “business-like” with strict rectory hours and priest often require appointments to see parishioners (Castillo, 1986). They also noted that there were no statues in many churches, few devotional services, and strict registration policy that required Catholics to stay primarily in one parish (Castillo, 1986). This was the opposite of what most Filipinos were accustomed to. In the Philippines the

churches are ornate, devotional services are held regularly, priests have more time to meet with parishioners, and parishioners are free to go from church to church. Responding to the complaints of the assembly as well as the complaints of other Asian ethnic groups, the American Catholic Church held a series of hearings from 1989 to 1990 (see USCCB report, 1990). From these hearings, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a report entitled *A Catholic Response to the Asian Presence*.³²

A landmark statement, the report sought to 1) publicly acknowledge the increasing presence of Asians in American Catholic parishes and 2) highlight the rich diversity of culture, tradition, and religious practices they bring to the Church. At nearly 2.5 million people and growing via immigration and native birth,³³ the Church admitted that it had long neglected the voices of Asian American Catholics who in the past were subject to discrimination and unwelcoming “coldness” in the Church (see report for further comments, 1990). Looking at Filipinos specifically, the report laments the abuses that the Church brought on the Philippines during Spanish colonial rule (USCCB, 1999). It also emphasizes that in a post EDSA 1 world, the Church has revitalized itself and taken stronger roots in the hearts of Filipinos. Coming full circle, the report, largely based on Castillo’s initial *Introduction to Filipino Ministry* and her *Pastoral Plan for Filipino Ministry*, outlines how parishes can better serve the needs of Filipino-Americans in their parish (Castillo, 1986; USCCB, 1990). Calling on parishes to be more open to Filipino

³² The hearings were sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association, the Office of Pastoral Research and Planning from the Archdiocese of New York, and the Office of Migration and Refugee Services.

³³ The *Asian and Pacific Presence* estimates that 83.0% of Filipino Americans (1.54 million), 29.0% of Vietnamese Americans (0.33 million), 17.0 % of Indian Americans (0.29 million), 12.3% of Chinese Americans (0.30 million), 7.0% of Korean Americans (0.07 million), and 4.0% of Japanese Americans (0.03 million) are Catholic (see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) 2001 *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*. Washington, DC: USCCB).

personal needs and traditional celebrations, many Filipino-Americans took the report as a sign that the Church was changing.

In September of 2001, ten years later and largely overshadowed by the terrorist attacks of that same month, twenty-four archdiocesan directors and coordinators of the Filipino Catholic Ministry gathered to form the Filipino-American Catholic Ministries Council (Networker Vol. 9(4), 2001: online) . It is the first national organization formed in response to the growing needs of Filipino-American pastoral ministers. Largely developed to better communication and coordination among lay ministers, the Council was also created to discuss national issues facing Filipino-American Catholics and advocate for appropriate and sensitive responses to those issues. Four years later in June of 2005, the Chapel of San Lorenzo Ruiz in New York opened as the official national Filipino-American Church for the Filipino Apostolate. A monumental event, the Chapel highlights the continued growth of Filipino-Americans in the United States and the Church's recognition of their importance to the future of American Catholicism (Filipino-Express, 2005: Online- Vol.47, November 21-27).³⁴

No longer considered outcasts, Filipino-Americans are in many ways now the life blood of American parishes (Gonzales III and Maison, 2004). Filipino professionals such as doctors, nurses, and engineers are not the only ones leaving the Philippines to seek better opportunities. The intellectual "brain drain" from the Philippines also includes Filipino Catholic priests. With nearly 800 priests leaving the Philippines abroad each year, Philippine Bishop Bacani notes that, "priests are leaving the country at an alarming rate" (see Bishop Bacani's comments Filipino-Express, 2006: online). One diocese in

California alone has 40 Filipino priests and it is estimated that as of 1995 there were around 300 Filipino-American priests and close to 200 sisters in the United States (Filipino-Express, 2006). However it is not just priests trained in the Philippines that are replacing an aging American priesthood. American Catholic churches are also recruiting heavily among Filipino seminarians to study in the US with signed commitments to stay once their studies are complete. The American Catholic Church is in the midst of an ethnic revolution. Where Irish and Italian priests are now aging, young priests from the Philippines and Latin America are waiting to take their place in congregations that are increasingly non-white. Highlighting this fact, Bishop Bacani offers that,

Filipino priests are serving in communities where there are large numbers of Filipino parishioners... [and] in many American Catholic churches, it is the Filipino church goers who are keeping them [the churches] open (Filipino Express, 2006: online).

Filipino-Americans are now just as vital to the future of the Church as Catholicism has been to them since the first arrived in the early 1900s.

The change the American Catholic Church has made in the ways in which it welcomes and increasingly incorporates Filipino-Americans into its parishes has also forged an important bridge between the Church and many Filipino-American homes and associations. This again has historical precedents. In the Philippines when American Protestant missionaries threatened to convert Filipinos during colonial rule and expose the neglects of the Church, Catholicism responded by reinventing itself and fully integrating the Church into every aspect of Filipino community. This had a tremendous impact on their civic life. And the same can be said today in the American context. When

³⁴ The Chapel is the second church dedicated to Filipinos outside the Philippines, the first one—The

the American Catholic Church realized that it may lose a vital part of its growth if it did not address the needs of Filipino-Americans, it changed its approach and embraced them. As part of a broader ethnic renewal of American Catholicism, the Church has also called on and incorporated home devotional and prayer groups to strengthen the Church. Echoing a plea made first during Vatican II, the Church increasingly encourages Catholics to use religious groups to express their own cultural understandings of Catholicism thereby strengthening their own faith. For many Filipinos, this has meant that home devotional and prayer groups were not only accepted by the Church but welcomed.

When Filipino-Americans get together in their home devotional and prayer groups they often say “*pupunta tayo sa barangay*—let’s attend the barangay” or “*magbarangay tayo ngayong gabi*—let’s barangay tonight.” The barangay is not just community but the basic socio-political clan of a region. And religion has been one of the only sources of unity across barangays. Turning to these resources, in the next chapter I outline and theorizes where and how religion impacts Filipino-American civic life. The chapter contextualizes what social scientists have discovered about the relationship of religion to American civic life in the general population versus how these religious resources may shape the Filipino-American community specifically.

Basilica of Sta. Pudenciana—was established in Rome during the fall of 1991.

Chapter 3: Upon this Rock, Religious Resources and Filipino-American Civic Life

The same sentiments of practical religion and charity that was brought to the Islands by the Friars is the motive that inspires us, and while there may be an accident of color that distinguishes the Filipino from his American friends, at heart and in spirit we are ONE in the bosom of God, and in the fold of our Holy Mother, His Church. (Lorenzo Zamora president of Catholic Filipino Club of Seattle, 1924 in Burns, Skerrett, White, 200: 256).

Feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men upon another (Tocqueville, 2000: 514).

“This is the most joyous time of the year for us Filipinos,” explains Kristi a first-generation Filipina-American in her late twenties.³⁵ It is *Simbang Gabi*, a nine-day Filipino tradition that celebrates the days and nights leading up to Christmas day. And it is one of the most enduring celebrations in the Filipino community. Simbang Gabi was first celebrated in the Philippines sometime after 1565 when Miguel Lopez de Legaspi introduced a Christmas mass to the Islands. Today the celebration thrives even in diaspora and has become one of the major cornerstones of community building for Filipinos in the United States.

While Kristi admits that she misses the pageantry of Simbang Gabi in the Philippines, she suggests that the spirit of the celebration remains the same, “It feels like home, just a little smaller.” Logistically, however, the communal meals that accompany the events are even more difficult to coordinate in the United States than in the Philippines. In the Philippines patrons and parish groups of a single or common regional

³⁵ The following account is based on interviews with various members of the Filipino-American community in Houston and three years of observations at Simbang Gabi celebrations at St. Catherine’s Catholic Church. Additional observations were collected in people’s homes as they prepared for these celebrations. Out of respect for people’s wishes, their names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

heritage vie for the honor of sponsoring a night's meal. In the United States, Filipinos who have come from all over the Philippines must negotiate the same few nights of service. Although in smaller cities where Filipino numbers are few this diversity forges a single bond, in cities such as Houston the competition from a host of ethnic and religious associations has led the Church to take steps to insure everyone gets their share of sponsoring the celebration.

Since the late 1990s, the Filipino council of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese has seen the celebration of Simbang Gabi as an opportunity to bring the Filipino-American community together. Father Roland, a first-generation Filipino American priest at St. Catherine's church, tries to explain how it all works,

I am not even really sure how the council selects groups but it makes things easier for us. You still have groups that split and end up at other churches sponsoring different nights, but for the most part its all fun and whoever has the best food has the best food...its not a competition, just loving faith and the Filipino tradition. It really is about the spirit of the season and everyone... knows that they will get their turn.

And they do get their turn. In 2006 nine nights were sponsored by eighteen groups: The Black Nazarene fellowship, the Filipino Community of Notre Dame (FCND), Confredia Del Santo Nina, Visaya Mindanao association (VISMIN), Couples for Christ, Pilipino American Masons of Texas (PAMAT), Solidarity Lodge #1457, San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila center, United States Senior Citizens Association of Texas (USCAT), Philippine-American Senior Organization of Houston (PASCOH), Candelaria of Texas, the Aparece Family, Bicol USA (the Houston chapter), Our Lady of Lourdes fellowship, Magnificat prayer group, Sandugo and Totus Tuus prayer group, and the Palitaw prayer group. In the years I observed these nights, this long list of sponsors always changed and even got

longer, although some groups such as PAMAT and Couples for Christ (CFC) were always present.

Simbang Gabi often represents a voice of unity in the Filipino-American community in Houston. Whether the message is heard through Father Roland's homily or in prayer meeting surrounding these events, giving becomes the focus of many households. Reflecting on her own preparations for the Christmas season, Kristi describes the hours she and her husband Mark pored into building a traditional Filipino *parol*, a large decorative paper lantern symbolizing the Star of Bethlehem. The parol was made for a contest held at St. John's Catholic Church sponsored by the Filipino-American Council of South Texas (FACOST).

By Mark's account, the parol took some 500 plus hours to construct with eight couples who are members of their CFC prayer group working in shifts over a three week period. Juggling full-time jobs during the week, planning household CFC meetings, and caroling with Kids for Christ (KFC), building the parol left Kristi and Mark, "completely exhausted." Mark and Kristi did not enter the contest for their own personal aggrandizement. After winning the competition and \$500 dollars, they gave the money to *Gawad Kalinga*, a social ministry that builds homes for the poor in the Philippines. Their winning parol was some seven feet high and five feet wide with a statue of Santo Nino in the center. It was beautiful. Beyond the artistry, Mark and Kristi offer, "it is yet another way in which the true spirit of the season gets revealed."

The evening masses of Simbang Gabi are a spectacle. Filipino-Americans from across the city gather under one roof dressed in traditional Filipino attire and are largely united in prayer and song. The food at the end of the mass is a smorgasbord of every

Filipino dish you can imagine. “It’s a lot of work and it takes a great deal of coordination but it’s worth it, just look at the smiles,” suggests one Filipina. Echoing these same thoughts, Rev. Msgr. Hermoso, a first-generation Filipino-American himself, points out

Our Filipino tradition of Simbang Gabi is a timely preparation for Christmas. The nine-day novena of masses and Christmas carols together with Mary Our Mother can help us appreciate and benefit from the real meaning of Christians...

Continuing this message later in *Tambuli ng Panginoon*, a Catholic newsletter from the archdiocese Filipino Council, Father Hermosa called on the Filipino-American community to answer Archbishop Emeritus Fioremza’s request to raise money for the construction of the new Co-Cathedral,

For many years we have lived our Catholic faith and enjoyed the pastoral care in the archdiocese...This gift will be a lasting dedication and gratitude from our Filipino community (Oct-Dec, 2006: 1).

Filipinos resoundingly answered the call. According to Father Roland, the final contributions made “a sizable dent” in the fifty thousand dollars that the Archbishop Emeritus had asked for. Outside of donating money, many individual Filipino-American efforts also replenished the parish food bank and stocked relief boxes for the homeless in Houston.

At the same time, Father Roland was also able to raise money for the Bicol region of the Philippines, his home province, devastated by recent floods. Although the Bicol association of Houston split over differences during this time Father Roland urged his fellow Filipinos to act out of unity and love.³⁶ Once again, Filipino-Americans answered the call. “It is about giving,” suggests Jerry, a first generation Filipino-American who raised 3,000 dollars to help with the relief efforts in Bicol. And here “giving” means

something more than the money. Explaining this, Jerry, a first-generation Filipino-American, points out,

...It's Christmas...it's Jesus' birthday...shouldn't we give of ourselves to those around us knowing in a few months that we will be reminded of what he [Jesus] gave us? It's simply [a] matter of living your faith, that's all!

UPON THIS ROCK

The spirit and organization of Simbang Gabi captured in the vignette above reveals how religious resources can and do bring many Filipino-Americans in Houston together. Simbang Gabi typifies the importance of Catholicism and faith more generally to Filipino-American civic lives. As Noemi Castillo, former director of Filipino affairs in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, explains,

Filipino-Americans have found it [Simbang Gabi] to be an effective way to build a community of faith, to express who they are as a people, to celebrate their religious traditions and culture, and to reach out to Filipinos in the parish (Castillo, 1997: 1).

Simbang Gabi reflects many central Filipino values, faith, family, fiesta, and evokes a powerful memory of the Philippines itself. The religious resources that are brought together to make each night run smoothly are not just a once a year phenomena. Catholicism is the wellspring from which Filipino-Americans draw year-round in their commitment to build community and lead fulfilling civic lives.

In the follow sections I explore and hypothesize how the religious life of Filipino-Americans impacts their involvement in civil society. Four sets of overlapping religious resources emerge as key to the civic life of Filipino-Americans I interviewed: 1)

³⁶ Two years later the Bicol group is now back together and many Filipino-Americans in the parish suggest that it was due in large part to the leadership and efforts of Father Roland, a fellow Filipino from Bicol.

Religious Institutions, specifically the Catholic Church as a truly transnational entity; 2) Involvement in church through active weekly attendance; 3) Involvement in church through other activities not associated with regular attendance such as Church functions and activities; 4) Involvement in religious groups such as Palitaw or Couples For Christ that are not affiliated with the Church.

Filipino-American Religious and Civic Life in an Emotional Context

American civil society has historically drawn on religion for inspiration and resources. Whether it is through formal or more spontaneous activities, both political and communal, civic life entails a host of ways in which people realize their rights and responsibilities as members of a community and set out to get involved not so much for personal or economic reasons but to contribute to a common good (Putnam, 2000; Bellah et al, 1992; Wuthnow, 2004). Not surprisingly, these visions of a good society are often centered on religious beliefs (Williams, 1999). This reminds social scientists that people are not simply rational calculating and consuming animals but “moral believing animals” embedded in moral orders that generate deep and intimate commitments to community (Smith 2003; Wuthnow, 1987).

According to Smith (2003), these moral orders should be the central focus of our theoretical and analytical attention. And I would concur. Moving beyond rational choice perspectives, while incorporating its obvious merits in explaining how people construct strategies of action, Smith posits that it is culture itself that provides the normative ends toward which people act. Surprisingly, the influence of religious culture on civic involvement is one of the least explored mechanisms (Harris, 1999; Lichterman, 2005). Bringing attention to this fact, the view of civic life presented here involves the powerful

operation of moral commitments and motivations. The majority of the social scientific literature focuses on material or “hard” resources as Harris (1999) puts it, and largely ignores the more intimate or micro mobilizations one might associate with a lived religion. These hard resources matter but to understand how they are engaged requires looking deeply at moral commitments, and this is particularly the context for Filipino-Americans.

Very little is known about how the recent influx of immigrant faith communities after 1965 has impacted the public sphere and the fundamental relationship between religion and American civil society. In the case of Filipino-Americans, one might rightly anticipate, given the history outlined in chapter two, that religion is an essential part of how many Filipinos not only see civic life but are actively mobilized to engage it. New Immigrants do not just bring with them vibrant religious practices but a historical and cultural memory of how religion can and did interact with civil society in their home country. While the rules of engagement may change in the American civic plain at both the macro and micro level, mobilizing religiously active immigrants may have less to do with the freedom afforded by the separation of church and state or the healthy competition it generates in America, and more to do with the cultural schemas that have historically moved foreign born people.

Tocqueville remains at the center of ongoing debates between civil society and political theorists over the causes and consequences of civic engagement. What is missing, however, is a recognition that Tocqueville’s America was built to some extent by Catholic immigrants. At the beginning of Tocqueville’s discussion of religion as a powerful institution that serves the maintenance of American democracy, he points out

that “around fifty years ago, Ireland began to pour a Catholic population into the United States” (2000: 275). Tocqueville’s comments on the Irish give a clear indication that his thoughts on American Catholics being the most republican and democratic class in the United States includes immigrants. According to Tocqueville, American Catholics were religiously active and expressed a zeal for their beliefs. Contrary to the thoughts of some at the time, Tocqueville suggests that this zeal was good for civic life as was the structure of the Church itself. As Tocqueville points out,

I think that it wrong to regard the Catholic religion as a natural enemy of democracy... Catholicism appears to me, on the contrary, one of the most favorable to equality of conditions. Among Catholics, religious society is composed of only two elements: the priests and the people. The priest alone is raised above the faithful: everything is equal below him... [Catholicism] imposes the same practice on the rich as the poor, inflicts the same austerities on the powerful as the weak; it compromises with no mortal, and applying the same measure to each human, it likes to intermingle all classes of society at the foot of the same altar, as they are intermingled in the eyes of God (2000: 275).

Since priests in the United States were not tied to a monarchy as they had been in Europe, Tocqueville also believed that priests immersed themselves in the community as a voice for their parishioners (see 2000: 282). Continuing, Tocqueville offers,

If Catholicism disposes the faithful to obedience, it does not therefore prepare them for inequality. I shall say the contrary of Protestantism, which generally brings men much less to equality than to independence (2000: 276).

This is the opposite of what Verba et al and others have suggested about contemporary American Catholicism. Tocqueville did not discuss immigration and Catholicism at length but his comments on both the structure of the Church and its relationship to its parishioners raises the question of what impact Catholicism truly had on newly arriving Catholic immigrants two centuries ago.

Today, social scientists increasingly demonstrate how religious institutions are an important resource for new immigrants but few have studied the Catholic Church outside of the Hispanic American case. In general, religious institutions can facilitate the settlement process, and in many cases provide emotional support and key community contacts for jobs, housing and basic life essentials (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000; Min, 1992; Warner and Wittner, 1998). They can also connect illegal immigrants to food resources and safe housing as Guest (2003) alludes to in the case of Chinese immigrants in New York's Chinatown. Leaving the more general debate over the nature of legal versus illegal migration aside for now, on a more intensive level, faith and private devotion are just as an important resource for first-generation immigrants, regardless of immigration status. These religious resources, both institutional and lived, also extend well beyond the context of a single country, linking immigrants to their former countries at the same time (see Martes et al, 2002; Hagan and Ebaugh, 2003; Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2002; Freston, 2004; Guest, 2003; Levitt, 2001; 2005; 2007; Hirshman, 2004; McAlister, 2002; Richman, 2005; Bowen, 2004; Carnes and Yang, 2004; Marquardt, 2005; Yang 2002; 2004). Hence the recursive relationship between religion and civil society must be seen as linking the private and the public, the personal and the social across borders. Religion is not just institutional but lived and practiced. It is a resource embedded in social and cultural norms and values that can be mobilized both at the micro and macro level simultaneously.

Building on Harris (1999), who suggests that the multidimensionality of religious resources, both macro and micro, have been underestimated in the study of African Americans, I suggest that one might also think of these resources along more intensive

and extensive lines. The macro-micro divide does not quite allow for a discussion of domestic religion where more non-churched resources motivate religiously active immigrants. Nor does it fully capture the more emotive side of devotion sought here. However, the use of an intensive and extensive nomenclature is not meant as a corrective but an extension of Harris' model developed on the heels of Young's important contributions to social movement theory (see Young, 2000; 2006; Cherry and Young forthcoming). Young's explanation for the rise of the anti-slavery and temperance movements highlights an under theorized side of religion. It explores the ways in which cultural schemas can mobilize people and resources to civic action across great distances. Building on Sewell (1996), Young suggests that in order for cultural schemas to control or even generate resources, they must be both intensive and extensive. They must reach inward and provide people with an intimate meaning for their action. They must also reach outward to make sense of peoples' circumstances and connect these inner meaning with the motivations needed for action. In fusing these schemas both intimate emotional resources and extensive hard resources can be mobilized for civic life. Motivation matters, not just for civic life but the everyday commitment needed to engage people in religious activities themselves. Much of the recent social scientific theorizing about culture is missing this point. While Harris beautifully recaptures the analytical power of this *something within*, it is not theorized outside of the church nor is it applied to non-political civic life. Obviously, the church Harris theorizes about is not the Catholic Church which poses a completely different institutional situation, one that in some ways is a stark contrast to African-American churches.

Returning to the historical context outlined in the previous chapter, the understanding of Catholicism sought here points to the fluid nature of religious resources across both institutional and non-institutional spheres. Filipino religiosity is dynamic. It is a lived religion that exists in the streets, in homes, and in the Church. Hence theorizing the impact of Filipino-American religious life on their civic life must capture the vibrancy Catholicism plays in bridging the spaces between *home*, real or imagined, culture and church life itself. Within each of these highly interconnected and overlapping spheres, both intensive and extensive, religious resources can be seen as engaging Filipino-Americans in civil society and providing an important means by which they build community and an identity in diaspora. These religious resources play an important role in overcoming internal issues of unity for many in Filipino-Americans community and they provide an important means of defining community. And for many Filipino-Americans, community can mean a small group or *barrangay*, the Catholic Church, the parish, the larger city in which they live, or the Philippines simultaneously. Although the lines that distinguish these resources are often clearly defined, including the more ridged boundaries of Church and parish authority, many Filipino-Americans seamlessly transcend institutional and non-institutional structures, blurring the lines as they actively engage civil society both in the United States and beyond.

Turning to these intensive and extensive resources, in the following sections I outline where each may inform and shape the civic lives of Filipino-Americans. Establishing a foundation for the empirical chapters that follow, the next three sections explore specifically what is known about the impact of religious resources on civic life in the general social scientific literature and where these findings may be relevant to the

Filipino-American case. Section one, explores the Catholic Church at an institutional level and the type of hard or extensive resources it can mobilize to Filipino-American civic life. Section two highlights the role of home devotional and prayer groups as an important extensive resource. And section three, looks deeper at the role of Catholicism as an intensive resource within both the Church and home devotional and prayer groups.

A UNIVERSAL AND TRANSNATIONAL CHURCH, CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Institutionally, religion is arguably the single most important source of social capital, rivaling education as one of the most powerful correlates of civic participation in the United States (Putnam, 2000). By some estimates nearly half of all associational memberships are related to places of worship, half of all personal philanthropy is religious in nature, and half of all volunteering occurs in a religious context, if not through a place of worship (see Putnam, 2000: 66). People who attend church frequently are more likely than other people to be involved in their community both formally through various voluntary associations and informally through familial ties or relations with friends and neighbors (Putnam, 2000). Through this involvement, religiously active people acquire skills that carry over into other facets of civic life (Park and Smith, 2000; Verba et al, 1995).

Looking specifically at philanthropy and volunteering, religious institutions not only provide the extensive networks and resources necessary for these behaviors but mobilize more intensive resources that can serve as inspiration or forces of social coercion (Wilson and Musick, 1997; Wuthnow, 1990; 1991; Hodgkinson, 199). Nearly 60 percent of all religious congregations contribute to some form of social service in the form of community development and neighborhood projects. Looking at the Catholic Church specifically, given its long standing tradition of charitable service, the parish

serves as a key resource for volunteerism and community participation (Regnerus, Smith and Sikkink, 1998).

Churches also support a wealth of social activities outside of formal worship attendance through which civic skills are developed, an interest in community life is engendered, and civic recruitment may occur (see Verba et al, 1995; Djupe and Grant, 2001; Peterson, 1992). Whether it is through serving on a church committee, giving a speech, leading a prayer or teaching a Sunday school class, people who are active in church life are presented with a host of opportunities to develop leadership skills, build confidence in opinions, and feel that they are a part of a community (Macaluso and Wanat, 1979; Peterson, 1992; Wald et al, 1993).

One need look no further than the example of African-American churches to see that religious institutions can nurture leadership and develop an organizational infrastructure through which political and community mobilization can be effectively carried out (Morris, 1984; Harris, 1994; Ellison and Sherkat, 1995). The same holds true for Filipino-Americans. The Catholic Church plays an important role in Filipino-American civic life. It would be a mistake to ignore this fact despite the anticipation in the social scientific literature that as Catholics Filipinos are somehow less engaged in civic life. Given the history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, particularly after American rule when the Church not only became a truly Filipino institution but a fulcrum for democratic self-governance, the opposite is true.

The Catholic Church has worked over the last one hundred years to secure its position in Philippine society and in the hearts and minds of those in diaspora. And it has succeeded. As France (2002) alludes to in chapter one, the Catholic Church is the “400 pound gorilla” that now sits at the center of Filipino social structure. The Church, at an institutional level, an extensive or hard resource, is not simply transported piecemeal in

migration but today is already fully intact upon arrival. The Catholic Church is *catholic* in the truest sense of the word. It is a universal church that transcends national borders, perhaps the most transnational or globalized institution in the world (Cassanova, 1997). While the Catholic Church may have historically resisted the transformation from a nation-state orientation to serving a more global civil society, the combined forces of globalization, secular involvement, and voluntary disestablishment has made the Church a transposable resource for migrant civic life that often serves the same function *here* as it did *there* (see Levitt, 1999; 2001; McAlistar, 2002; Peterson et al, 2001).

For many Filipino-Americans, the American Catholic Church, much like the Church in the Philippines, is a vital resource for community life. At the center of these overlapping understandings of community, however, is the church. Highlighting this fact in the case of Filipino-Americans in San Francisco, Del Rosario and Gonzales III (2006) point out,

Many new Filipino immigrants, especially from small towns, operate within the mental construct of a Philippine *poblacion* (or town plaza), wherein the church is at the center of the plaza with various governmental institutions and various social gathering places around it...In San Francisco's South of Market area, Saint Patrick's is the center of gravity that draws Filipinos back even when they have moved to the suburbs (31)

Part of this draw is the increasing presence of Filipinos in the American priesthood. Filipino-American priests provide a key leadership role in the Filipino-American community. It is an indigenous leadership that is well trained and capable of inspiring commitments to church and community affairs (in the general case, see Harris 1999; Smith, 1996). Mobilizing parishioners from a position of privileged legitimacy, Filipino priests, and non-Filipino priests alike, enjoy a certain amount of authority in Filipino-American civic life. This includes the shaping of public opinion and political views that other social institutions and organizations do not possess (see Smith, 1996). This reach

extends transnationally as well. When mobilization and planning are needed across borders, even rather quickly, the Catholic Church commands a certain stately status of its own (see Levitt, 2007). Father Roland's efforts on behalf of those from the Bicol region during Simbang Gabi, for example, serve as a reminder that *home* is not a fixed place for many Filipino-Americans. Linking the roll Church leadership played in the EDSA 1 revolution to the civic memories of recent Filipino immigrants, Filipino priests share a similar position of authority in diaspora as they did in the Philippines.³⁷ The Catholic Church also serves as an important path for further blurring national lines and fostering networks of care in which these priests can call on their parishioners to transcend borders as religiously global citizens.

Contrary to what Verba et al (1995) have noted about the hierarchical structure of Catholicism, the Church does not impede civic life but actually creates a path through which groups and individuals can unite. Thus, community projects, such as Simbang Gabi, can be carried out with minimal conflict. Many of the numerous civic associations, the barangay organizations to which Filipino-Americans belong, have fundraisers or support various voluntary or non-profit organizations through which Filipino-Americans can get involved in the community and even mobilize on political issues. However, it is often through the parish and the numerous charitable organizations of the Church itself that these efforts get coordinated. And again, the efforts of Father Roland for Bicol, the food drive, and other projects during Simbang Gabi highlight this. When this is not the case, it is often through church bulletins and the existence of set communication channels that these efforts are coordinated, planned, and enacted. The parish provides a field that is "ripe" for harvesting civic involvement (see McAdam et al, 1988 and Smith, 1996 for a

³⁷ This is particularly true when one considers that the majority of new Filipino priest arriving in the United States were trained in post-EDSA 1 seminaries that highlight the power of the Church in civic life.

social movement perspective on these resources). Through parish directories, newsletters and email lists, these communication networks provide effective and well worn paths of disseminating information and recruiting civic participation.

The Church also provides what Smith calls “enterprise tools” such as phones, computers, photocopiers, fax machines, a library, and ancillary staff members that help meet the needs of Filipino-American groups that might not otherwise have access to these resources, at least not all in one central location (Smith, 1991: 61; also see Harris, 1999). In the events surrounding Simbang Gabi, for an example, Filipino groups not only use the Church as a center of communicating their various projects but the Church in turn uses newsletters such as Tambuli, aimed at Filipino-Americans in the parish, to rally support for its own interests, namely the construction of a new co-Cathedral.³⁸

WHEREVER TWO ARE GATHERED, CATHOLIC HOME DEVOTIONAL AND PRAYER GROUPS

According to Putnam and his prognostications about the ills befalling American civil society, privatized religion is morally compelling and psychologically fulfilling but also embodies less social capital and hence mobilizes fewer resources to civic life (Putnam, 2000: 74). Surfing from one congregation to another, Putnam suggests that people who exemplify this trend may still be religious but they are also less committed to a particular religious community. For many Filipinos, however, this privatized religiosity can often hold the community together even as they cross parishes and frequent more

³⁸ Due to the phenomenal growth of Houston and the increase in the number of Catholics and Catholic institutions, Bishop Wendelin Nold (the first bishop to reside in Houston) asked the Vatican to re-designate the diocese as the "Diocese of Galveston-Houston." In 1959 Pope John XXIII designated Houston as an episcopal city. This did not change the status of Galveston as an episcopal city. With the elevation of Sacred Heart Parish to a Co-Cathedral, it became co-equal in rank with St. Mary Cathedral in Galveston. With this designation, an episcopal chair was also installed in Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral and full episcopal ceremonies could then be celebrated in Houston, as well as in Galveston (see <http://diogh.org/cocathedral/dedication/history-cocathedral.htm>).

than one church. Simbang Gabi serves as a reminder that historically the home became the center of Filipino religious practice either by choice or during subsequent waves of exclusion from institutional resources under Spanish rule and in response to American racism. Through home prayer groups and devotionals that largely stand outside of Church authority, many Filipinos forge an important, more personalized, resource for their civic life that transcends parish and national boundaries. Despite the intimacy shared in these groups their focus is not always inward. Couples for Christ, as an example, is a rather large international organization. In Houston CFC has roughly twelve households of 25 people or less compared to just one household of the same size for Palitaw. By sheer size alone, CFC is unique in its scope and the spread of its transnational networks. However, both of these groups, CFC and Palitaw, remain deeply linked to the Catholic Church and the larger community of the cities in which they live. Through the Church they often come together for joint celebrations. Consequently, these groups are seen by many Filipino-Americans interviewed as different from other groups such as Filipino-American ethnic associations.

Although Putnam does not equate “privatized religiosity” with home devotionals and small prayer groups, these groups are a historical product of the same privatizing religious trend as Roof and McKinney note (1988).³⁹ When large numbers of young and well educated middle class youth left mainline churches in the sixties and seventies, part of their move in joining new religious movements was a desire to express their religiosity outside of organized religion in a more intimate and personal setting. Even among those

³⁹ Putnam’s discussion of privatized religion (2000) is based on Roof and McKinney’s historical account of American mainline religion (see Roof and McKinney, 1988).

who remained in churches this desire was equally held giving rise to a small group revolution both within and outside of American churches. In the case of Filipinos, it is a combination of both push and pull factors which have historical precedents drawing them to these groups.

It is estimates that 40% of Americans are members of a small group and 60% of those are affiliated in some way with a house of worship (Wuthnow, 1994). Reinforcing church life on the one hand and stimulating churches' ability to get actively involved in civil society, these groups are playing a crucial role in rebuilding American civic life (see Putnam, 2003; Wuthnow et al, 2004). People who are members of religious groups are more likely to be engaged in other civic clubs and groups, serve on a jury and take part in a community projects (Putnam, 2000; also see Lazerwitz, 1962). This supports Wuthnow's claim that involvement in small groups is not self serving but good for community and civic life (1994a; 1994b).⁴⁰ Looking again at the events and community efforts surrounding Simbang Gabi, this is clearly the case for many Filipino-Americans. However, in the social scientific literature that has emerged on the small group movement, few studies address its impact on civic life and even fewer address the role immigrant religious fellowships are playing in this transformation.

Since Vatican II, American Catholics have been encouraged to join small groups and fellowships. In fact, the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II, built on the strength of lay leadership in the United States, not only encourages lay movements but has helped the

⁴⁰ It should be noted that the size of small groups matters. Tocqueville assumed that the groups he observed were small enough to make decisions and encourage interaction but large enough to convince member they can make a difference in the wider society. And Wuthnow (1994) agrees—groups that are over ten members in size are better connected to the wider community.

Church see the benefit of establishing these groups (Joyce, 1994). This is not, however, without an older historical precedent. Nineteenth century American Catholic parishes organized themselves according to each immigrant community's nation of origin. Within these ethnic parishes smaller groups often facilitated the spaces between home, community, and the Church itself (Orsi, 2002; Greely, 1977). In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ethnic Catholics continue this tradition to some degree but also increasingly incorporate associations outside their churches and parish lines under the encouragement of Vatican II and subsequent statements from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (see Joyce, 1994; USCCB, 2001). Although the Church is cognizant of their existence, even visiting or participating in these groups from time to time, it has little authority outside of more normative moral commitments it engenders among the participants as Catholics. Many church leaders target these groups as way to get people more involved in the wider activities of the church (Joyce, 1994). At the same time, they question whether the inward focus of these groups will ultimately deter from Church life and service to the community (Wuthnow, 1994).

It is hard to define Filipino-American prayer groups and home devotionals, at least those observed. In Houston, they typically serve as much family support as equal parts discussion, prayer, and Bible study. At the same time they can serve as women's groups, men's groups, couples' groups, and therapy for all those confronting life in diaspora, a home away from home. As Adler, first-generation Filipino-American member of Palitaw points out, "when I came to Houston... this [the group] became my home, my support in hard times, and a family that I look forward to seeing every Friday night." Since American Catholicism relegates the majority of ethnic devotions to outside avenues

in attempt to forge a uniform church life and foster an American Catholic identity, Filipino-American devotional groups are also the physical site where ethnicity can get reproduced. In any given prayer group the access to a common language and traditional Filipino food is a means by which being Catholic and being Filipino are conjoined. While this might not always serve as a resource that bridges Filipino-Americans to the broader society, it can be a powerful resource for Filipino-American community mobilizations. Again, the events surrounding the celebration of Simbang Gabi are a testament to this fact as is the example of the Cruz family in chapter one who worked at a Houston area soup kitchen because of their involvement in CFC.

Like the broader resources of the Church itself, many Filipino-American devotional and prayer groups can provide intimate and effective communication networks that can disseminate information and recruit help for civic affairs. Unlike those studied by Wuthnow et al (1994a; 1994b) or Lichterman (2005), the groups in this study cross parish lines and draw from members across zip codes. These groups also raise an indigenous leadership that plays a crucial roll in organizing activities across parishes as well as in the more general contours of civic life. Some element of this can be seen in the role of these groups in Simbang Gabi. Although their structure involves a relatively high degree of formal organization with goals, agendas, and lesson plans as Wuthnow (1994a; 1994b) suggests, a high level of informality and flexibility often leaves power in these groups more diffuse and broadly democratic with no one leader in charge. Some groups, such as CFC, have elected household leaders but even in these situations meetings are often moved from house to house thereby distributing authority and responsibility.

Ritually, the service and fellowship found in these groups can serve as a cohesive point around which a Filipino identity is reinforced. “We do this not just because we are Catholic but because we are Filipino Catholics,” Arlen, a first-generation Filipina-American member of Palitaw explains. It is in these intimate settings that faith is made relevant to Filipino lives. The Bible is interpreted through purely Filipino lenses, although doctrinally perhaps no different than any other Catholics. Examples on the relevance of scripture are given through testaments and the earnest confessions of fellow Filipino-Americans in their native languages. This can often carry with it a more heartfelt expression of how they see the world and feel their faith. As Adler explains, “I don’t have to tell them [the group] what I mean, they know, they understands because they are Filipino.” Religious artwork observed in the homes where these groups meet also reflects the icons of faith, such as Our Lady of Antipolo,⁴¹ that Filipinos identify with and upon which their faith is constructed. While in many American churches, these icons and statues are missing, in many Filipino-American home devotionals and prayer groups they are on full display playing to the pageantry and vibrant colors that are Philippine Catholicism. And here, images of Mary and Jesus serves as models of empowerment, particularly for Filipinas who turn to Marian images for comfort and legitimacy in their civic endeavors.

THE POWER OF FAITH, EMOTION, AND MORAL COMMITMENTS

⁴¹ This a venerated image of the Virgin Mary carved out of dark wood brought to the Philippines from Mexico by the Spanish in the mid to late 1600s. The image is revered as one of the first Catholic images in the Philippines and is considered to be a protector in travel. The image was originally housed in a church in the town of Antipolo (from interview; also see Castillo, 1997).

Echoing the possibly over quoted passage by Tocqueville that opens this chapter, the rich traditions and customs that are renewed in many Filipino-American prayer groups and home devotionals in Houston do not simply lead to an enlargement of the heart in and of themselves.⁴² The heart must first be moved. And here, religion can serve as a transcendent motivation. For Filipinos religion has historically united the barangay with deep spiritual commitments and an ardent belief in the universality of family (France, 2002; Pido, 1986). Godparents, as an example, are not simply brokered by the Church to unite families in political or economic alliance but to assist a family in the Catholic instruction of children and surround them with models of faith and community. Although priests hope that this model can be fostered through active participation in church life, it is just as likely that Filipino-Americans will learn just as much, if not more, from their home devotionals and prayer groups (Castillo, 1986). As an intensive resource, this more lived side of Filipino religiosity deepens an understanding of faith, builds on the values that forge community bonds, and in doing so provides the spiritual commitment that can engage Filipino-Americans both within their parishes and the wider community.

In the 1930s, Blumer developed a comprehensive theory of collective behavior. Exploring a wide range of social phenomena from crowd behavior to fads, Blumer suggests that the underlying causes of collective action are emotional reactions to a state of psychological unrest. In this state, Blumer describes how the frustration of desires can

⁴² According to findings from the SCCB survey, 22% of the Filipino-American sample somewhat agrees and 66% strongly agrees that religion is very important to their lives. With no variability at 88% and a bad measure of faith at that, perhaps the reason why Putnam et al do not include it in constructing their own index for faith based social capital (see Putnam 2000), this intrinsic side of religion could not be generalized through quantitative analysis beyond the findings of the ethnographic data.

cause people to be apprehensive, irritable, and in severe cases neurotic. Although Blumer points out that the sources of this anxiety can readily be seen as symptomatic of daily living, it is also a state, one might add, that is heightened in the excitement and uncertainty of immigration. Recalling the quote that opens chapter one, as an example, Burgonio-Watson offers that,

nowhere is one's spirituality tested more than in the situation of being an immigrant in this country [United States], especially a new immigrant trying to make sense of life that has been uprooted and disconnected from that which is familiar, nurturing, and accepting (Burgonio-Watson, 1997:326).

Migration can be a dizzying set of circumstances. It can be a fateful journey in which many first-generation Filipino-Americans turn to religion and their culture as a mediating force. In the moments or events in which solace can be found, it is emotion that often holds the power to conjoin more hard resources, institutional or not, to a moral order. Embodying larger narratives and beliefs systems, as Smith (2000) points out, this moral order can be a symbolic universe that alleviates social unrest and provides meaning as well as direction to this frustration of desires. More than an individual level phenomenon, these emotions are collective and relational. They can bind Filipino-Americans to each other as well as their prayer groups, home devotionals, and the Church itself. As Lyn points out in the case of Palitaw, "even when we are tired we still make it on Friday night... here we can relax because we love each other." Agreeing with Lyn, Adler adds, "no matter how bad the week is going I know these guys are waiting for me on Friday... this is home."

Returning the example of Simbang Gabi, over the course of nine nights the numerous groups that facilitate charitable projects, scriptural readings, and evening feasts transcended ethnic and regional ties for a common purpose. However, many Filipino-

Americans in Houston are able to do this not just because of the Church's control over the events, although this is important, but also because of the collective power of being Catholic. In some cases newly Catholic. Filipino-Americans interviewed through the course of this study, particularly those involved in home devotional groups such as Palitaw and CFC, often described themselves as newly catechized, despite being Catholic their entire life. Often breaking down in tears as they described how they had renewed their faith, and in some cases their commitments to their family, they point to a moment or a series of emotionally charged events that led them to this change. Highlighting these cases, John, a first-generation Filipino-American explains, as he clears his throat,

I grew up in a Catholic household, I mean we were very religious; I went to Catholic schools back in the Philippines but when I came here it was all about making a life and I really don't think I got it... I mean being Catholic is just a part of being Filipino, we don't think about it we just do it. But when my parents heard I was screwing up my marriage they flew over here and got me going with a CLP [Christian Life Program] through CFC. My wife was already involved... I hated it, especially the time it took away from my week.

Continuing, now in tears, "somehow the Lord opened my heart and I remember that day... I got it, it all made sense, and now I live my life as a real Catholic, a faithful Catholic." For John, living his life as a "real Catholic" entails getting involved in his local Filipino-American community, his church, his city, and the nation he left behind. While a host of religious resources played an important part in providing John with the opportunity for spiritual renewal and his subsequent involvement in civic life, it was a numinous moment charged with emotion that literally brought him to his knees and bound him to a moral order.

Emotion is power. It is powerful enough to move people spiritually and mobilize them collectively in civic life, a point that social movement scholars and those interested

in civic life have largely ignored. Most of the social scientific literature views emotion as devoid of power or distant from power structures and relations. However, as Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005) point out, if emotions are not where the power is then why study them? Building on the ground work laid by Emirbayer and Goldberg, emotions must be seen as embedded in power relationships. They are transpersonal and it is through them that power derives the capacity to identify with or “speak in the name of” the values of a moral order (see Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005: 492; Smith, 2000).

Emotions have their own internal logic and are dynamic in their relational context. They are not merely reflections of social and cultural structures. They are networks of meaning, institutional and otherwise, which constrain and enable civic involvement. Through them, people can enjoy a kind of emotional power. The euphoria of salvation expressed by John in the long quote above, as an example, serves as a powerful motivation for his religious devotion. At the same time, with this emotional power comes a commitment to act on faith and to engage civic life for what many Filipino-Americans perceive as a common good (see Smith, 2000; Wuthnow, 1987). Exemplifying this, Dan and Lita in chapter one, offer, “we are not just members of one community, one home, but servants of the Lord... this is our home [United States] but so is the Philippines and through Filipinos, God will show the world what he can do!” Many Filipino-Americans in Houston get involved in civic life because they *believe* that God commands them or because they *feel* that they are doing the “work of the Lord” through their groups and churches. It is a vow of faith. And it is a testament to the resiliency of faith in the Filipino diaspora.

Drawing on intensive and extensive resources, both institutional and non-institutional, Catholicism is an emotional faith that often drives the passion of these civic voices. Exploring these emotions and the impact broader religious resources have on civic life, in the proceeding chapters I draw on the full data, beyond the vignettes given to this point, and explore the complex relationship of Catholicism to the civic life of Filipino-Americans in Houston. Dividing Filipino-American civic life into two arenas, political participation and community involvement, in chapters four, five, six, and seven I demonstrate how Catholicism shapes, defines, and engages a people whose civic lives cross and transcend borders.

Chapter 4: Church Politics, Filipino-American Interests in Political Issues

Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions; for if it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of it (Tocqueville 1:316).

Filipino-American “politics” is constituted in and through maps of historical memories of immigration and settlement, of links between original homeland and new destination and informal/alternative political practices, and of “Filipinoness” and “Americanness” (Bonus, 2000: 94).

It is eleven thirty at night. For the members of Palitaw their Friday night fellowship has just really gotten started.⁴³ They have been praying, singing, and sharing their thoughts on scripture for over three hours. As the final prayer closes with a resounding, “Amen” and one last song is sung, they all make their way to the kitchen to prepare “a little midnight snack,” as Janis puts it. More like a buffet, the kitchen is filled with dish after succulent dish of Filipino cuisine, including Jun’s famous *pancit* noodles. Taking the last few dishes out of the oven and microwave, the members of Palitaw take their seats around a large breakfast table adjacent to the kitchen. “Let us bow our heads and give thanks,” Anthony proclaims. After blessing the food they begin to pass it around the table and then dig in. Exhausted from a long work day but energized from an active fellowship, the group talks over food, and loudly at that. While it is difficult to keep up with all the conversation, floating in and out of Tagalog and English, and bouncing from

⁴³ The following account is based on interviews with members of Palitaw and four years of formal observations at their Friday night fellowships. Additional data were collected in follow-up interview after many nights of observation either by phone or email. Although Palitaw is the actual name of the group, out of respect for people’s wishes, the names of its members have been changed to maintain their anonymity. Palitaw is a Catholic home devotional and prayer group of 13 couples in Houston. The name comes from a traditional Filipino dessert (see further chapter 1).

one subject to another, one issue is heard in almost every corner of the room, politics! Whether it dealt with personal issues and opinions, the Catholic Church, or the current state of affairs in both the United States and the Philippines, politics of some sort filled the room.

Noticing my interest, Janis stops her own conversation and asks, “how’s the food?” Responding, “it is fantastic,” I then pose a question about the groups’ interests in politics. Laughter contagiously erupts around the table as if I just told a joke. As the laughs came to an end, Cheryl a first-generation Filipina-American remarks, “Yes of course we’re interested in politics... it is a part of everything we do whether we like it or not... we don’t mean to laugh” Continuing, Cheryl explains,

I don’t really need spell it out for you do I? We vote here, we talk about what Gloria is doing back home, and then there are our numerous associations but they are more a social thing these days more than anything else. I mean its politics, high drama, but the many associations have not made a dent in society at large.

The truth is scholars do know better. Filipino-Americans, in general, have an active civic life. They rank second among Asian Americans in voter registration, second among Asian Americans in voting in presidential elections, and more importantly they perceive their involvement in politics as having a real influence in governmental policy (see Lien et al, 2004). What constitutes “politics” for many in the Filipino-American community, however, is far more complex than direct political participation.

“You see, with Filipinos there is political talk, there is whole lot of organizing, and then maybe a little action,” Adler, a first-generation Filipino-American, points out. Explaining further, Adler offers, “We have so many associations, like Cheryl said, but it’s always a matter of unity talk and we never have unity... at least not in the Fil-Am associations.” Sensing that I was confused, the group begins to suggest that their

conversations that night were not really about politics per se but issues that effect their lives, and issues, as Angie points out, “where faith can make a difference.” Agreeing, Jun, a first-generation Filipino-American, explains that the problems of unity and doing politics in the Filipino-American community may never be solved by Filipino-American associations,

Most Filipinos are discriminatory, myself included. Even back in the Philippines, if you are not from the Manila suburbs or the Tagalog region, you are somehow discriminated against. That still happens here but to a lesser extent. I do not belong to any Fil-Am organization because I see them as mostly social groups than anything else. I believe the numerous organizations is bad in obtaining a unified voice in the community.

As Jun continues, nearing two o’clock in the morning, he leaves me with a few questions of his own,

it is even worse if you are not Catholic... then you have nothing but your own group and it’s bound to split. Then where do you go when you need to get something done? You can spin your wheels in organization, and that’s politics but where do you turn when you need to actually accomplish something important?

The answer, perhaps, is the Catholic Church or Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups.

CHURCHED POLITICS

When first-generation Filipino-Americans talk about politics, they often speak about a specific Filipino brand of politics. Their political interests, much like many of their lives, span continents and political arenas. In “doing politics,” Filipino-American political activism often engages these interest not only in the United States but in the Philippines as well. Simultaneously active in two nations their political life can involve a form of engagement that lies outside of mainstream politics. It is here, in a unique

understanding of doing politics, that Filipino-American ethnic associations play a significant role. However participation in these associations, as the members of Palitaw point it, may be as much a barrier to mainstream politics. Highlighting this fact in the vignette above, Cheryl suggests that these associations have not made a “dent in society at large.” Agreeing, Jun suggests that if Filipinos are going to find a sense of unity or actually accomplish something through politics that is difficult to do in Filipino associations.

Filipino politics in America were born out of exclusionary and racist conditions that necessitated the formation of regional and ethnic associations that could work outside of mainstream politics. Prior to the mid 1960s, Filipino-Americans had largely been excluded from traditional American political avenues. Building on this historical memory, many Filipino-Americans still engage in alternative political practices. Although when many Filipino-Americans need to act as a community versus a region or ethnic group, it is the Church and the intimacy of home devotional and prayer groups to which they often turn. And this is not a recent phenomenon. Even prior to the 1960s, the formation of Catholic clubs, served as an important source of community mobilization when it was obvious that racism was an embedded part of American Catholicism (Okamura, 1983; Burns et al, 2000; Gonzales III and Maison, 2004). Today, Catholicism has continued to galvanize its position in the hearts and minds of many Filipino-Americans. At a purely institutional level, despite a history of racist exclusion the Church serves as an extensive or hard resource for Filipino-Americans that reaches beyond borders. As a universal church, the Catholic Church transcends national borders and has increasingly grown to embrace its diversity (Mooney, 2007; Casanova, 1997). Providing

a mass membership that is at least ostensibly united in being Catholic, the Church presents a host of opportunities for Filipino-Americans to build community and engage political issues such as the right-to-life that touch upon their Catholic faith.

Although church life is often important to Filipino-American religiosity and civic life, home devotional and prayer groups such as Palitaw cross parishes and can also mobilize important resources, both intensive and extensive, that are just vital to their interest and involvement in politics. These groups can be an important transnational space where Filipino ethnicity is reproduced through a common language or dialect and the enjoyment of Filipino food and customs. This can also be said in the case of Filipino-American ethnic associations. In these associations many Filipinos freely interact with each other often in their own languages while sharing Filipino food and custom. The difference between the two is a matter of purpose. Ethnic associations are largely not focused on the intimacy of faith. This raises the several questions: Which type of group is more conducive to unity and political life? What resources do religious and ethnic associations mobilize to certain causes and issues? Do they tap different resources? And What is the role of the Catholic Church, if any, in engaging Filipino-Americans in politics both within and outside of these groups?

Turning to these questions, in the remainder of the chapter I chart some of the key political issues many first-generation Filipino-Americans take interest and explore the networks, institutions, and resources that provide an opportunity for them to get involved in political life in Houston and beyond.⁴⁴ Looming large as the central question of this

⁴⁴ Some of the key issues of interest for Filipino-Americans such as the right-to-life are deliberately not discussed in this chapter but chapter five. The focus of this chapter is interests versus action. Issues such as the right-to-life represent both an interest and an issue around which Filipino-Americans mobilize.

chapter is the importance of religion to Filipino-American political life? While there are historical reasons to expect that religious groups and the Church itself are vital to Filipino political life, one must also question where moral commitments and the intimacy of more intensive resources play a role. Religion can be a transcendent motivation that engenders commitment to a community of the faithful. This can compel Filipino-American interests as much as or even more than extensive or material resources.

Situating Filipino-American Politics

Filipino ethnic associations⁴⁵ are a “space of their own” (Bonus, 2000). They are an arena in which many Filipino-Americans feel comfortable voicing their grievances and advocating on behalf of their community. For pre-1965 Filipino immigrants to the United States these associations were a major political outlet when the exclusionary conditions of a pre-Civil Rights Movement America cut off access to traditional political parties and organizations. Today, these associations, despite decade old pleas for unity, remain largely regional, *barangays* in diaspora. They are still considered by many Filipino-Americans to be an alternative space for achieving political recognition within the United States. They also provide aid to their fellow countrymen, both in America and the Philippines. And they strengthen a sense of *home* and identity in diaspora. At any given ethnic association meeting, one is just as likely to find Filipinos singing the Philippine national anthem as the American anthem. Planning relief benefits for families in Houston or Manila, and speaking a host of regional languages in addition to English, every meeting is a testament to transnational lives. In these associations, many Filipino-

Americans express a pride in their heritage and citizenship. Elaborating on this sense of being Filipino and American simultaneously, Edwin, a first-generation Filipino-American in his late fifties and member of Palitaw in Houston, offers,

I believe in the saying "when in Rome, do as the Romans do." I am proud of my Filipino heritage, but by the same token, I want to be as American as the person next door!

Almost every meeting expresses this sentiment. It is an earnest desire to remain loyal to heritage and home, where you are and where you came from, and the town or region in which they were born.

Filipino-American ethnic associations are often vibrant and at times chaotic, if not confrontational. Associational meetings involve as much yelling as they do organization. This is "*palengke*" politics (Tagalog for market place).⁴⁶ It is a market like atmosphere in which "anything goes" and "hidden transcripts" seemingly facilitate the business at hand (see Bonus, 2000: 92+). Objectives are met and resolutions are enacted forging a sense of accomplishment and mobilization. However, unity across these groups remains a challenge. As Butch, a first generation Filipino-American in Houston notes,

I think that for the first generation of Filipino immigrants, unity within the broader Filipino community will be difficult to achieve. They all came from various regions and provinces in the Philippines which were separated in terms of geography and each have their history, language, means of communication, culture and traditions. Everyone has strong attachments to their families, town mates, schoolmates and provincemates and thus, usually tend to associate with the same people where they came from. They are have unity within their own smaller groups but they seem not to be able to find a common bond that cuts across their differences and gives them a genuine feeling that they truly belong to the larger Fil-Am community... That explains why there are so many small

⁴⁵ The term ethnic association refers to Filipino-American associations that are not affiliated with a church or religious groups such as the Knights of Columbus, and whose purpose is purely secular. They are often regionally based and form along ethnic Filipino lines according to town or province of birth.

⁴⁶ Although many Filipino-Americans use this phrase to describe politics in their ethnic associations, it first appears in print, to my knowledge, in Bonus, 2000.

associations. Umbrella organizations unifying the smaller associations have been formed but a strong rallying objective to unify them has been unsuccessful thus far.

Providing a measure of insight into the regional and cultural reasons why there are so many Filipino ethnic associations, Butch points to the *palengke* atmosphere as problematic. Highlighting this, Michael, a first-generation Filipino-American suggests that, “all the yelling gets old after a while... you just get tired of the fighting, even if it is somewhat productive in its weird way.”

Outside of the *palengke* style of Filipino-American ethnic associational meetings, doing politics is further complicated by what many Filipinos perceive to be “pioneering syndrome” among those in the community. Pointing to this, Ray Colorado, editor and publisher of the an on-line community page in Texas, offers that,

The practice of political maturity must begin with our community organizations, for they are the smallest unit of our political involvement... We must break away from the “pioneer syndrome” and be aware of its presence as a political disease keeping us politically immature (November 27, 1999: online)

By “Pioneer syndrome,” what Ray and many other Filipino-Americans describe is a situation in which Filipino-American associations split over issues of pride and recognition. When Filipino-Americans form a new community association they often recruit new members on the promise that there will be many programs and activities designed to benefit the Filipino-American community. As the new association grows, top leadership positions are rotated among a small founding group of pioneers. When new members join they are not granted access to these positions despite working just as diligently. Overlooked or given little credit, these new members leave to start associations of their own.

In some cases, however, new members do make head way in these associations. When this occurs or when pioneers lose key leadership positions, the pioneers often rally the original members and start another association with the aim of not only recouping a sense of face, one of the four Fs Viana described in chapter 2, but outshining or even crushing the former association. This is what many describe as a “crab mentality.” It is paramount to a crab pulling down its peer as it makes its way to the top of the bucket. And it is, as Vince points out, a “cultural problem.” The crab mentality is not unique to Filipinos in Houston either. As many Filipinos suggest, it is a real issue for the wider national community, “these two patterns of breakup is too common among Pinoy [Filipino]⁴⁷ communities such that we have too many organizations in every city” (Colorado, November 27, 1999: on-line).

Although the historical precedent of racial and ethnic exclusion from American politics may have reinforced a palengke style of politicking for Filipino-Americans, many Filipinos now question what purpose these associations serve. Filipino-Americans, such as Vince and Ray in Houston, understand that these association are still the most basic unit of political involvement but lament what they has become,

Today, who really cares about induction of officers? The officers, of course. But those same individuals may have been elected a dozen times. The question is; is attending many meetings to organize induction of officers worth sacrificing personal health, family time, church time... (Colorado June 9, 2004: on-line)

What ultimately matters is being with family, maintaining one’s religious faith, and seeking a balance among numerous obligations. This is not at the exclusion of an active civic life. As Ray emphatically editorializes, “it is not true that Filipinos are loosing their

⁴⁷ Pinoy is another term many Filipinos use to describe themselves. In Tagalog there is no true “F” hence most Filipinos when using the term say Pilipino or Pinoy/ Pinay.

civic consciousness... far from it but they have raised the standards for wise use of their time.” For some Filipino-Americans, however, this desire for balance has led to apathy. For others, it has led to a deepening in religious life and subsequently an expansion of their civic lives. Turning to this case, in the next section I explore where religious life informs and sparks the political interests of many Filipino-Americans in Houston and elsewhere.

FILIPINO AMERICAN POLITICAL INTERESTS AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

Many Filipino-Americans in Houston have retreated from ethnic associational life. Although they still pay their dues or attend an occasional fundraiser, they have grown tired of the lack of unity and no longer devote their time to “spinning their wheels” in weekly meetings. Highlighting this fact, Vanessa, a first-generation Filipina in Houston points out, “I am a member of Fil-Am Association of but not involved... don’t even have time to go to their annual induction ball... I guess I am a member in name only.” Continuing, Vanessa reveals,

I moved to the U.S. in the 1970s. It is sad but I have seen the crab mentality among Filipinos. I have seen it in the Fil-Am association, that is why there was a split in the Fil-Am Associations here...I have seen it in the workplace. I guess you see it more in civic organizations rather than religious organizations.

For Vanessa, there is something different about religious organizations. Like many of her fellow Filipinos, Vanessa has turned to religious fellowship both within and outside of her church as a civic outlet and a resource for her political life. When asked how she would classify these more religious associations, Vanessa, emphatically answers, “this [CFC] is my home.” Expressing a similar sentiment, Angie, a member of another home

devotional group, offers that, “Palitaw is my community, these are my brothers and sisters... [and] they are my family.” Like the more general social scientific literature on small groups, what many Filipino-Americans in Houston have found in these more intimate religious settings is a sense of community.

Many Filipino-Americans, however, do not see these prayer and home devotional groups as groups or associations per se but movements. Pointing to this, John insists, “I would not consider CFC as an association but rather a movement inspired by the Holy Spirit!” Talking to other Filipino-Americans in Houston about their experiences in these prayer and home devotional groups, they see their involvement as an alternative to palengke politics. Similar to the role of ethnic Filipino-American associations as an alternative to racist exclusion from mainstream American politics, religious fellowships are now, for many Filipino-Americans, a response to the chaos of ethnic associations and a voice of real unity. Drawing attention to this fact, Jeff suggests,

I think religion could hold the key to solving this unity problem... 85 plus percent of the Filipinos are Catholic Christians by baptism and on the surface that, that should promote unity. However, the vast majority of Filipinos are either non-practicing Catholics or are poorly catechized and have not really integrated Catholicism in their daily lives.

For Jeff, simply being Catholic is not enough for unity. It is a matter of devotion and truly understanding what it means to be Catholic. As Jeff points out, “you can’t just go to Church... to be Catholic is to be involved, know the issues of our faith, and live it.” And living this faith and understanding these issues can entail sacrifices.

Many Filipino-Americans in these religious groups admit that they have also found unity and a sense of true fellowship in secular groups, namely fraternal lodges. As Danny describes it, “the fellowship among brothers is unequal to anything.” However, as

members of Catholic renewal groups such as CFC, some Filipino-Americans have renounced their memberships in these lodges. In becoming “new Catholics” and learning more about their faith, they stop attending the lodges because of the Church’s stance on Masonry as a historically divisive and anti-Catholic group. Lamenting this situation, as tears welled up in his eyes, Danny explains, “it was a painful break... I was a former master, I loved, still love my brothers.”

Danny sees his sacrifice as a necessary part of being re-catechized. Fred, on the other hand, a founding member and former Master of PAMAT (Philippine American Masons of Texas),⁴⁸ believes that his involvement in Palitaw and his life as a faithful Catholic does not require this sacrifice. Pointing this out, Fred describes that, “there is nothing anti-Catholic about PAMAT... in fact, we even have priests who join our fellowship.” Continuing, Fred describes how on numerous occasions, including the celebration of Simbang Gabi, PAMMAT has worked side by side with the Church, “we [PAMAT] provided food one night and on another I served food as a member of Palitaw.” For Danny, giving up his Masonic affiliation means giving up one civic outlet to open another, CFC also provided food for a night of Simbang Gabi. For Fred, being a Mason connects both civic outlets. Although Fred and Danny hold differing views on what it means to be Catholic and what groups you can join, the Church stands at the center of both their lives. It is in the Church and through a lived faith that interests in political issues is generated, calling on Filipino-Americans to act as Catholics.

In the Filipino-American community, there is often no greater seat of authority on social and political issues than the Church, not just in Houston but beyond. It is here that

the views of priests, and even more so of the Pope, carry considerable weight. As Putnam et al (2000) rightly point out, the Catholic Church is not a democratic institution. On “matters of faith” there is only one authority and one way the Church hopes that people will see an issue. Through the issuing of Papal edicts and encyclicals, the Church seeks uniformity. Despite the more liberal tendencies of American Catholics, Filipino-Americans are, for the most part, not your average American Catholics. They are largely more conservative and come to the United States with a different relationship to Catholicism. As was noted in chapter two, Filipinos in the Philippines consider the Pope to be one of the top three trusted and idolized figures in the nation. Among Catholic nations, the Philippines are one of the most traditional, and hence conservative. Compared to the more liberal views of American Catholics, Filipinos in the Philippines report that they would like the next Pope, Pope Benedict XVI, to be less open to change in the Church, to oppose priests getting married, and to be more focused on religious issues than what life is like for the ordinary person (see Social Weather Survey, 2002). Although there is little to no statistical data to confirm this, many Filipino-Americans in Houston appear to hold similar views to those in the Philippines, as evident from interviews and their own press. The Church matters to Filipino-Americans and is trusted as a moral authority. As Kristi a first-generation Filipina-American in Houston and recent citizen concurs,

The issues that are important to us [she and her husband Mark] are Pro-life issues. Our religion plays an important role...we are guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church on all the issues.

⁴⁸ PAMAT is the oldest Filipino Masonic lodge in the Southwest and one the oldest Filipino lodges in the United States.

Expressing a similar sentiment, Jeff also points to the Church as a source for his interest in certain issues,

my Catholic faith is not only a huge factor but it is my anchor because it represents the fullness of truth. The unity in truth of Christian moral principles makes perfect sense when applied to the issues.

Kristi and Jeff are “guided” by the teachings of the Church on political issues but also see the Church as the “anchor” for understanding the issues that are important to them as Catholics. Looking specifically at the issue of immigration, as an example, the next section I outline the importance of the Catholic Church in shaping Filipino-American interests. The section also highlights where faith can mobilize this interest and elicit sympathy even when many Filipino-Americans in Houston do not see immigration as a problem within their own community.

AN IMMIGRANT CHURCH AND A MORAL DILEMMA

During a Sunday visit to St. Catherine’s Catholic Church in Houston, a church with one of the largest Filipino-American congregations in a diocese of roughly 50,000 Filipinos, both a guest speaker and Father Roland, a first-generation Filipino-American, instruct the congregation at the beginning of mass of the need for sensitivity and compassion when looking at the immigration debate.⁴⁹ Although neither talks about immigration as a political issue, both discussed it as a Catholic issue and a matter of faith. The guest speaker, a representative of Immigrants for Justice, passes out pamphlets and

⁴⁹ The following account is based on observations at St. Catherine’s church, conversational interviews with Filipino-American parishioners after the mass, in-depth interviews with various members in the Filipino-American community, and analysis of Catholic newsletters and papers. In the case of conversational interviews, these interactions were brief and little to no demographic data was collected outside of identifying them as first-generation Filipino-Americans.

urges the congregation to educate themselves on the issue as, “good Catholics.” After singing a hymn in Spanish, accompanied by guitar, and telling the congregation how to find more information, the speaker takes a seat. The rest of the mass follows along in usual fashion with no further mention of immigration. During the homily, however, Father Roland picks up the issue again. Calling on the example of Jesus, Father Roland, a first-generation Filipino immigrant himself, asks,

What would Christ have us do? Are we not to give compassion to our fellow brothers and sisters in need? Think of the love he has shown the world. These immigrants are members of the parish and children of God!

Echoing a sense of moral obligation and an edict of divine love, Father Roland’s words are clear, although it is not immediately apparent if Father Roland’s words would move the parish to action.

After the mass, some praised Father Roland’s earnestness. Many, including some Filipino-Americans, saw the issue as a “Mexican issue” and not one of their own. Explaining this, one Filipina pointed out, “It’s not an issue for us Filipinos personally... we are not the illegals... but they deserve our compassion like Father said.” Other Filipino-American parishioners were not sure where they stood, “I have mixed feelings about them [immigrants].” Continuing, this first-generation Filipino-American offers,

being an immigrant myself, I could sympathize with the immigrant's plight. Most of them are honest, hard-working people and contribute to the country's economy. It is the way, how they got here that troubles me... I came through the legal system, which diminishes my sympathy for them. This is a big issue in the Filipino community specially in California where there is an enormous number of illegals.

These thoughts reflect the feelings of many Filipino-Americans interviewed after the mass. Filipinos at St. Catherine’s acknowledge that illegal immigration is an issue in the Filipino-American community in California among the so called “*tago ng tago*,” legal

permit Filipinos who have stayed beyond their time “playing hide and seek” (*tago ng tago* in Tagalog) with immigration authorities. Many are also quick to point out that this is not an immediate issue in Houston. And for the most this is the case. The majority of Filipino immigrants coming to Houston are professionals and no press has documented problems with illegal Filipino workers in Houston (see U.S. Census report on foreign born Americans, www.census.gov). Filipino-Americans at St. Catherine’s struggle, nonetheless, with a sense of moral obligation to help others in the church. Pointing to this, one Filipino-American admitted, “I’m not sure what we should do or what Christ calls us to do...”

In the month prior to Father Roland’s homily, the local Texas Catholic Herald ran a series of articles on the immigration issue. These articles not only carved out where the Church stands but the threat new legislation, specifically House Resolution 4437,⁵⁰ poses to good Catholics who are helping their fellow brothers and sisters through charitable acts. The point was not to cease giving charity but increase it. Even if they are illegal, Cardinal McCarrick suggested, “our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion” (Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, March 10, 2004). Moving beyond a call for sensitivity, the Herald pointed parishioners to “Justice for Immigrants” (www.justiceforimmigrants.org) to inform them where they could go for updated information on the issue. Like the speaker at mass from the same

⁵⁰ HR 4437 directs the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) to take all appropriate actions to maintain operational control over the U.S. international land and maritime borders, including prosecuting those harboring illegal immigrants. The Church feared that by serving its parish among who are illegal immigrants it would be subject to prosecution (see www.thomas.loc.gov for details, and the Texas Catholic Herald throughout 2004 for the Catholic response).

organization, the articles also provided pre-addressed cards to Senator John Cornyn and Kay Bailey Hutchinson with a form letter on the issue,

Dear Senator,

Our immigration system is broken. Comprehensive immigration reform is needed now! I ask you to oppose HR 4437. I ask you to support comprehensive immigration reform as described in bill SB 1033, proposed by McCain and Kennedy. . . I urge you to conduct the immigration reform debate in a civil and respectful manner, mindful not to blame immigrants for social or economic ills or for the atrocities committed by those who have carried out acts of terrorism.

Respectfully Yours, X—sign here

In addition to the cards, the articles also suggested four ways for parishioners to make a difference,

- 1) Purchase fair trade goods
- 2) Be a stranger no longer, in our parish, by developing relationships with diversity—know their struggles and how these issues effect their families
- 3) Refer immigrants to legal clinics such as St. Frances Cabrini Immigrant legal Assistance Center
- 4) Look in your own backyard—do you know or hire workers that are illegal?
(TCH, February 24, 2004: 13)

This was, and still is, a clear call to take interest.

According to the Catholic Church, the issue of immigration is connected to a global state of poverty that forces people to move from country to country leaving the Church and its parishioners as the only source of aid for a diasporic poor (see as an example, Texas Catholic Herald, February 24, 2004:24). While many people in 2004, and today for that matter, questioned the Church's involvement on the issue, both within the parish and outside, the Herald continued to call for parishioners to get involved in subsequent weeks following these initial articles. Further pushing the issue, they suggested that it was morally right for the Church to take a stand and a duty,

The Church's role in immigration reform is to follow Pope Benedict XVI first encyclical letter, *On Christian Love: The Church wishes to help form conscience in political life and to stimulate greater insight in to the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interests...yet at the same time, she [the Church] cannot and must not remain in the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument, and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply* (Texas Catholic Herald, April 28: 24).

This sense of duty was also expressed in the role parishioners were, and still are, called to take,

believers are called to become informed, active, and responsible participants in the political process. As the Catechism states—know the facts, consult church documents and theologians, and pray for guidance.

For many Filipino-Americans this duty is taken seriously. Consequently, immigration as an issue is often taken seriously by many Filipino-Americans in Houston because it is a concern for the Church. If it is important to the Church, it is largely important to Filipinos. Although many Filipino-Americans interviewed struggle to articulate what should be done or whether immigration was truly a Filipino issue or not, their interest was mobilized by a sense of compassion and an intimate sense of duty communicated by the Church.

Looking more generally at political interests, I turn to findings from the SCCB survey data to further evaluate the role of more extensive or hard religious resources in predicting Filipino-American interest in politics beyond the Houston context. Although the data do not have more intensive measures to test the saliency of faith and the intimacy of religious covenant in predicting this interest, the findings are seen as a broader snapshot of where religion might impact Filipino-American political interest.

Table 2:

Odds Ratios of Filipino-American Political Interest (SCCB Survey 2000- Christian Sub-sample)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.01(.00)			1.01(.00)
Gender (Male)	1.58(.28)			1.45(.29)
Education	1.31(.11) *			1.24(.12) ~
Income	0.97(.09)			0.84(.09)
Citizen	1.23(.34)			1.28(.35)
Ethnic Group Participation		0.80(.34)		1.67(.55)
Religious Group Participation		2.47(.53)		0.57(.39)
Catholic			2.11(.35) **	1.76(.36)
Weekly Attendance			2.29(.29) **	2.19(.31) **
Church Activities			1.36(.29)	1.41(.34)
N	185.73	185.73	185.73	185.73
-2 L Log	466.51	473.76	461.62	453.12

~ = p < .06 * = p < .05 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001

Looking at table 2, findings complicate the picture of the ethnographic accounts (see methodological appendix for variable construction). Using a measure of interest in politics, i.e. *How interested are you in politics and national affairs*, multivariate analysis suggests, religious resources do positively effect many Filipino-American interests in

politics, but not in quite the same way as Filipinos in Houston describe.⁵¹ Weekly church attendance and participation in activities outside of or in addition to attendance are indeed significant predictors of political interest. In fact, looking at the complete model in table 2 (model 4), Filipino-Americans who attend church weekly are 2.19 times as likely to be interested in politics. Being Catholic has a nominally positive effect in model 3 and is not significant in the final model. The Church is not a hindrance to political interests but it also does not carry the same strength in the statistical models as it does in the ethnographic data. Part of this may be a matter of living ones faith, as Filipino-Americans in Houston would point out. Being Catholic in name is different that being actively Catholic. It is not denomination affiliation per se, therefore, that effects interest in politics. Through weekly attendance religious teachings, scriptural narratives, stories, and parables play a major role in the way in which many Filipinos view society and take an interest in issues that are important to them as Catholics (see Elision, 1992).

Associational participation either in ethnic organizations or religious groups, has no significant effect on political interests in the statistical models. This is somewhat surprising. In the case of ethnic associations, the nature of *palengke* politics in Filipino-American associations, may explain these results. Following the complaints of many Filipino-Americans about the crab mentality and pioneer syndrome, these associations are, perhaps, a legitimate barrier to political interests.

At a more methodological level, the pairing of “*how interested are you in politics*” with “*and national affairs*” in the survey question may also present a problem

⁵¹ As we would anticipate from the civic engagement literature (Putnam, 2000; Verba et al, 1995), increased levels of education have a positive effect on Filipino-American interest in politics (1.24 times more likely). Income, however, has no significant effects contrary to what we might expect.

for many Filipino-Americans. Although purely speculation, connecting political interests to national affairs, may effected how many Filipino-Americans in ethnic associations answered the question. Filipino-American ethnic associations tend to be regional and rarely extend beyond the cities in which they reside, hence their interest are often not those of national affairs. When these interests do extend to the national level, it is often not this nation, the United States, but the Philippines to which they reach.

The absence of any significant positive effects for Filipino-American participation in religious groups in the models is equally surprising. Prayer groups and home devotionals are a vital part of Filipino-American religiosity. As the vignette that opens this chapter illustrates, politics are an ever present part of their discussions over food. However, nearly all the Filipino-Americans interviewed through the course of this study who are members of religious groups such as Palitaw and CFC often made an ardent distinction between their interests in politics and an interest in issues that are more religious in nature. Highlighting this point, Janis, a Filipina member of Palitaw, explains,

When we ‘talk politics’ it really isn’t a political discussion, I mean we talk about the current state of things here and at home but never anything heated. We are a family and we know we all have different views so we avoid really getting into a debate... what we do discuss is matters of faith, not who to vote for but what we should do as good Catholics about issues like abortion.

For Janis, it is religious issues not politics per se that are of central importance. Outwardly, the two appear to overlap but perhaps the distinction that Filipino-Americans such as Janis make is a response to palengke politics and the political interests that are debated in ethnic associations. It is this form of politics that Janis and members of Palitaw appear to be avoiding.

One also cannot forget that the Catholic Church stands as the central point of authority for many Filipino-Americans on several political issues. This may suggest that their interests are in fact sparked more through weekly church attendance and participation in parish life than their home devotional and prayer groups. At the same time, more intensive resources in these groups may equally spark their interests and are not testable in the quantitative data. Like ethnic associations, these home devotional and prayer groups often discuss political interests that are just as tied to the Philippines as the United States. Again, methodologically speaking, survey measures may inadvertently miss a larger part of Filipino-American political interests by limiting where these interests exist. Although purely speculation, asking, *how interested are you in politics and national affairs*, may have connotations of an exclusive American context. And the issues Filipino-Americans are drawn to extend well beyond the national borders of the United States, making the question difficult to answer. Exploring these transnational interests further, in the next section I discuss how faith and Catholicism more generally compels many Filipino-Americans to stay informed about the politics of *home*.

Gatherings in Diaspora

For many Filipino-Americans *home* is a place that is as dear to their hearts and heritage as the physical location in which they reside (Espiritu, 2003). First-generation Filipino-Americans are a diasporic people. They are connected to an understanding of home that is truly transnational, one that often situates their political interest in more than one national arena. Religion often plays a central role in both their interests of home politics and the meanings by which they understand their diaspora. Looking at the Jewish Diaspora as an ideal type for comparison, the Filipino-American Diaspora exemplifies

many of the same characteristics. Filipinos are dispersed from a geographic center but retain a collective memory and mythos about the homeland (see Gilroy, 1993). They often believe that they are not truly welcome in their host nations, and although many do not return to the Philippines permanently from the United States, the belief in an eventual return to their homeland plays a prominent role in their psyche (see Espiritu, 20003). More importantly, many first-generation Filipinos harbor a collective consciousness and sense of solidarity that is built around cultural practices such as religion (see Safran, 1991). Explaining this parallel, Allen, a first-generation Filipino-American college student points out,

The Filipino-American community should begin to think like the Jewish Americans as far as valuing their roots...for whatever it's worth, our veins are intertwined and fate not too distant from one another [referring to Filipinos in the Philippines].

Although Allen does not directly point to religion as a source of solidarity for Filipinos in diaspora, the choice of comparisons is very telling. Being Catholic, similar to being Jewish, matters in diaspora whether they are religiously active or not.

The Filipino community is by in large a *gathering in diaspora* to borrow Warner and Wittner's metaphor (1998). Many first-generation Filipino-Americans are a people with one foot in the Philippines and another in the United States. It is here, in an truly transnational existence, that one can see the complexity of either side of a hyphenated identity (see Tuan, 1998). And it is Catholicism that binds many Filipinos to *home*, allowing them to take interest in the Philippines, the United States, or where ever two or more Filipinos are gathered. Drawing attention to this fact, Patricia Evangelista, a Filipina and winner of the 2004 International Public Speaking competition in London suggests,

I will come home... a borderless world doesn't preclude the idea of home. I am a Filipino and I will always be one. It isn't about just geography; it isn't about boundaries. It's about giving back to the country that shaped me (Yuson, 2004: 200)

Unlike the early Jewish Diaspora (587-586 BCE), Filipinos migrants have a home to return. Understanding this and feeling an obligation to give back to their country of origin, many Filipinos are burdened by a heavy sense of guilt. Pointing this out, Allen asks while blogging with fellow Filipino-American students, "how long are we going to wonder in the desert?" Responding, JoJo, suggests that, "Filipinos are proud to be Filipinos but they are not exactly doing their obligations as citizens." Here, citizenship refers to a spirit of "dual citizenship" that brings with it a sense of obligation to take an interest in the lives of Filipinos not just in the United States but the Philippines themselves. It is also, in some cases, a legal right that is now open to Filipinos in diaspora.

As a result of the passage of Philippines Republic Act No. 9225 in 2003, also known as the Citizenship Retention and Re-Acquisition Act, Filipino-Americans are eligible for dual citizenship in both the United States and the Philippines. In 2004, about 6,000 people became dual citizens of both countries allowing them to vote in presidential elections in the United States and the Philippines. According to Domingo Nolasco of the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C., few have taken advantage of this opportunity fearing that their participation in Philippine elections will jeopardize their American citizenship (see Star, 2004: online). However, the act has stimulated increased interest in the politics of home.

When news draws attention to the chaos and corruption of Philippine politics or highlights continued economic instability and the dire poverty that it breeds, the public

perception of the Philippines, and hence Filipinos in diaspora, can often be damaging. For some Filipino-Americans such as Rene P. Ciria-Cruz, writer for *Filipinas* magazine, these images compel Filipinos to take a deeper interest in their homeland. Pointing this out, Ciria-Cruz asks,

Why should Filipino Americans be concerned about the damaging images of their homeland? Why? Because perception is, more often than not, based on reality, and part of our existence here in the United States is helping our families, relatives and compatriots "back home" cope with some very burdensome realities...

Continuing, Ciria-Cruz suggests,

We [Filipino-Americans] should be concerned because perception is politics. We become justifiably proud when one of us here or in the Philippines achieves something spectacular in any field, because the achievement reflects on all of us and helps us become more politically empowered as a community. How is our search for respect, recognition and empowerment served by the perception that the homeland we came from is a basket case? (Ciria-Cruz, 2000:7)

First-generation Filipino-Americans, especially those nearing retirement age, often take this message to heart because they can now legally retire in the Philippines with the passage of the Re-Acquisition Act. Subsequently it is in home devotional and prayer groups such as Palitaw and CFC that the question of where to retire often sparks their interests and conversations on Philippine politics. Pointing this out, Jake, a first-generation Filipino-American in his early sixties offers, "I really want to go home to retire but I can't, not yet, the Philippines is such a mess."

Many first-generation Filipino-Americans in Houston are hopeful that things will change in the Philippines and they remain vigilant in their interests "back home." They also believe that it is faith that will make the difference. Consequently, it is through intimate connection in their home devotional and prayer groups that links them to

political interests both in the United States and the Philippines. As Jake, a first-generation Filipino member of Palitaw notes,

We discuss issues here and in the Philippines. We talk in politics about the Presidential election, the Iraq War, Philippine President Estrada's impeachment, their [Philippines'] corruption and the previous fraud election of President Gloria Arroyo...and social issues like unemployment, abortion, divorce, and racial issues...

Explaining these interests further during another interview, Amy, a first-generation Filipina-American member of CFC, offers,

Politics in the U.S. and the Philippines are important to me... no one can deny the widespread corruption in Philippine politics. It's in their blood—sons and daughters of politicians are the most involved in Philippine politics because they are the ones who has the money and power... [more empathically] That is why Couples for Christ is evangelizing the politicians and the Philippine army... just to stop or lessen the spread of corruption back home.

Moving beyond interests, Amy sees her faith and religious involvement as a catalyst for change. She is emotionally connected to the issues and believes that her faith matters.

Agreeing, Kristi, a fellow member of CFC, suggests that what goes on in the United States is of equal importance to her. Like Amy, she also believes that religion plays an important part of the solution,

we [referring to she and her husband Mark] consider politics both in the U.S. and the Philippines both important to us... we believe that true faith can resolve all problems, here and there, through forgiveness of one another...

Hence political interests can be transnational matters of faith in which emotion and the intimacy of intensive resources tie many Filipino-Americans in Houston to two nations.

Although home devotional and prayer groups such as Palitaw are purely local, physically an American fellowship with a keen eye on the politics in the Philippines, it is important to note once again that CFC is somewhat different. Couples for Christ, like Palitaw, is comprised of roughly 25 people and are physically located in American

homes, however, Couples for Christ is a rather large international organization. In Houston CFC has twelve households of roughly 25 people compared to just one household of the same size for Palitaw. By sheer size alone, CFC is unique in its scope and the spread of its institutional transnational networks. In 1981, Couples for Christ (CFC) was started in Manila, Philippines by eight Catholic couples as a new approach to evangelizing married people. Developing into a broader Christian family life program, by 2004 CFC blossomed into a worldwide ministry of one million adherents in 134 countries becoming a major charismatic force for the renewal of Christian family life for Filipinos in diaspora (www.couplesforchrist.org).

Wherever Filipinos are drawn internationally for work, CFC has largely followed and expanded to involve the host communities in which they live or have become citizens. It has also further tied them to a transnational understanding of *home*. Highlighting this fact, Judy, a first-generation Filipina-American in Houston, notes,

Wherever I travel, either in the States or abroad, I wear my CFC shirt or a GK [Gawad Kalinga] shirt and always I find a fellow brother or sister...we are everywhere you know and that makes everywhere home... I feel connected to something more than myself!

While other CFC members largely agree, they also admit that they feel less direct personal control over issues of concern in the Philippines. Pointing to this fact, Jeff offers,

I tend to pay more attention to politics here in the US than in the Philippines simply because I live here. Even though I consider politics in the Philippines equally as important as in the U.S., I have resigned myself to the fact that there is really nothing much I can do on a personal level, except to pray and also to work around political issues and problems through, of course Gawad Kalinga...

Social ministries such as Gawad Kalinga, discussed in greater depth in the coming chapters, are an important link through which Filipino-Americans stay abreast and connected to issues in the Philippines. And this is not all that surprising.

Migration scholarship increasingly points out that immigrants can and do maintain ties with their homelands while also becoming active citizens in the countries that receive them. It is a transnational existence that crosses borders and often blurs the lines of our understanding of what it means to be good citizens (see review Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007 forthcoming). Yet the question of how immigrants remain active in both their receiving and home countries is not always clear. Can a person truly be active in two worlds, maintaining both sides of a hyphenated identity, engage in politics in the physical space they reside and their home of origin? And what role does faith and the transnational structure of the Catholic Church play? Where Verba and his coauthors find fault with Catholicism is not in political interests which they note is equaled to that of Protestants. It is political involvement and civic action. While the Church clearly has a major influence over the issues Filipinos consider important, fueling their interest in politics, does active involvement in the Church lead to political involvement? What roles, if any, do religious groups that are outside of the Church such as Palitaw and CFC play in connecting their members to their political life? And what should social scientists make of the emotive power of faith in mobilizing Filipino-Americans to political ends? Addressing these questions, in the next chapter I turn from interests in political and social issues to Filipino-American activism.

Chapter 5: Matters of Faith, Filipino-American Political Activism

For the lay faithful, political involvement is a worthy and demanding expression of the Christian commitment of service to others (from the Compendium on Church Social Doctrine quoted by Fr. Roy Cimagala, 2005: 565).

There is no religion that does not place the object of man's desire above and beyond the treasures of earth...nor is there any which does not impose on man some duties towards his kind and thus draw him at times from contemplation of himself (Tocqueville, 2:23).

On the first weekend after the 34th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, John and his wife Sue, both first-generation Filipino-American Catholics and members of Couples for Christ (CFC), pack up the car with their four young children (ages 23 months through thirteen years old) for a trip to Austin.⁵² The Mercados have been up since 6 am. Getting together snacks, packing extra clothes, and preparing signs for the rally, John is not sure his children completely understand. John believes, however, that involving his kids is important, “when my wife and I surrendered our lives to God eight and half years ago, we already made a decision that even our kids will be in the battle field with us...”

Earlier in the week, John and Sue were in Washington D.C. at a similar, although significantly larger, national pro-life rally. Inspired by what they saw, the Mercados felt compelled to get others to join them in Austin. Sending out mass emails, John explains,

You know, we saw yesterday that there is a chance! Yes there is! During the mass at Verizon Center yesterday, [a] throng of people in different age, occupation, vocation, young and old, laity and religious gathered together to worship and bow down to the source of all LIFE! Then in the field [during the march] one could

⁵² The following account is based on interviews with various members of Couples for Christ including the Mercado, Cruz, and Gonzales families. Additional data were collected through email exchanges, observations at the Austin pro-life rally, and phone interviews with CFC members who were at the rally. Out of respect for people's wishes, their names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

easily sense the hand of God moving the crowd—everyone is at peace and hopeful that one day victory will come!

Continuing, John offers,

There is a chance! Only if people just like you and me would give our time. Just like what you have done already in the different pillars of CFC, now is the time to show another facet of God's power thru this pillar... and so I'm encouraging you to do the same sacrifice that our CFC brothers and sisters did in other states.

It was an open invitation, an emotional plea calling on others of faith.

Impassioned and driven, the Mercados do not see the rally on the anniversary of Roe v Wade or subsequent rallies as political events but as an opportunity and a spiritual obligation to engage their faith, “wherever God brings us, either further into this ministry or on other field of service, we know only one thing, as we echo the words of Peter, Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!”⁵³ It is a deep faith that compels the Mercado family to “get involved” as Sue puts. It is also a sense of duty as Catholics and member of Couples for Christ. Across town, Dave and Agnes are also getting their two children (ages fourteen and nine) ready to make the drive to Austin. Somewhat skeptical, Dave admits, “Why do I need to go? Why should I travel two and half hours just to walk a mile or so? Will I, one person, really count? I know other must wonder about that too” At the same time, the Cruz family, whom we met in chapter one, Dan and Lita and their three small children (ages 7 through 11) were making similar preparations. Like their work at Loaves and Fishes, Dan and Lita are not sure the children will completely understand the rally but they are hopeful the message will impact them nonetheless.

⁵³ (John 6:68)

Arriving in Austin, the three families find each other in the crowd. Much to their surprise they are not alone. Over 52 members of CFC Houston both couples and whole families made the journey. As they stood side by side wearing CFC t-shirts, they form a vibrant presence among the 1,500 protestors that gathered in Republic Square, roughly a mile and a half away from the capital (local ABC affiliate). Heralded as the “Texas Rally for Life,” over 32 local and national pro-life groups as well as individuals and families from around the state are gathered to protest against abortion and pray for what they see as a tragic loss of life (local ABC affiliate). As CFC members march toward the capital they begin to recite the rosary. Inspired by those around them, Agnes and Dave are thankful that their children are with them,

By bringing our daughter and son, we are teaching them by showing them they have a voice in this cause, or for any cause they believe in. We are already planting a seed in their hearts. Beyond the material and earthly processions, these are life-lessons and values we wish to leave them, our legacy, priceless!

Echoing these sentiments, John later offers, “those children that were at the rally knew why we were having the rally... they might not understand everything but the seed is planted.”

Making their way to the capital steps, a group of protestors release 212 white balloons, representing the number of babies they claim are aborted in Texas every day, and 212 red balloons, representing the women having the abortions while others including CFC sing the hymn Amazing Grace (local ABC affiliate). It is hard to gauge the response of onlookers to these acts but it is clear that the rally is not just about abortion. It is about life and a religious life at that, where faith engages society. Expressing this, Agnes offers,

We have to uphold the culture of life at every opportunity that beckons us. Amidst the confusion, violence, unrest, apathy, cynicism, and disregard for life in the world today, it is important to show that there is hope for goodness to triumph. We have won, in fact, 2000 years ago when Christ conquered all... the [rally] is not just anti-abortion, it is for everything that Christ stands for, his incarnation tells us how much dignity God bestows on human life!

Continuing, Agnes reveals the powerful emotive covenant that compels her faith through actions,

We march because it is our duty...this filters down to our everyday activities and all. It is pro-life to drive the speed limit. It is pro-life to exercise. It is pro-life to avoid smoking and drugs. It is pro-life to eat healthy food. It is pro-life to uphold the sacredness of sex and see its meaning within the framework of God's plan. To be catholic is to be pro-life! To be a member of CFC is to be pro-life! To love Jesus in to be pro-life!

MATTERS OF FAITH

It has been roughly seven years since Putnam first questioned “what killed civic engagement” in the last third of the American twentieth century. The events described in the vignette above, however, remind us that many Filipino Americans do not *bowl alone* (see Gonzales III and Mason, 2004 on Filipino bowling leagues). Rather, in an age when the majority of Americans undertake no other political activity outside of voting in national elections, the slice of Filipino-American activism that opens this chapter points to a sense of civic concern that is vibrant and well connected to the traditional social structures such as voluntary associations, the Church, and political parties that Putnam fears are in atrophy.

Looking at the activists themselves, the Filipino-Americans interviewed that marched to the Texas capital after driving three hours, with their families in tow, demonstrate a sense of passion and a clear commitment to civic life. They are immigrants and Americans. They are Catholics who are active in church both in attendance and

social service. And they are also members of a religious renewal group. What drives them is a devout faith and their access to a wealth of religious resources and opportunities that mobilizes their civic concerns. Pointing to this fact, the Filipino-American cyber social pundit Perry Diaz, editorializes,

Yes, in these days of sound byte and cyberspace surfing, Americans of Filipino descent have a higher propensity for fulfilling their religious obligations... our religious upbringing, our strong family ties, our deep-rooted tradition of self-reliance, and our time-honored spirit of "bayanihan" [caring for your fellow neighbor or countryman] have ingrained in us a core of values that directs how our brains think and how our hearts beat (October 29, 2004).

Religion matters for many Filipino-Americans. It is ingrained in their hearts and minds. It is through this intensive sense of religious obligation that many Filipino-Americans collectively take action on the issues that are important to them as Catholics. Social scientists from Putnam to Lichterman believe that restoring the American community of old is contingent on the widespread understanding that we are *better together* (Putnam and Feldstein, 2003; Wuthnow, 1994; 2004; Lichterman, 2005). Many Filipino-Americans in Houston, again, would agree pointing out that this sometimes "elusive togetherness" can be found through faith, the Church, and participation in home devotional and prayer groups (see Lichterman, 2005).

Over a decade ago, Wuthnow (1994), theorizing about the extent to which the small group movement was beginning to alter American understandings of community and redefining its spirituality. He notes that, "with the exception of a few lobbying groups, small groups are not staging protest or trying to initiate public policy but are private, largely invisible ways in which people choose to spend their time" (Wuthnow, 1994: 2-3). Wuthnow suggests that politics are a frequent but informal part of small group discussions, often sparking their interests, but does not see these groups becoming

significant political forces at any point in the near future (see Wuthnow, 1994). If this is indeed the case, however, what are social scientists to make of the Filipino-American protestors at the Texas capital who are members of Couples for Christ? Granted CFC has a large international umbrella organization but the protestors in the vignette above acted on their own accord, not at the urging of the larger institution. They acted as households of 25 people, not all of whom attended. And they acted as small groups.

What scholars often fail to consider is the impact immigration is having on American civil society. If citizen participation stands at the heart of American democracy as Verba et al (1995) and others suggest, its heart and its future, at least in the case of Filipino-Americans in Houston, may very well be imported. The future of American civil society may be dependent as much on the social integration of new immigrants as their subsequent involvement in civic life. Although some might argue that groups such as CFC and Palitaw are not exactly the same as those studied by Wuthnow and his colleagues,⁵⁴ the importance to Filipino-American civic life is often vital nonetheless. Their participation in these groups does not come at the expense of an active church life but actually enhances it. In the broader Catholic universe one supports the other. To this point, the role that these home devotional and prayer groups play in mobilizing the civic life of first-generation immigrants has largely been overlooked in the social scientific literature. So too has the role of the Catholic Church itself and the powerfully intensive resources that binds Catholics to a moral order.

Clearly the activist that marched to the Texas capital described in the vignette above are religious people, however, was it religion that mobilized them? Did they rally

⁵⁴ See the chapter 3 discussion on non-institutional Catholic resources.

simply because they are Catholic? Or does their religious life reveal other resources that are important to their political activism. At the same time, how generalizable is this event to other forms of Filipino-American political life? And in these other cases, do religious resources impact their involvement? Turning to these questions, in the remainder of the chapter I situate Filipino-American political activism and disentangling the religious resources that can facilitate their participation on issues that matter to them both as Catholics and Filipino-Americans. The chapter also highlights how being involved in a religious community shapes not only how many Filipino-Americans see issues but how they act.

Filipino-American Religious Life and American Electoral Politics

After four hundred years in the United States, Filipino-Americans have made headway in local politics but a lack of unity has often left the community one of the most underrepresented in the country (Pasadas, 1999; Espiritu, 1992; Pilapil, 1997). Where Filipinos have been the most successful in local elections is in areas where Filipino-American voters cannot carry the deciding vote. Infighting and schisms present a real barrier for Filipino-Americans running for office. Without change, many Filipino-Americans, such as the cyber social pundit Perry Diaz, fear little progress can be made for the community in mainstream politics. Pointing to this fact, Diaz editorializes,

the Filipino-American community is not ready to bring itself to a higher level of political sophistication. Filipino-American political leaders are more interested in protecting their little turfs by supporting non-Filipino-American candidates with the belief that Filipino-American candidates have less chances of winning. In other words, they are assured of the "political appointments" that usually follow a victorious campaign. Filipino-American political leaders need to rise above the pettiness of "barangay politics" and think outside of the box, and free themselves

from political bondage. This mindset has been our biggest drawback. We should push each other up; instead, we are pulling each other down and the whole community loses. The community needs to get its act together. We have a choice: political enlightenment or perpetual political bondage (October 15, 2004).

For several decades, perhaps centuries, “unity” has been the rallying cry of the Filipino-American community. Despite the ardent efforts of many to unite the myriad numbers of ethnic associations, unity has rarely been realized.

The lack of unity has also meant that many Filipino-Americans continue to engage in palengke politics. As a result, for those active in these associations, there is often a further distancing from mainstream political avenues. Pointing to this, Diaz explains,

in my observation most Filipino-American organizations do not interact with mainstream political and community leaders. They isolate themselves like islands with no bridge to the mainland. They seldom participate in political activities, except electing their own officer...it is Pinoy-style politics...it’s ingrained in our culture (Perryscope, October 22 2004).

It is a real concern for many Filipino-Americans. Complicating the issue is the fact that nearly 40% of the Filipino-American population is ineligible to vote because they are not citizens (see 2000 U.S. Census).

Filipino-Americans, in some cases, have overcome these obstacles and elected members of their community to state and national office. Benjamin Cayetano, as an example, was elected governor of Hawaii in 1994, the highest elected official in Filipino-American history at the time. In 1992, just two years prior, Velma Veloria became the first Filipina in the continental United States to be elected to a State Legislature, serving 12 years as State Representative for South Seattle’s 11th District in Washington.⁵⁵ The

⁵⁵ Analysis of the SCCB survey suggests that the Filipinos (men) were .14 times less likely to vote in the 1996 presidential election than Filipinas (women). This should not be a surprise considering that Filipinas have been very involved in electoral politics in the United States post 1965. Whether it is Dolores Sibonga who was appointed to Seattle’s City Council in 1978 and served for twelve years, Ruth Asmundson who served as the mayor of Davis California in 2005, or Velma Veloria herself, many of the milestones in Filipino-American “firsts” in U.S. politics have been forged by women (Posadas, 1999). Filipinos do not

fact remains, however, that Filipino-Americans are severely under represented in mainstream political institutions for their relative size as a community.

During the Clinton administration this situation changed, at least for the next eight years. Survey findings suggest that Filipino-Americans overwhelmingly supported Clinton, and he rewarded them for it (Rodis, 2008; Dwyer, 2008).⁵⁶ President Clinton nominated Maria Luisa Mabilangan Haley to the board of director for the Export-Import Bank of the United States, a position that required Senate approval. He also appointed several other Filipino-Americans to key positions. This list included: Paula Bagasao as the senior policy advisor in the Agency for International Development; Ferdinand Aranza as the deputy director of insular affairs in the Interior Department; Irene Bueno as deputy to the assistant secretary for legislation in Department of Health and Human Services; Eugene Bae as senior program analyst of the environmental at the Defense Department; Christian Balida as senior policy analyst of domestic financing at the Treasury Department; Tyrone Cabulu as confidential assistant in the Bureau of Export Affairs at the Department of Commerce; and Bob Santos as the head of the Northwest and Alaskan office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This list totals to eight Filipinos and the Filipino-American community praised Clinton for his efforts.

Additionally, Clinton's appointments also served to further solidify the support of Filipino-Americans for the Democratic Party. Prior to 1965 immigration, Filipino-Americans supported the Democratic Party as a party that stood up for minority rights and social welfare (see Posadas, 1999). Clinton's actions served as reminder of this fact and this wedded many Filipino-Americans to the party through the turn of the century.

refer to the Philippines as the motherland for nothing. Perhaps linked to sanctity of the Virgin Mary in Filipino culture, women have always played a major role in shaping the Philippines and they seek to do the same in the United States.

⁵⁶ It is important to note that analysis of the SCCB survey reveals no significant negative effects of being Catholic on voting in the 1996 presidential election. Although other religious measures did not predict voting behavior either, a point that will be address, being Catholic was not a hindrance to Filipino-American participation in electoral politics as Verba et al might expect.

Analysis of the NAAP survey suggest that in 2000 a little over 22% of Filipino-Americans considered themselves to be “strong” Democrats compared to just 7% who considered themselves “strong” Republicans (see Lien et al, 2004). Subsequent, in the 2000 presidential election roughly 64% of Filipino-Americans voted for Gore, a Democrat (Lien et al, 2001). This was not the case in 2004 for Kerry, a Democrat, and oddly a fellow Catholic. It would be hard to imagine that things changed so dramatically in just four years, but they did.

A RELIGIOUS AWAKENING AND A POLITICAL SHIFT IN THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

In the months leading up to the 2004 U.S. presidential election there was often considerable debate in the Filipino-American community over who to vote for (Diaz, August 2004). Unlike previous elections, many Filipino-Americans were not by in large supporting the Democratic candidate forthright. Split on a host of issues, many Filipino-Americans were not confident in Kerry. At the same time, many had their reservations about Bush. As the election drew nearer, they also had serious questions on what impact, if any, the Filipino-American community would have on the outcome (Filipino-Express, 2004: on-line). Of the five states with the largest Filipino American population-California, Hawaii, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois, John Kerry had a running lead. However, among Filipinos, making up roughly 800,000 eligible voters, there was no clear consensus on a candidate (Filipino-Express, 2004; Diaz, August 2004). Those who staunchly opposed Kerry were deeply concerned that their vote would not matter in the Electoral College (Diaz, August 2004). In Texas, many Filipino-Americans interviewed

were confident that their vote for Bush simply validated the voice of the state. At the same time, many voting for Kerry in Houston feared that their vote had little meaning.

Among the twelve battle ground states, Filipinos saw a greater opportunity on either side of the political spectrum. In Nevada, Virginia, and Arizona, which were leaning slightly towards Bush, Filipino-Americans believed that they could sway the vote either way if they voted as a group (Filipino-Express, 2004: online). This was also the case for Wisconsin, Oregon, Missouri, and Minnesota (Filipino-Express, 2004). With the previous presidential election in 2000 coming down to the wire, decided by less than 600 votes, the “one vote matters” campaign in 2004 seemed to echo loudly in Filipino-American community,

With 1.2 million Filipino-American qualified voters in the entire United States, less than 100,000 Filipino-Americans could influence the outcome of the presidential election on November 2, 2004. That’s power. Let’s use it! (Perry Diaz, August 2004)

The question was how to use it and for what candidate. With so many Filipino-Americans split between the two candidates, many also questioned where a source of unity would come from.

When Father Oscar Azarcon Solis, a first-generation Filipino-American, was ordained to the episcopacy on February 10, 2004 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, there was hope among many in the Filipino-American community that as the first Filipino-American bishop in the United States he could unite Filipinos and rally the Catholic vote, especially with a Catholic running for president. However, as many Filipinos pointed out in interviews throughout 2004, they believed that, “Kerry is [was] taking the Catholic vote for granted.” They suggested that while Kerry was Catholic that he did very little to show it. There was a great deal of concern

that if elected to office he would not address issues such as the right-to-life from a purely Catholic doctrinal point of view. Being Catholic did not matter. What mattered was being a “good Catholic.” In this sense, Father Solis’ ordination may have further drawn many Filipino-Americans away from Kerry and the Democratic Party.

When the exit polls were tallied in places like Maryland, it was Bush that had garnered the Catholic vote, not Kerry (Filipino-Express, 2004; Dwyer, 2008). And among these Catholic voters were Filipino-Americans. Across the nation many Filipino-Americans, traditionally democrats, voted for Bush. Although some Filipinos suggested that Bush and Cheney did not “walk the talk,” even pointing to the fact that Cheney’s daughter was in an open lesbian relationship, most ignored this issue and focused on the issues surrounding the right-to-life, and voted for Bush accordingly. Explaining how this unfolded, Ray, a first-generation Filipino-American Catholic and Democrat lamented,

Let me point you to a simple fact, Asian Americans mostly voted for Kerry in the last elections. There is one group that deviated from that, the Filipino Americans...when asked why Filipino Americans instead voted for Bush, common reply was that Filipino Americans can relate to the Republican definition of moral values—I don't think I have to direct you to my favorite liberal, Bill Maher's interpretation of the Republican definition of moral values...

This frustration, however, was also felt among those who voted for Bush on another level. Several Filipino-Americans suggested that Kerry simply left them with little choice. Pointing to this fact, one first-generation Filipina, asked, “where is our generation’s Kennedy... now that was a man you could feel good about voting for.” Whether it was push, a case of Filipino-Americans being repelled by the pro-choice stance of a fellow Catholic in Kerry, or pull, a case of Filipino-Americans being attracted to the more conservative positions of Bush, a shift had occurred.

Looking once again at the opinions of Filipino-Americans in home devotional and prayer groups, 78% of those interviewed in Houston were confident in their vote for Bush and felt good about their decision. As Jose, a first-generation Filipino-American Catholic and member of CFC emphatically argued,

I have always voted since I became a citizen [and] faith is a factor... anything anti-God, I vote against... I am anti-abortion. I have not voted for a democrat for this reason!

For many Filipino-Americans interviewed, moral or religious issues appeared to drive them to the polls. Anything “anti-God,” at least in terms of how the Church defines it, was cause for getting out the vote. While Gore benefited from his ties to the Clinton administration in the 2000 election, Kerry could not rally the same interest among Filipino-Americans.

Compounding Kerry’s distance from the Clinton legacy for many Filipinos, was a clear sign from the Catholic Church that Kerry was not their man. When cardinal Ratzinger ordered a ban on serving communion to Catholic candidates such as Kerry who supported pro-choice, the Church, inadvertently endorsed Bush. As Ratzinger pointed out, this was not done as an act of judgment on a particular candidate,

rather [it] is reacting to a person’s public unworthiness to receive Holy Communion due to an objective situation of sin...Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and euthanasia...There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not however with regards to abortion and euthanasia (Ratzinger in Brennan, 2004: online).

Among many Filipino-Americans in Houston, and perhaps elsewhere, this was a source of confusion. Some understood and even applauded Ratzinger decision. Others feared that a line had been crossed, presenting a real problem for the democratic process. As Jose, described it,

I believe in the separation of church and state and I believe that faith should not be a factor in choosing a candidate. Some politicians showcase faith to get elected in America but oppose religion from becoming a major factor in forming other governments such as Iraq and Iran...

Ultimately, Jose suggested that the Church had no place in politics and should, “stick to issues of morality.” For other Filipino-Americans interviewed in Houston, however, Ratzinger’s actions were a clear condemnation of Kerry’s faith as a Catholic, even if they disapproved of him not being offered communion.

Members of CFC and Palitaw avoided discussing who they were voting for. Although occasionally pointing to Bush in private, neither group pressed their members on selecting a candidate. Highlighting this, Stan, a first-generation Filipino-American member of Palitaw explained, “We exchange our point of view but nothing critical... we know that the issues is divisive to the group so when the situation is getting heated up we just stop.” And this truly appeared to be the case throughout observations. These groups did not point to particular candidates so much as they focused on issues where the Catholic Church has a clear and articulated position. Explaining this, Jason, a first-generation Filipino-American member of CFC notes,

The Church teaches that every issue has a moral dimension...on vital issues...and consistent with scripture and church teachings and tradition, the Church issues pastoral letters to guide members. In the end it is up to the member who decides!

Focusing on these issues, Filipinos turned to the Church for guidance and it responded.

Recalling the phone call from the Catholic Archdioceses of Galveston-Houston to Lyn in chapter one, the representative called on Lyn as a Catholic to vote,

the future of the country depends on your vote, the ability of the Church to attend to the poor many of whom are immigrants depends on you, and the future of the family, a union sanctified by God as a model of community, is being threatened in the coming election. Please vote, it is your civic right and your duty as a Catholic.

Although many Filipino-Americans interviewed suggested that the call was odd and somewhat out of character for the Church as I described it to them, it is a clear indication that the 2004 election was different. Pointing to the actions of Ratzinger, Gale, a first-generation Filipina-American in Houston offered,

I must say that I did not use to vote based on religious beliefs, even back in 2000, but because the candidates and some factions have made moral issues become central, issues like the right-to-life has become the litmus test!

The moral emphasis on political issues in 2004 presented a religious awakening of sorts in the Filipino-American community. It also marked a rather dramatic shift for many from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party.

One might argue that 2004 survey data on Filipino-Americans, if it were available, would show a significant change in the saliency of religious effects but this is purely speculation. What is clear is that issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and gay marriage mobilized the Filipino-Americans interviewed in this study during the Kerry/Bush election. In home devotional and prayer groups, these issues were often discussed from a Catholic point of view. And it was from a position of faith and a firm understanding of their Catholic beliefs that they set out to the polls. Consequently, Filipino involvement in these groups can also facilitate involvement in politically charged groups such as Grassfire Alliance and the National Justice for Immigrants that seek to mobilize the community around issues such as abortion and immigration. Turning to this case, in the following section I look at yet another side of Filipino-American activism and the role religion can play in Filipino-American participation in politics beyond voting.

Filipino-American Activism and Religious Life

This chapter began by looking at the mobilization of Filipino-Americans at the Texas State capital on the 34th anniversary of Roe versus Wade, the Texas Rally for Life in 2006. The Filipino-American participants interviewed, were largely members of Couples for Christ, Catholic, and highly active members in their local churches and parishes. Recalling their descriptions of the day's events and the reasons they offered for marching, it is clear that the religious nature of the issue evoked a certain sense of moral duty in their actions, "we march because it is our duty... to be Catholic is to be pro-life." Picking up these conversations where they left off in the opening vignette reveals the powerful intensive force a sense of covenant can play in Filipino-American activism. Describing her motivations for attending the rally, Agnes offers,

For me encouragement is a big factor...it is very encouraging to see tens of thousands of people waging war against [the] culture of death. People from different political, religious, social and ethnic backgrounds are sharing the same conviction about the integrity of life. That made me realize three things. One, that there is hope. Two, regardless of how divided this world may seem, God can bring about unity in a very unexpected way. And three, we can only expect God to help us change our circumstances if we decide to make ourselves available for God's purpose—when we start living not only for ourselves but for others as well!

It was through religious networks that the message and opportunity to mobilize were carried to the faithful. Either through email listserves, in the case of the messages sent out by John and Sue to fellow members of CFC, or in the church itself, posted on bulletin boards by members of various groups, Filipino-Americans, and others, made sure fellow Catholics knew about the event. Acting on this opportunity, however, is another matter.

For Agnes, and many others interviewed in Houston, the opportunity itself was not the source of their action. What inspired them to march was grounded in the teachings

of the Catholic Church and a deep sense of moral obligation to the issue of pro-life. This moral obligation compels them to act. It is a calling to make themselves, “available for God’s purpose.” Highlighting this sentiment, Lita humbly offers, “it starts with me and my commitment to God.” Recalling Smith’s (2003) suggestion that moral orders are vital empowering structures for human motivation, the words of Agnes and Lita make a great deal of sense. Motivation or “encouragement” as John alludes to, does matter. At their core, Filipino-Americans are not simply rational calculators, relying solely on opportunity and resource for their activism, but also moral beings embedded in moral orders that enact commitments of a powerful and intimate nature (Smith 2003; Wuthnow, 1987). Faith is an emotive force and an intensive resource for mobilization beyond the right-to-life issue. Thus, being involved in a religious community shapes not only how many Filipino-Americans see these issues but also how they act.

MOBILIZING AN IMMIGRANT CHURCH

Returning to the issue of immigration discussed in the previous chapter, in the 2006 national marches over U.S. immigration policy, the Catholic Church was a visible participant from the pulpit and in the streets. Filipino-American involvement, however, received less attention in the media. This does not mean that they were not involved. In the sea of Hispanic immigrants that flooded the streets in March and April of that year, Filipinos, although in significant less numbers, walked side by side with a diverse crowd that shared their political agenda. Highlighting this fact, one Filipino protestor reported to a local paper, “Latinos are not the only ones affected by these immigration reform

proposals...Asians, especially Filipinos, have a stake in these bills as well” (Filipino-Express Online, April 17-23, 2006). And these sentiments were echoed around the nation.

Whether it was in New York, where more than 100 Filipinos joined an estimated 250,000 protestors at City Hall to express opposition to HR 4437 or in Washington, D.C. where various Filipino-Americans organizations joined thousands of protestors on the National Mall, Filipinos, documented or not, marched in the streets. It is true that Filipinos numbers were small by most estimates, but they were present and their voice of support and solidarity followed the example of Bishop Solis, a first-generation Filipino-American, and also that of Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles.

Bishop Solis, head of the steering Committee on National Justice for Immigrants, together with Cardinal Mahony who fasted for weeks over the issue, rallied many Filipino-Americans to the immigration cause. The Church sees pending immigration legislation as a threat to render care to its faithful. Outlining this fact, Cardinal Mahony offers, “we’re not going to be immigration officers...our role is spiritual and pastoral” (Mahony in balitamedia.com; February 25, 2006). Continuing he asks,

are we to stop every person coming to Holy Communion and first ask them to produce proof of legal residence before we can offer them the Body and Blood of Christ? (Mahony in balitamedia.com; February 25, 2006).

For many Filipino-Americans interviewed, these words were more than enough to get involved particularly after being reminded of the Cuevas family incident.

In June 2004 the Cuevas family was deported, unjustly according to most Filipino-American. While the Cuevas family had been in the United States since the early 1980s with visitor visas, during this time they were able to secure jobs and overstayed their visas some ten years. Despite the fact that the Cuevas had hired an attorney to act on

their behalf with INS to officially apply for citizenship well prior to their troubles in 2004, the attempt to legalizing their status was never heard and the stiffening of laws during a time of national crisis, after 9/11, made the case rather difficult to adjudicate. For many Filipino-Americans the timing of the deportation, including 89 other Filipinos a week later was more than coincidental. Pointing to this, the Gabriela Network (General Assembly Binding women for Reform, Integrity, Equality, and Action), a Filipina organization for social justice noted,

Just hours after the Philippine government's decision to save the life of a Filipino overseas worker by withdrawing its troops from Iraq, the Bush government abruptly deported Filipinos from the US. Whether due process was observed in these deportations, no one knows as secrecy has become part of the deportation procedures. Despite official claims that the deportations were "routine," the action was obviously both retaliation and threat. Just as his Iraqi captors used Angelo de la Cruz to pressure Philippine government policy, it would seem that the US government is also using Filipinos residing and working in the United States as pressure points to bring Philippine government to its knees...

Continuing, the editorial outlines the impact the Gabriela Network believed these deportations were having,

The effect has been to terrorize Filipinos in the United States. Rumors, reports and tales of woe concerning the deportations panicked the community. With more than half of the community comprised of immigrants, documented and undocumented (Gabriela Network, August 2, 2004)

Beyond the editorializing, the number of Filipinos deported reflects a source of legitimate concern for many Filipino-Americans, if not others. From 2001 to 2003, just a two year span, the number of Filipino-Americans deported rose by 65%. If the cases are reduced to deportation considered non-criminal, not a result of a crime or national security risk, the increase was 134% over the same period (see December 2004 report from the Critical Filipina and Filipino Studies Collective).

Clearly the issue of immigration is important for many in the national Filipino-American community but the response to this problem often did not result in rallies in the streets across the nation. In places like Los Angeles and New York Filipinos did join marches in opposition to HR 4437 but none of those interviewed in Houston and other cities participated. Explaining this, Mary, a first-generation Filipina-American in Chicago, points out,

Well, about the clergy rising up the way Cardinal Sin on Radio Veritas, I'm not so sure... many Filipinos change when they move to the U.S., many feel guilty not attending Sunday mass but...

Continuing, she reveals why, perhaps, there was not a larger Filipino-Americans presence at immigration rallies, outside of the obvious fear of deportation,

Here in Chicago at least, one does not have to be clergy to convince and mobilize people to their cause...there is also the argument that you fight using the tools that the government uses... so, for one, you can call or write your legislator as often as you want and get everyone else to do it too.

This is perhaps the key to understanding Filipino-American activism on the issue. It is in these "other expressions" that we find religious resources, particularly in the form of Catholic solidarity makes a significant difference. And it is through churches and religious networks that these efforts are often made possible.

Over 3,000 Filipino-Americans in California alone signed petitions on behalf of the Cuevas family. Highlighting this, Jeff, a first-generation Filipino-American and member of CFC in Houston admits,

I have on a few occasions signed petitions...I'm not really sure how effective these are but I think they serve the good purpose of letting the adversary and society in general know that we're not sleeping, that we stand behind good moral principles...and will not be led by default towards the wrong path that the prevailing culture wants us to go...

Effective or not, these petitions can express Filipino-American grievances and often with a voice of moral authority. Signing petitions is an important way for many Filipino-Americans to take ownership of issues and stake their claims against what they perceive to be unjust. However, these campaigns should not distract from the fact that Filipino-Americans are also present in the streets marching for their causes. Among the 200 plus organizations who rallied during the Cuevas episode in Los Angeles, as an example, were the Catholic Church and other religious organizations actively holding prayer vigils (see December 2004 report from the Critical Filipina and Filipino Studies Collective).

GENERALIZING BEYOND THE CASE OF IMMIGRATION

Other issues compel many Filipino-Americans to take to the street in political action. Religion, however, is not always readily observable as the cause of their mobilization or a resource in their efforts. Take, for example, the numerous rallies in support of WWII Filipino-American veterans. These men have historically been denied citizenship, monetary benefits, and the rights to an American military funeral. Many of these men are religious, and Catholic at that, but one might question whether it was their religious practice that spurred their decades of struggle. In Houston the Catholic Church has not held vigils in the street for these veterans, but many pray that justice will be done. And perhaps it is their faith that gets these veterans through their struggles. Describing this, one Filipino-American offered, “God is on the side of right and by our faith we will get what’s due us...”

On other issues, social scientist must be reminded that Filipino-American actions are often not always American centered but focus on issues that effect Filipinos both here

and the Philippines. The Gabriela network, cited above as an example, has launched transnational protests since 1989, linking Filipinas in Chicago, New York, New Jersey, Irvine, Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco, San Diego, and Washington D.C. to simultaneous protests in cities throughout the Philippines. Rallying around issues ranging from the closure of the Clark Air Force base, site of numerous rapes and sex trafficking violations, to the on going killing of Filipino community organizers, journalists, activists, and church leaders in the Philippines under Gloria Macapagal Arroyo presidency (see Bertone, 2000: 4-22; Daiva Statiulis and Abigail B Bakan, 2005; Pratt, 2004).⁵⁷ Gabriela is not a religious organization, although one of its key members and former chairperson, Sister Mary John Manazan, is nun and devoutly religious. Gabriela Network is a women's organization, Filipinas taking actions that cross borders on issues that touch their lives in the United States and the Philippines. At an individual level, however, religion may be a source of inspiration for some of these women. Sister Manazan herself once suggested that,

Anyone who enters the religious life through, for example, teaching, nursing, or social work commits herself primarily to the preaching of the Gospel (Sister Mary John Manazan, 1998: on-line)

And for many Filipinas, this may be taken as driving force in their service to others as medical professionals as an example.⁵⁸ The point here is that religion whether overtly or not can play a vital role in Filipino-American activism. Depending on the issue and the

⁵⁷ Gabriela estimates that 863 activist have been killed in recent years.

⁵⁸ Like Espiritu (2004), Choy's much needed analysis of Filipina-American nursing history highlights the linkages between the Philippines and the United States but fails to acknowledge the fact that many of these Filipinas were educated in Catholic Nursing Schools and are themselves largely practicing Catholics (see Choy, 2003). This remains an important but understudied part of their story.

circumstance, religion can impact Filipino-American participation in politics beyond voting.

Looking at a more generally view of these forms of political participation, I turn to findings from the SCCB survey data to further evaluate the role of more extensive or hard religious resources in predicting Filipino-American activism beyond the Houston context. Although the data do not have more intensive measures to test the saliency of faith and the intimacy of religious covenant in predicting these engagements, the findings are a broader snapshot of where religion might impact Filipino-American civic life.

Table 3 & 4:

**Odds Ratios of Filipino American Participation Beyond Voting-Dichotomous
SCCB Survey 2000- Christian Sub-sample**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.01(.00)			1.01(.00)
Gender (Male)	1.52(.33)			1.49(.35)
Education	0.71(.14) *			0.68(.15) *
Income	1.59(.13) **			1.59(.13) **
Citizenship	2.62(.44) *			2.29(.48)
Ethnic Group Participation		2.45(.38)		2.72(.67)
Religious Group Participation		.77(.58)		0.58(.49)
Catholic			4.71(.46) ***	3.77(.50) **
Weekly Attendance			0.82(.34)	0.71(.38)
Church Activities			1.90(.34) *	1.95(.42)

N	185.73	183.73	185.73	185.73
-2 L Log	224.22	250.62	237.13	209.8

* = p<.05 ** = p<.01 *** = p<.001

**Odds Ratios of Filipino-American Participation Beyond Voting- Frequency
SCCB Survey 2000- Christian Sub-sample**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.01(.00) *			1.01(.00)
Gender (Male)	1.36(.31)			1.19(.34)
Education	0.75(.14) *			0.74(.14) *
Income	1.51(.11) ***			1.45(.12) ***
Citizenship	2.56(.44) *			2.42(.47) ~
Ethnic Group Participation		0.86(.55)		2.78(.61)
Religious Group Participation		2.61(.38)		0.6(.47)
Catholic			5.02(.47) ***	3.78(.49) **
Weekly Attendance			0.94(.33)	0.82(.36)
Church Activities			2.19(.33) **	2.29(.39) *
N	185.73	185.73	185.73	185.73
-2 L Log	293.8	318.67	303.33	277.82

~ = p<.06 * = p<.05 ** = p<.01 *** = p<.001

Exploring tables 3 and 4, findings from analysis of the SCCB survey highlight the saliency of religious effects on Filipino-American political activism found in the ethnographic accounts. Using a measure of participation beyond voting both dichotomous and continuous, i.e. an index of three political engagements including signing petitions,

attending a political rally, and protesting or marching (see methodological appendix for construction of variables), religious resources not only predict whether or not Filipino-Americans participates in one form of activism beyond voting in national elections but also predict the likelihood of increasingly being involved in these forms of political activism. Model 4 of table 3, suggests that Filipino-Americans who are Catholic are 3.77 times as likely to have participated in at least one form of political action beyond voting. Those who participate in church activities beyond worship attendance are 2.19 times as likely to be involved in these activities. Although in model 4 the saliency of religious participation diminishes, being Catholic holds as a strong predictor for political activism. This is not what Verba et al would predict, however, it is in keeping with the ethnographic accounts in previous sections. Being Catholic can connect many Filipino-Americans to certain issues, Catholic issues that then become points for mobilization.

Turning to the likelihood of being involved in an increasing number of these forms of activism (Table 4), findings likewise suggest that Filipino-Americans who are Catholic are significantly more likely to be engaged, 3.78 times as likely in the complete model. Unlike the dichotomous models, participating in at least one form of activism, the likelihood of participating in more than one or increasing political engagements is dependent on religious participation as well. In fact, Filipino-Americans who participate in religious activities beyond worship attendance are 2.29 times as likely to be involved in more than one form of political activism. This is not all that surprising.

It was not church attendance by in large that brought members of Couples for Christ to the Texas capital to rally or even similar marches over issues such immigration (note the lack of statistical significance in the models). It was faith and the issues

themselves, something not testable in the current survey data. Calling attention to this point in the case of immigration rallies in Chicago, Mary offers, “at least in my experience, people join because they believe in the cause...the lure is also to be with people of faith.” Church attendance certainly does not inhibit Filipino-American participation in political activism, as evident from the both the ethnographic accounts and the survey findings above. However what is revealed in the words of many Filipino-Americans in Houston is a deep sense of obligation and a moral commitment to certain issues. This is not accounted for in the models. Faith is an intensive resource that often stands outside of what can be measured in survey data but is clearly important to many Filipino-Americans. Pointing to this out, Father Culaba, a Filipino-American priest on the west coast, notes,

Historically, we have been taught to assimilate but that may be a good thing, because it leads us to stick to the security of the faith and the value systems and family orientation... things all Catholics can learn (Langlois, 1999: online)

It is from this base, values and the security of their Catholic faith that many Filipino-Americans get involved in political activism.

Returning to the findings in tables 3 and 4, it is not surprising the participation in ethnic association has no significant positive effect in the models, given the discussion of palengke politics in chapter 4. It is a bit curious that participation in religious groups is not a significant positive predictor of Filipino-American political activism. Methodologically, groups such as CFC and Palitaw fit the description in the survey measure, i.e. *in the past 12 months have you participated in organizations affiliated with religion besides your local place of worship*. And in focus groups, members of both CFC

and Palitaw overwhelmingly (83%) suggest that they would indeed answer yes to this question referring to their own groups. The issue is not one of measurement.

The weight of the Houston ethnographic data point to these groups playing an important role in Filipino-American activism. Perhaps, these effects play a different role at more national level in the SCCCB data. It may also be a situation in which being Catholic and participating in church activities trumps the effect of these groups in the statistical models. While members of Couples for Christ stood hand in hand praying and singing hymns at the Texas capital, what got them there was not necessarily their home devotional and prayer group but an emotive bond that is strengthened in these groups and elsewhere. This bond bridges more than the Church and religious groups. It can connect Filipino-Americans to political organizations surrounding the issues that drive their activism. Looking at this further, the next section explores how home devotional and prayer groups are linked to like-minded political groups whose focus is not the intimacy of home and faith but where Catholicism can be mobilized on certain issues.

GRASSROOTS AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

To this point in time, CFC in Houston has not organized an official rally on any issue nor has Palitaw. Although, in the case of CFC, they met as a group at the Texas capital, their mobilization was individual. At the same time, the issue of pro-life itself is a fairly new focus for the group, one that they have yet to mobilize on outside of their own households. Pointing to this fact Danny, another first-generation Filipino-American who was at the rally, notes,

The pro-life ministry [meaning a CFC ministry for pro-life issues] is barely starting here in Houston. Those directly involved with the ministry are currently preparing the groundwork. As far as I know, the committee wants to look at the local CFC community first as far as its position, understanding, awareness, etcetera on pro-life issues is concerned before making a move outside of the community...it's kind of self house cleaning...if you understand what I mean?

The initial focus of CFC on issues surrounding the right-to-life is largely inward. For these Filipino-Americans, their primary concern is education within their own households and religious community.

Although mobilization outside of the community is being planned it has not yet materialized. John, as an example, who sent out mass emails to rally his fellow CFC members to Austin for the 34th anniversary of Roe versus Wade, has only been involved in the issue for two years. Danny, who was also at the rally, has been involved for less than a year. Much of their mobilization, while banding together many of their fellow CFC members, has largely been through other organizations. This is not to say that the members of these groups are not involved, clearly they were and are. All the members of both Palitaw and Couples for Christ suggested that at one point in time or another they had either physically signed a petition or electronically signed one through email and sent it on to others. The petitions, however, were planned and put into action by other organizations that called on Filipino-Americans to act on a common bond as Catholics.

For many Filipino-Americans, faith engenders a moral commitment to issues such as immigration and pro-life that starts within the church and active participation in Catholic life. This also extends to their home devotional and prayer groups. This in turn can lead to subsequent involvement with like-minded political organizations such as Grassfire Alliance and the National Justice for Immigrants. These more politically focused groups can serve as an important resource for many Filipino-Americans looking

to mobilize on issues outside of their own religious communities. Explaining this, members of Palitaw and CFC describe how Grassfire Alliance⁵⁹ in particular has facilitated their involvement on the issue of right-to-life. As Ray, a first-generation Filipino-American member of CFC in Houston describes it, “the Fire Society has helped me get the word out on abortion and keeps me up-to-date on what others are doing around the country.”

Grassfire Alliance was started in 2000 by Steve Elliot as a grassroots on-line conservative advocacy group. Through www.grassfire.org like-minded individuals of all backgrounds are called to add their input on conservative issues, chat, and even launch their own “grassfire” petitions. Grassfire promotes its agenda through TV, radio ads, and news releases that are also available on-line. Reading the forum, it is clear that most members, including Steve Elliot, overwhelmingly support Bush. A larger part of this support comes on the heels of the Bush administration’s stance on stem-cell research, gay marriage, and abortion. Consequently, in 2000, right after the website was launched, Grassfire attacked Kerry on these very same issues, a point that resonated with many Filipino-Americans in Houston. In 2004 Grassfire launched a political action committee (PAC) for its members to rally around on conservative issues, and several Filipino-Americans interviewed saw it as outlet for their own political interests. Although little has developed from this PAC, it is an important example of how Filipino-American religious life can lead to involvement in political organizations. Specifically, looking at the case of John and Danny in Houston, their personal involvement in Grassfire is brought into their home devotional and prayer groups thereby mobilizing fellow members

⁵⁹ Grassfire Alliance is not a Filipino-American group nor is it affiliated with any particular religious

to participate in Grassfire and other similar organizations and groups. Turning to a broader snapshot in the SCCB survey data, table 5 highlights the importance of religious resources to Filipino-American participation in political organization found in the Houston ethnographic accounts:

Table 5:

Odds Ratios of Filipino-American Participation in Political Organization SCCB Survey 2000- Christian Sub-sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.01(.00)			1.01(.00)
Gender (Male)	2.09(.51)			1.19(.62)
Education	1.34(.19)			1.27(.23)
Income	1.15(.17)			1.36(.20)
Citizen	4.41(.88)			2.75(.98)
Ethnic Group Participation		0.39(.93)		0.19(1.18)
Religious Group Participation		13.32(.53) ***		11.11(.67) **
Catholic			1.20(.64)	1.87(.96)
Weekly Attendance			0.39(.53)	0.66(.74)
Church Activities			9.56(.62) **	3.2(.77)
N	185.73	185.73	185.73	185.73
-2 L Log	116.75	104.69	113.62	89.27

~=p<.06 * = p<.05 ** = p<.01 *** = p<.001

group. It is an independent conservative group.

Using a measure of participation in political organizations, i.e. *In the past 12 months, have you participated in a political group of some sort* (see Appendix for measure construction), model 4 suggests that Filipino-Americans who are active in parish life, church activities, are 3.2 times as likely to participate in political groups. Turning to Associational participation, participation in ethnic associations has no significant impact on Filipino-American participation in political organization. Many Filipinos bemoan this fact, suggesting that Filipino-American associations should be more involved,

Filipino Americans should be mobilizing around civic issues such as immigration but social activities such as induction balls, beauty queen balls, picnics, etc... are higher on the agenda of community leaders (Bergano and Bergano-Kinney, 1997: 205).

However the lack of effects should come as no surprise. It may be explained by palengke politics. This is where Bonus (2000) rightly sets his attention in attempting to understand Filipino-American ethnic associations as an alternative to mainstream politics. Where the numerous ethnic associations largely fail to link the Filipino-American community to political interests groups, religious groups often succeed. Members of home devotional and prayer groups such as Palitaw and Couples for Christ are 11.11 times as likely to participate in political groups and organizations. This is a significant finding but not surprising. People who are members of religious groups are more likely to be engaged in other civic clubs and groups, serve on a jury and take part in a community projects (Putnam, 2000; also see Lazerwitz, 1962). Participation in one group leads to participation in another. Through this involvement many Filipino-Americans strengthen their view of the role faith in action. Explaining this, Kristi in Houston points out,

The issues that are important to us are Pro-Life issues—abortion, euthanasia, human cloning, stem cell research... our religion plays an important role in the decisions...however, first we have to invite those people [outside of Catholic life]

to a fuller life in the faith through a community like CFC, then after accepting the invitation, make a commitment to become better, holier persons in the eyes of God

To be involved in a religious community shapes not only how many Filipino-Americans see issues but how they act. In acting on these issues, according to Kristi, people must first understand what faith and community truly means. Addressing this relationship, in the next two chapters I focus on the nature of religion and community, namely how many Filipino-Americans in Houston see community and build community through active participation across borders.

Chapter 6: Faithfully Defining Filipino-American Communities in Diaspora

Catholicism seems to me...to be one of the most favorable to equality of the conditions among men. In the Catholic Church the religious community is composed of only two elements: the priest and the people. The priest alone rises above the rank of his flock, and all below him are equal... Tocqueville 1:311

Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you...Isaiah 43:5

“Shhhhhh... be quite, don’t say anything he’s coming already, get ready to sing,” shouts Janis, a first-generation Filipina-American.⁶⁰ As we crouch down, Stan enters the restaurant with his wife Cheryl to a rousing “surprise” followed by a loud round of “happy birthday—*maligayang bati*,” sung by some in English, others in Tagalog, but by most in both, Taglish. The occasion is Stan’s sixtieth birthday but the day also marks his official early retirement from a long carrier in the energy field. Affectionately known as Tito Stan by friends and family, the small Mediterranean restaurant is packed with fifty plus people, Filipino and non-Filipino alike. They have all come to celebrate his birthday and honor a man they believe has had a profound impact not only on their lives but the community in general.

As Stan begs people to sit down he offers a humble “thank you.” Stan suggests that he had no clue about the surprise party but had wondered why Cheryl was in such a hurry all day. Turning the focus on Cheryl, Stan stands in a brief moment of embarrassment and glee as the night’s business is outlined. Cheryl thanks everyone for

⁶⁰ The following account is based on interviews with various members of the Filipino-American community and observations at “Stan’s” party. Additional data were collected after the party through email or phone interviews with Filipinos who attended the event. Out of respect for people’s wishes, their names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

coming and working so hard to keep it a secret. She then relieves the crowd by stating, “let’s eat first and then we can talk about the man I love, my inspiration and partner for life”

As people begin to take their seats waiting for further directions on how to proceed to the buffet, the room reveals itself to be more than a simple birthday party. It is a coming together of a vast social network in which Stan is only one of the key points of contact. The attendees are not just friends and colleagues or members of Stan’s Catholic church but a vast delegation of representatives from a host of civic and religious groups. On this special occasion the restaurant houses a virtual community of communities. It is a unique connecting of dots, metaphorically speaking, that is as telling about Filipino-American civic life in Houston as any rally or protest.

The seating arrangement in the restaurant is completely open with no assignment. Many people, however, cluster around tables of their closet friends or groups that are their most important causes. At one end of the room sits Stan’s family, biological or otherwise. These are his closest friends, his children and their children, and those with whom he has shared some of the most important and intimate moments of his adult life. Behind them sit members of Stan’s Catholic church both those who have grown to love him in church fellowship and those who have served with him on numerous boards or worked with him in various parish activities. Next to his fellow parishioners sits members of the Texas Association of Mapua Alumni (TAMA)⁶¹ of which Stan is a member as well as members of Santo Tomas, the Texas alumni of the University of Santo Thomas where

⁶¹ TAMA is an association of alumni from Mapua Institute of Technology in the Philippines.

Cheryl went to college.⁶² In the middle, bridging the family circle and crossing it, sits members of Palitaw, Stan's weekly prayer and fellowship group. In some form or another, the couples in Palitaw have been together for over twenty years. Through hard times and joys, from the years of adjusting to life in America to the raising of their children, these couples, as Stan points out, "get you through difficult times...[it is] a community of its own, actually a small church." On the other end of the table where Palitaw is seated are a few members of Couples for Christ, another Catholic renewal group Stan and his wife recently got involved with through friends and family members.

As people begin to take their place in the buffet line at Cheryl's urging, it is a clear reminder of how central food is to any Filipino gathering. Laughing about, the name of Paliaw,⁶³ Stan responds to another Filipino in the line, "what does food have to with the group, everything!" Continuing, Stan explains, "[our] fellowship is important, it bonds us... the sharing of faith, food, friendship, our Filipino heritage—it is the glue of our lives." However it is not food alone that builds community and the sense of fellowship present at Stan's party. It is Filipino Catholic solidarity, and Palitaw is only one side of the picture. Looking around the room, people are enjoying their food and are waiting for the PowerPoint presentation that is being cued up by Stan's two sons. The room is festive and echoes with laughter. Casual conversation, in some cases intense debate, on everything from the current state of politics in the Philippine to the curious absence of Filipino food at the party can be overheard. On one table various business

⁶² Members of TAMU are alumni of the Mapua Institute of Technology in the Philippines; the University of Santo Tomas is also a Philippine institution.

⁶³ Palitaw is named for a traditional Filipino sweet that is made by the group once a year during Christmas. The dish is rather labor intensive and hence the name was selected to represent something rare and special as well as something explicitly Filipino (see chapter one).

cards and brochures from different groups and companies compete for space. On another table a sizeable display provides literature for Gawad Kalinga, a housing project for the poor in the Philippines.

“Again, can I have your attention?” Jack, the son of a close family friend of Stan exclaims. As he attempts to quiet the crowd, he directs everyone’s attention to the projection screen. After a somewhat tearful and at times comedic retelling of Stan’s life in pictures and words, Stan’s friends and family take turns offering insight and adoration for a rich sixty years. Stan’s older son thanks his father for “lessons hard learned” and for inspiring him to, “to seek out an education and make a life of his own.” His youngest son, first thanks his older brother for “taking the heat” off him, then thanks his father for showing him, “how to be a man, a good man, [and] a man of faith and devotion.” This theme carried over to many other speeches including a white woman who thanked Stan for introducing her to Catholicism and holding her close as she learned what it meant to live her faith,

without Stan, I would have never become a Catholic, without his leadership and model, I would not know what it means to know God and live a meaningful life engaged in Christ’s community—the Catholic community.

For this woman, Stan was not Filipino, but first and foremost a Catholic who had provided guidance during an important time in her life. This is something that seemed to unite others in the room as well.

Pulling out all of the stops, Cheryl attempts to embarrass Stan a bit before her own speech by calling out a belly dancer for a birthday stroll. Stan, loving every minute, plays along even getting Cheryl to duel with the dancer for his affection. As the dance ends Cheryl turns to a more serious note. She talks about her husband as more than just a

life partner but an inspiration and model communitarian. Thanking all the people that were in attendance, Cheryl points out all the groups Stan is involved with and the extraordinary sense of compassion and dedication he has shown in, “putting his faith in action.” Whether it is raising money for scholarships, educating kids in catechism classes, or helping out a neighbor or fellow member of the parish, Cheryl outlines Stan’s accomplishments in rich detail. Continuing, she notes,

his faith has moved me too. It has allowed me to explore my own mission in life, to get involved in my community knowing that I had a partner who would support me in every cause I saw fit...we are now looking into helping the poor in the Philippines together [pointing to the table display]. I know after giving so much of ourselves to America we also need to give back to our home and our countrymen who [are] not as fortunate as us.

As the night comes to an end, it is clear that Stan, although he would not say so himself, is a community leader. Standing side by side with Cheryl, hand in hand, Stan offers a concluding show of appreciation for the party and humbly offers that his life to this point has been wonderful but not as extraordinary as some suggest. It is a matter, as Stan points out, “[of] acting on what you believe, you’ve got to own your faith, why else did Christ die?”

ONE CHURCH, ONE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Among those who attended Stan’s birthday party, described in the vignette above, were members of Palitaw and Couples for Christ. These are the very same Catholic Filipino-American religious fellowships that are rallying, signing petitions, and trying to initiate public policy on issues as diverse as immigration and abortion. These groups are not lobbying groups, however, they are as active in the public domain as they are interested in the intimacy and fellowship of community. The celebration described above,

while special in its own right, reveals a spirit of community that in many ways is quite typical of many other Filipino-American social events. It is vibrant, loud, centered on family and food, and reveals the important role religion can play in Filipino-American civic life and their understanding of community.

At first glance it may be difficult to see a birthday party as a major community event. Underlying the celebration of Stan's sixtieth year of life and his retirement from fulltime employment, however, is a celebration of his civic life and a faith that has spurred him into community service and tied him into a rather complex set of social networks. Although Stan does not see himself as a community leader, he is in his own way. Although his birthday party is not a large Filipino-American public event but a more intimate or private affair, the crowd gathered at Stan's party represents a gathering of communities, groups, and associations, Filipino and otherwise, that is as vast as the Philippine Islands themselves.

What brings this diversity together is not the food, although as Stan would point out, "it does not hurt." It is not a single association or group, or even a single cause. It is not really even Stan himself but his faith and his involvement in several groups and the broader contours Catholic life. Explaining this, one Filipina at the party, suggests, "[it is his] sense of Christian community across communities we love." Upon further inspection Stan is not all that unique among the members of the party crowd. He is an avid church attendee, a member of a religious renewal group, an active alumnus in his Philippine university, a member of a Filipino-American ethnic association, and a devoted family person. For many, this is the Filipino way. As Thelma Burgonio-Watson (1997) describes it,

A spiritual value that is common to most, if not all, Filipinos is the value of community life. The extended family is the most basic community. You orient your actions to the needs and betterment of the collective...where I grew up and where I learned what community means, no one was hungry, no one was homeless. We shared and pooled resources. We wept with those who mourned; we took time to celebrate...

Continuing, Burgonio-Watson points to the source of this spiritual value,

It was there in the barrio, reinforced in my local church, that I learned that I belong to a caring, nurturing community. In my context, that was the barrio and the church together. Where I go, the spirit of the community goes with me (328).

This spirit of community in diaspora is a cultural and regional construction. More importantly, it is religious and often links a sense of moral obligation and devotion to the sanctity of church and religious lives that transcends borders.

Stan is one of many leaders in the Filipino-American community, including his wife Cheryl who while nearly just as active stands more quietly in his shadow. The question remains what role religion plays in other cases. Clearly religion is central to Stan's personal life and Cheryl's as well. The reasons they give for being involved in the community and the causes they pursue are in one way or another "matters of faith." But how generalizable is Stan's birthday party to the broader Filipino-American experience? Looking at the often unseen side of civic life that is more intimate and private, where is community to be found? And how is it built across groups, parishes, and borders? Turning to these questions, in the remainder of the chapter I explore these issues and the problems confronting many Filipino-Americans in Houston as they engaging themselves in diverse networks and communities of their own creation.

What Unites a Community?

The Filipino-American community in Houston, as evident in previous chapters, is for the most part not united nor is it residentially centered on a single ethnic enclave or business district. Many Filipino-Americans often feel that they are virtually invisible as a community even on the West coast where they reside in greater numbers (Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995; Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1991; White, 1986). Explaining this, one first-generation Filipino-American laments,

the fact remains that other cultures can put aside their differences and form a viable collective. While their may be in-fighting amongst other nationalities such as the Koreans, Vietnamese, Greeks, Italians, etcetera, etcetera...they are still able to get together as a group and provide a unified front and lobby of their needs. Filipinos on the other hand, form groups upon groups, associations upon associations and continually fight amongst each other. We have no unity.

It is not just a matter of associational politics but the geographic dimensions of the community as well.

There is virtually no consistent pattern of residential or commercial concentration that characterizes larger Filipino-Americans communities in the United States, making unification physically difficult (Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995; Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1991; White, 1986). Even in smaller towns with fewer Filipinos, the issue of unity looms largely. Many Filipino-Americans feel, and openly express, that they are invisible to their city's other residents and have no collective front from which to voice their own grievances. By some accounts, this issue of invisibility may stem in part from the fact that Filipino-Americans speak English, are more familiar with the American lifestyle given their colonial past, and are perhaps the most westernized of all Asian immigrant groups in the United States (Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995). As Ron, a

first-generation Filipino-American puts it, “we are too assimilated.” However, while their may be some truth to these claims, the reasons that many Filipino-Americans have not established more easily recognizable ethnic enclaves has a great deal to do with economics.

The majority of post-1965 Filipino immigrants come to the United States as well educated professionals (see U.S. Census, 2000). They move into largely diverse or majority white middle class neighborhoods (see U.S. Census, 2000). With no time or need to build an ethnic business center, the age of the Manila-town has come and gone with the passing of many older waves of Filipino immigration. Any attempt to revive these centers has been met with failure more times than not. Signs or plaques remain in places like Los Angeles and San Diego along with a few stores or a restaurant or two but that is it, remnants of an historic presence (see Estrella, 2005). In cities like Houston, Stan’s home, the community is fairly new and lacks the historical foundations of pre-1965 Filipino migration but here too the issue of community and how to build it are also a major concern, if not greater.

Turning to a very heated email exchange posted on a large Filipino-American e-group listserve as an example of community concerns, the chaos of palengke politics reveals itself to be a serious stumbling block for many Filipino-Americans community efforts in Houston. Attempting to rally the community and build a single community center, Carol, a first-generation Filipina-American civic leader in Houston, exclaims,

I have a few things to rant about... and the first would be the development or lack thereof, of a Filipino Community Center!!! What happened to the funds FACOST [Filipino American Community of Southern Texas] set aside for a center?

Raising a concern over questionable misuse of funds and venting at the complete lack of unity and progress at building a center, Carol describes her anxiety openly and unabashedly. Continuing she recalls,

I remember people discussing this when I was a teenager—over twenty years ago...and still there has been no progress. Filipinos have been here [Houston] longer than many other ethnic groups, yet we still behind them in terms of building [an] infrastructure for our own community. And the people that suffering the most from this lack of infrastructure are the youth...can we open this dialogue among the elders of the community and get everyone to start working together on finally building a center? And can we make this a dialogue one that does not require a membership fee, has transparent leadership and accountability, and makes records public so that everyone can see how the money is... will be used?

Like the discussions in previous chapters, the heartfelt plea above suggests that many Filipino-Americans in Houston are clearly distressed over the lack of unity in their community. They long for a central center where all groups can meet and share in the richness of being Filipino. Calling for an end to the strife and an open dialogue in which the internal politics of ethnic associations can be managed with a measure of transparency and accountability, the Carol fears the impact this lack of community will have on future generations. These youth, she suggests, will either carry on a pride in their ethnic community or leave it in order to, “lead fulfilling civic lives elsewhere.”

Responding to this frustration, Regina, a Filipina member of PCCI (People Caring for the Community, Inc), one of the countless umbrella organization attempting to unite the numerous Filipino associations in Houston, attempts to moderate the situation.

Explaining the present efforts of Filipino-American groups, she offers,

everyone, please be patient. Several Filipino and Filipino-American leaders in the community are working on this project. Unfortunately, everyone of us are ALL volunteers. We have families and jobs to attend to, and for the most part, the biggest drawback has been financial. Yes, we are asking for memberships of \$100...because it takes money to build a Filipino Community Center.

Although not acquiescing to the demands for no membership fees nor turning to redress the concerns over leadership accountability, what Regina suggests in her defense, feeling the heat of increasing personal attacks is very telling about where many Filipino-Americans find their motivation and model for community life.

After explaining how she has been hampered by illness, a failed marriage to a white man who stifled her Filipina heritage, and a host of other complications, Regina explains,

bottom line, I am continuing in my volunteer work and my community services in Houston, Texas as long as the Lord gives me strength and direction of what I can do as a citizen and human being for the good [of] ALL the Filipinos and Filipino-Americans...IT IS ALL ABOUT MY TRUST IF MY LIFE IN GOD... I have no personal agenda in getting out ONE Filipino Community Center BUILD ONCE AND FOR ALL.

This faith and the model of a united community that Regina points to are not found in Filipino-American ethnic associations. As Burgono-Watson (1997), reflecting on her own community experiences agrees,

I believe that not all of these coalitions are motivated by a spirit of community that goes beyond that of the barrio and that not all of them support and nurture relationships, promote and advocate for the good of the collective above the individual, and practice the sharing and pooling of resources. Some coalitions are divisive and at odds with spirit of true community. The spirit of community needs to transcend the barrio community.

Here, barrio is the barangay and the numerous ethnic associations that represent them. For Burgonio-Watson and many others, something else must stand at the foundation of the Filipino-American community, a spirit that transcends ethnic particularities and unites the community.

In the Houston case there is no united Filipino-American community nor is there a single community center where *all* Filipinos can meet. In chapter one, Lyn discusses the

importance of her involvement at the San Lorenzo Center. Although the center has managed to establish some level of unity across associations according to Lyn, the center is small, still under construction, and is not the type of structure to which the entire Filipino-American community in Houston, or even a sizable portion, could ever attend.⁶⁴ At the same time, the development of the center hinges on fundraising and volunteer labor. Pointing to the task ahead for Filipinos across the United States struggling with these same issues, Clarence, a first-generation Filipino-American suggests,

there are many Filipino-Americans who are working hard to help ensure the well-being of the community and get the recognition that it deserve. There is, however, much to be done. We, as Filipino-Americans, need to realize the importance of our involvement to socio-economic and political issues that affect our community and us. The realization of our common purpose would rely greatly on our ability as a community to work together and be recognized as an important and potent bloc in this country and in our homeland.

Continuing he explains,

Filipino pride should be more than a t-shirt slogan or lip service. It should be more than just self-identity, but rather it should build on attaining the Filipino Purpose. Failure to realize the dream, failure to sate this hunger and failure to understand our common purpose would simply mean that 2.5 plus million strong is nothing but just mere statistics. All form with no substance, all bark with no bite.

Although some associations have been better at achieving this than others, it is not ethnic associations that many Filipinos turn to both as a center or as a source for community inspiration. It is religion.

As evident from the findings of the last chapter, for the most part, being a member of a Filipino-American ethnic association has very little impact on Filipino-American political life. It is a case of, “all bark and no bite,” as Clarence puts it. However this is not the case for religious resources. Returning to Regina’s conversation in the blog posting

⁶⁴ The center is expected to hold no more than 300 to 350 people once completed.

above, she points out what she sees as the difference between secular and sacred institutions,

all races have mentalities of, I am better than you are when it comes to volunteer work and community service but this is NOT TRUE when it comes to the volunteering and community service rendered at the church [her Catholic church]

Echoing the words of Tocqueville at the beginning of this chapter that point to the equanimity found in the Catholic Church, Regina explains how important the Church is to Filipino-American community life in Houston. Looking specifically at a sense of unity and purpose, she notes,

at least at my church where I belong since October 1986, we volunteers are equal. Our talents, time, and treasures are not equal with each other and we accept it and we move on with projects like clockwork without jealousies with one another, who did more and who did what...that is why [name removed] Catholic Church is very successful...I PRAY TO GOD, THAT, WE FILIPINOS AND FILIPINO-AMERICANS WILL HAVE THE HEART AND MENTALITY OF LIKE THE PARISHONERS OF [name removed] CATHOILC CHURCH.

Built on the emotive power of faith and the parish model of the Catholic Church itself, what Regina points to is a religious solution to the problems facing many Filipino-American community efforts in Houston. Exploring this, in the following section I outline where religious resources can play an important role in Filipino-American understanding of community in the Houston context and beyond.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

Asking many Filipino-Americans in Houston to locate or even define community is not an easy task nor is it easy for them to answer. The question is often met with confusion. Highlighting this, Jane, a first-generation Filipina-American responds,

What do you mean by community, my Church, my associations, where I live... do you mean Filipinos in Houston, we are all over don't you know, we live right next door to everyone.

Like the transnational lives of many Filipino-Americans themselves, community has no fixed boundaries. While an understanding of home, both real and imagined, and a transnational Church root Filipinos' lives to their communities they are as dispersed within any given city as they are in diaspora. This is certainly the case in the Houston area. Making unity even more physically challenging, the task of bringing the entire Filipino-American community together, even for one event, is difficult to say the least, if not impossible as many in Houston point out. And this has historical precedents that stretch well beyond the Houston context.

The Philippines did not have a central state, a national language, or a national culture or religion prior to Spanish conquest. In fact, the numerous Islands maintained city-state like existences which were only loosely linked through trade (Alip, 1950). There was no united Philippines to speak of nor was there a singular Filipino peoples. The name Filipino was initially introduced by the Spanish to describe a landed gentry that was either born in Spain and raised in the Philippines or at least half Spanish by birth. It was not until the adoption of the term by the Philippine patriot Jose Rizal, a Spanish mestizo himself, during the Philippine revolution against Spain that others began to rally around the identity (Pido, 1986; Martinez, 2004). This tentative recognition as a single people came only after centuries of colonial rule and an ardent mission by Spain to make the Philippines a Catholic nation, which it did. Despite pleas from many that the Philippines should return to a confederation of islands each with some measure of regional autonomy, these same voices admit,

No wonder self-rule failed to separate Church and State. No wonder most of us believe that the only thing that can possibly save the country, rather than our collective will, is a miracle (Martinez, 2004: 104).

Here the belief in miracles requires faith. It is a Catholic faith, an intensive resource that many Filipinos carry with them wherever they go and wherever they seek to build community.

When reexamine the words of Regina in the heated exchange above, there are several resources that she inadvertently suggests Filipino-Americans in Houston turn to for building a sense of community across associations and across the diversity that represents the Filipino-American community. And they are religious resources. Building on this discussion, there are three general areas in which religion can play an important role in Filipino-American community life: 1) the institutional structure of the Catholic Church as a model of community; 2) a uniting faith with a shared vision of community; And 3) leaders that bridge groups through faith and deed.

As evident in the case of Simbang Gabi in chapter three, and as Tocqueville rightly points out, the Catholic Church has at least two major levels of authority, the clergy and the laity. Although the clergy hold a position of authority, all below them are equal in the Church. When attempting to bring such a diverse community together, Filipino or not, the Church intercedes on behalf of its own interests and for the good of the parish to insure that what needs to get accomplished is done. Without succumbing to divisive politics and campaigns of self recognition, the Church establishing boundaries for how groups interact within the Church and in official parish events. Although it has little control over what goes on in peoples home devotional and prayer groups, the

Church calls on them to act as “good Catholics” and attempts to direct their relationship with the wider community to a certain extent.

Beyond institutional mechanisms, what Regina points to above is not so much a matter of forced submission but faith. It is a spirit of equality and higher purpose that transcends the mundane. This faith requires a shared vision of what the community “should be” and how its members “should behave” in engaging those around them. This Catholic vision is a code of conduct and a commitment to a moral order. It is an intensive resource that engenders a sense of normative duty not only to each other through mutual bonds, but also to get involved because it is the right thing to do. Within this moral order and this shared vision of community are often leaders who embrace their faith. These leaders can move within and across groups and associations by articulating this faith with a singular purpose. Such individuals live their faith and through their lives as examples convey a model of responsibility both in civic and religious endeavors.

Church, Faith, and a Vision of Community

Community for many Filipino-Americans is not about place so much as it is about purpose. Nearly all the Filipinos formally interviewed in Houston, point to community as some sort of group bound by a common goal or even the Church itself. And by church they often mean churches. Although many Filipino-Americans have a “base” or “home parish” they move freely every Sunday from parish to parish, much to the dismay of parish officials. Wherever Filipino-Americans gather to worship, the opportunity to create community is present. Expressing this understanding, John, a first-generation

Filipino-American member of CFC, notes that community is, “a group of people sharing their lives together, growing together, and praying together” Continuing, he offers,

Community is found wherever and whenever two or three are gathered together, whose activity ranges from the simple social interaction to worshipping the lord together. To me, this is the epitome of a community—communal worship and partaking of the Lord in the Holy Mass wherever you may be.

Making a deliberate reference to Biblical scripture, John’s believes community is a religious space where a common faith binds people in worship. Expressing a similar sentiment, Adler, a first-generation member of Palitaw, points to that his own home devotional group is a source of community, “[it] is a group of people bound by a common purpose and interest, like our prayer group... a prayer group is a smaller community.” And Vanessa offers, “community is a group of people sharing the same mission and vision, the same faith and the same goal... [it] can be anywhere you share the same mission and vision.” For these first-generation Filipino-Americans in Houston, community is found wherever Filipinos are gathered with a purpose, a deep sense of spiritual commitment that binds them to a moral order.⁶⁵

For many Filipino-Americans interviewed, religion is what they say binds them together. It also shapes their understanding of community and commits them to work towards a common good. Highlighting this, Danny, points out,

a community are people who share the same values, standards, morals and beliefs. CFC is not a society but a community. [Being a member of CFC] has helped me define the gray areas that divides society and community.

Making a clear distinction between society and community, much as Toennies would, Danny points to his own sense of community as intimate and centered around a smaller

⁶⁵ According to the SCCB survey analysis, 82% of Filipino-Americans indicated that their church or place of worship, gives them a sense of community.

collective who share certain morals and religious beliefs. Although CFC is not a society per se, for Danny, the group redefines community by comparison and leads him to see that there is a spiritual relationship between the two. It defines the “gray areas” between his idea of community, other communities, and society more generally. In the process, Catholicism binds Filipino-Americans such as Danny to a moral order and defines the parameters of that universe and its relationship to other civic spaces. Turning from the broader contours of how many Filipino-Americans in Houston see the purpose of community, in the following section I explore the role of religious fellowship and the Catholic Church itself in further defining their understanding of community as well as their place in it.

FAITH IN FELLOWSHIP

Many Filipino-Americans in Houston, and perhaps elsewhere, see something different about religious fellowships. As a result, they often turn to home devotional and prayer groups to build a sense of community they cannot find elsewhere. This intimate connection in groups such as Palitaw and CFC is exactly what Wuthnow et al (1994) point to as the unique force driving the small group movement. For Wuthnow and others, “community” is what people are seeking in these groups. The type of community they create, according to Wuthnow and his colleagues, is more fluid and focused on the individual emotional states of their members’ mental and social health, rather than traditional views of community. For many Filipino-Americans in Houston, however, this is not exactly the case. Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups, as Danny points to above, can offer individuals who may be lonely, individualistic, or simply tired

of the politics in Filipino ethnic associational a different view of society. This focus is not always inward, despite the intimacy. Subsequently, this alternate sense of community is not all that contrary to the traditional views of society Filipinos have historically held as chapter two highlights.

At the same time, groups such as Palitaw and Couples for Christ, match many of the demographic characteristics of the groups Wuthnow and Putnam have studied. Members of CFC and Palitaw have been in these groups five years or more, the group itself has been in existence for at least five years, they meet weekly, most attend every week, and meetings generally last at least two hours. Yet it is more difficult to define Filipino religious groups in these terms given the connection they have to other groups and the networks they form. Unlike the groups Wuthnow and Putnam have studied, fellowships such as CFC are not neighborhood or church based. The members of Palitaw, as an example, come from five different zip codes, some traveling two hours every Friday to meet. And they represent four different Catholic parishes.

Although Wuthnow (1994) suggests that the small group involvement redefines the sacred by replacing explicit creeds and doctrines within more implicit norms devised by the group, this too is not completely the case with some Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups in Houston—and perhaps elsewhere. As Catholics, these small groups can represent a process of relativization and a means to enact culturally or regionally specific expressions of devotion that cannot be fully practiced weekly at church. The liturgy and worship, however, rarely if ever veers far from the guidelines established by the Church in Vatican II. Consequently, the interpretation of scripture within these groups has less to do with replacing explicit creeds, as Wuthnow would

suggest, than making it relevant to a shared Filipino-American experience. It is in these groups that Catholicism is made culturally relevant. On most doctrinal positions and social matters for that fact, however, Filipinos in these groups follow what the Church decrees.

The Catholic Church is well aware of what goes on in most Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups and actually encourages them. On some occasions Filipino-American priests even join them. Although the Church has very little physical authority in micro managing these groups outside of more intimate commitments of faith, it believes that ultimately what goes on in these groups is Catholic and good for the parish. Looking at the mission statement of St. Catherine's, where several of the Filipino-Americans in this study attend, this is made even clearer,

As a parish we strive to be a community of disciples faithful to the teachings of Our Lord Jesus... we strive to be sensitive and responsive to the longings and needs of our diverse cultural groups to give praise and worship to God in their own language and tradition.

This mission statement is not just given in word, but is also reflected in the efforts the Church undertakes to incorporate groups back into the parish, where, consequently, a measure of control can be established.

On Saturday May 13, 2006, as an example, St. Catherine's brought together all the Marian prayer groups in the parish such as Palitaw, Our Lady of Lourdes, Legion of Mary-Holy Rosary, and many others. As the groups gathered to honor Mary, the church celebrated the unique devotions of each of their small group. Baring banners and singing hymns, the groups formed a single processional and streamed in from the back of the church to a large image of Mary. After the recitation of the rosary, the sacrament of reconciliation was given and representative from the various groups placed flowers at the

feet of the image of Mary. After this ceremony a full mass, presided over by Father Roland, was given. It was a vibrant celebration and very reminiscent of the pageantry of faith in the Philippines itself. Describing the day, Luis points out, “today is our day, everyone gets to see the power of our fellowships and the faith we lovingly share.”

With this inclusiveness in place and sanctified by the Church, religious fellowships become a viable outlet and a community in their own right for many Filipino-Americans in Houston. This is also the case in other cities where there are significant numbers of Filipino-Americans. Since the 1990s, the Catholic Church has increasingly looked for ways to embrace Filipino-American parishioners. The issuing of a pastoral letter addressing their concerns, the ordination of Bishop Solis, and the opening of a national Filipino chapel in New York are a testament to these efforts. As a result Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups are not excluded from the Church but welcomed. Responding to this sign of encouragement the number of these groups, according to Father Roland in Houston, has increased further creating spaces where community can be defined on its own terms and tailored to fit the diverse religious expression of ethnic and cultural views found in the Filipino-American community. Explaining this Keith, a first-generation Filipino-American in Houston offers,

Being a member of CFC has brought me a sense of community on how early Christians may have been like—where people share things as it should be within a community to better others who are less fortunate for [than] you, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even financially. I have been protected and prayed for by members of the community and I know that this is what I want my children and my children’s children to experience.

This sharing extends well beyond the group itself. It “spirals out” to the church and to the broader community as Lichterman (2005) points to in the case of Protestant groups.

Looking once again at the case of Stan in the opening vignette, what many people praised him for, both as representatives of ethnic and religious groups, was his faith and demeanor across groups. Individually these groups form smaller communities unto themselves but they are also tied together through a common Catholic faith. Whether it is in more secular ethnic associations or a religious group, a Catholic is a Catholic according to Filipino-Americans interviewed. The degree to which they live this faith, however, is another matter. Agreeing Keith explains,

I believe that you can be a member of more than one community, I offer myself as an example, I am a member of several groups, the Church, etcetera and each is a community but they do overlap...it is a community of communities...united in faith.

When one community no longer facilitates this vision of faith, then participation can wane despite retaining the same level of membership. As result, many religiously active Filipino-Americans remain members of ethnic associations even when they no longer frequent their meetings and induction balls (see chapter 4).

The difference between many ethnic associations and religious fellowships is a vision of faith that not only can transcend conflict but is valued above all things. When faith comes first then community often follows. It is through this common bond, an extended family, that deep and intimate connections are forged. Pointing to this fact, Tony, a first-generation Filipino-American in Houston suggests that,

Being involved [in CFC] made me see things from a different perspective, I should say, from a Catholic perspective. Though I see myself a member of my family, my most immediate community, I am also a member of several other communities—my place of work, the CFC, the parish, the society at large, my mother country and the whole world...It is interesting to note that my membership in CFC has affected my being in other communities as well---somehow, it is through CFC that I see things in a wider perspective.

Continuing, Tony points out that it is not just being Catholic or a member of CFC that matters but holding a true spiritual commitment,

As you get deeper into [the] life of community, especially when it's organized like CFC, you notice that, just like any other community there will be diplomatic and political struggles that people will want more power than others. Some people want more control—that's human nature. You notice that the more spiritually mature and more exposed ones to God's love will be able to overlook these and see the true meaning of community that gives support and nourishment to the souls that need it the most.

This is the true spirit of community for many first-generation Filipino-Americans. Expressing a similar sentiment, Angie, a first-generation Filipina member of Palitaw offers, "We are a group of people—a community that prays together, unified to be a good follower of God." And among the "followers of God" leaders arise to steer the flock. Turning to this point, in the next section I further outline the role of these leaders in the Houston Filipino-American community and describe how active participation in home devotional and prayer groups can put many Filipino-Americans in greater contact with leaders and their community efforts.

FAITH AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Looking back once again at Stan's birthday party, the groups that met on that night reflect the words of Keith above, "it is a community of communities." Although each person sat next to or with a particular group, their home or base group, they were all members of several groups and hence several overlapping communities. This is not, perhaps, all that unique to the Filipino-American community. As Woods and Judakis (2002:29) point out, most scholars agree that people are influenced by the community or communities in which they live or were raised but few recognize that people are

simultaneously members of multiple communities that function in varying degrees of harmony or discord with each other. This produces a host of competing forces which shape public and civic life. Every adult holds membership in several communities and each community exercises influence on individual needs, perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviors. As a result, linking these communities is no small task and requires leaders of tremendous skill. In the Filipino-American case, it also requires faith and an embedding in religious networks.

For many Filipino-Americans in Houston, Catholicism appears to act as a bridge that connects Filipinos and groups. It is a common faith across many Filipino groups where a diversity of religious expression is not cause for strife but seen as part of the united mission of the Church. Any leader within the community must understand this and be able to use it to bridge these communities. These leaders must understand that Filipino-Americans can be members of multiple groups and are active in many simultaneously. Even among religious groups and fellowships, many Filipino-Americans may be involved in multiple settings. Stand and Cheryl, for example, are members of Palitaw and attend pray meeting every Friday night but they are also involved in the social ministries of CFC. Explaining this further, Lyn, a Filipina member of Palitaw suggests,

We don't do some the things you might see in other groups but I know what they are doing—it is still God's work. We are all Catholics but each province, each island has its own way of doing things—their own saints and ways of praying. Sometimes we [she and her husband or other friends] go to their celebrations...it is fun, we dance, pray, sing, eat of course, we are all Filipino...

Again, not only does this reflect the way many Filipino-Americans in Houston see their community but it falls well within what we might expect from a more communities versus community based theoretical model.

Individuals' behaviors both public and private are best understood in terms of the collective experiences and influences within and across these communities. Any similarities or contradictions in the influences of these communities, as well as the specific nature of those influences, are important to understanding their needs, values, perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. And here, what matters is often faith, specifically Catholicism. This particularly true of home devotional and prayer groups which can give rise to leaders who further anchor how many Filipino-Americans define community and build networks of meaning. Through these groups and an active parish life, many Filipinos are drawn into contact with these leaders whether they are members of their own churches and fellowships or not. As active Catholics, these intricate religious networks are often made available to Filipino-Americans and through them they are often not only drawn into contact with community leaders but develop deep connections to them. Looking at findings from the SCCB survey, as was the case in the ethnographic accounts, Filipino-Americans who say that they have a personal friend who is a community leader are those who are tied into religious networks:

Table 6:

Odds Ratios of Filipino American Likelihood of having a Friend that is a Community Leader; SCCB Survey 2000- Christian Sub-sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.01(.00)			1.01(.00)
Gender (Male)	2.29(.32) **			2.04(.38) ~
Education	0.95(.12)			0.89(.14)
Income	1.12(.11)			1.17(.13)
Citizen	2.08(.39) ~			1.69(.44)
Ethnic Group Participation		0.64(.63)		.49(.72)
Religious Group Participation		6.46(.49) ***		9.41(.64) ***
Catholic			2.83(.41)	3.84(.48) **
Weekly Attendance			0.19(.39) ***	0.19(.43) ***
Church Activities			4.79(.40) ***	2.48(.45) *
N	183.97	183.97	183.97	183.97
-2 L Log	240.53	235.01	220.57	196.33

~ = p < .06 * = p < .05 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001

Using a measure of friendship, i.e. *do you have a personal friend who you would describe as a community leader* (see Appendix for measure construction), although weekly church attendance is a significant but negative predictor of having such a friend, this does not diminish the importance of the Church as a center of community for many Filipino-Americans. In fact, Filipino-American Catholics are 3.84 times as likely to say they have a personal friend who is a community leader. Simply attending church weekly

is not a significant indicator of civic and community life. What is more telling is participating in parish life and the activities of the church itself. This is where you are often going to find leaders. Community leaders may go to church on a regular basis but during the mass, their role, as Verba et al rightly point out, is largely secondary to the authority and leadership of the priest. However, when it comes to parish life the Church depends on the laity for organization, volunteering, and even leadership. Consequently, Filipino-Americans who are active in church life beyond attendance (church activities) are 2.48 times as likely to say they are close friends with a community leader.

What is more striking, but not all that surprising given the Houston narratives, is the strength of being a member of a religious group in predicting friendship with a community leader and the complete lack of any effect from being a member of an ethnic association. Members of groups such as Palitaw and CFC are 9.61, rough 10 times as likely, to say that they are close friends with a community leader. This does not necessarily suggest that community leaders are found religious fellowships but it does reinforce what we have seen in the ethnographic accounts. Home devotional and prayer groups are where intimate connections are made. These bonds, as well as the merit of the individuals themselves, produces leaders that members feel are not only friends but people who can lead the community. This is largely not the case of those in ethnic associations where divisive politics has caused many to seek out other forms of leadership.

In the case of individuals in Houston such as Stan, who is also a member of several secular and ethnic organizations, he finds a way through is faith of, “keeping the plates spinning,” as he describes it. First and foremost, his allegiance and the wellspring

of his inspiration are found in religious networks. Catholicism forges a covenant to a moral order that is not testable in the SCCB data. As Stan points out in the opening vignette, “you’ve got to own your faith...why else did Christ die?” For Stan being involved in religious groups, the Church, and his various communities is a spiritual obligation. Being involved is a matter of putting your faith into action. This quality, this sense of balance, faith, and cross cutting engagement is what makes Stan a civic leader. It is not Stan’s involvement in the community per se that makes him special. His birthday party crowd was filled with communitarians, but it is Stan’s pivotal role as a link to others, a facilitator between numerous networks, that draws the praise of his friends and family.

Asking Stan how he does it, he simply responds, “I am true to myself and live my faith.” Subsequently, asking Stan who he turns to for leadership, he once again points to his faith as well as the priests of his church. Beyond the Stans of the Filipino-American community in Houston, as Tocqueville might point out, lies the clergy of the Catholic Church. Priest such as Farther Roland in Houston are an important voice in the Filipino-American community, a voice that speaks with a sense of legitimacy and powerful position of authority. Moving from defining community to engaging in community service, one might also expect that these priests and Catholicism more generally can play a major role in mobilizing many Filipino-Americans to projects and efforts that build their community as well. Turning to this case, in the next chapter I explore where religious resources, both intensive and extensive, can impact Filipino-Americans’ participation in the community and the ways in which faith can call people to serve humanity, a broader community, across national borders.

Chapter 7: To Give Care, Engaging Transnational Communities of Faith

Christianity and consequently its morality went beyond all political powers and nationalities. Its grand achievement is to have formed a human community beyond national societies (Tocqueville from *Correspondence*, 192).

It has been said that whenever two Pinoys had gotten together, they formed a club. Further it has been said that wherever those two Pinoys had gotten together in the past with a third, the three Pinoys immediately organized themselves into a Filipino Community (Alo and Uy, 1995: 43).

“It’s a crazy time,” Father Roland explains on the eve of the Alief Heath and Civic Resource Fair at the church.⁶⁶ Teams of people are building booths in the parking lot while signs and posters are being thrown about like confetti. As the chaos mounts, representatives for various groups and civic associations flood the church looking for answers, “where do we set up,” “what time are we supposed to be here,” and a host of other questions. In the midst of this confusion are several familiar faces. Helping out in the preparations are members of Palitaw, Couples for Christ, and other Filipino-American groups.

Every year St. Catherine’s Catholic Church, the home of one of the largest Filipino Catholic congregations in the greater Houston area, either hosts the Alief Heath and Civic Resource Fair or is a major sponsor of the event. Starting in 1997 a local coalition entitled S.A.V.E. (Stand Against Violence Everyone) in partnership with St. Catherine’s began a local outreach forum for community and parish problems. This forum eventually grew into an annual fair. The first fair was held in 2002. It had a modest

⁶⁶ The following account is based on two years of observations at the Alief Heath and Civic Resource Fair (2005-06) and archival research of the years prior. Additional data were collected through interviews with Filipino-Americans working the fair and with Father Roland specifically.

attendance of 1,000 attendees with nearly 60 providers and sponsors. However, subsequent fairs grew to encompass several more sponsors and provide community resources on a scale unmatched in the area (Khan, 2004).

In 2004, as an example, the fair was sponsored by over 100 providers and attendance had swelled to over 2000 attendees (Khan, 2004). That year over 135 kids were immunized and free health care screenings such as dental, vision, blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, bone density, body mass, chiropractic, and Mammograms were provided to over 1,000 attendees (Khan, 2004). People also registered in large numbers for PSA tests,⁶⁷ CHIP,⁶⁸ and Gold Card insurance programs. Sign-ups booths for the Scouts, YMCA, and other youth groups were well attended. And school supplies were given away to over 300 students (Khan, 2004). In total, 189 local underprivileged families received 13,133 fresh produce items that had been collected by Southwest Houston Social Ministries and St. Catherine's own social ministry outreach (Khan, 2004).

The following year, 2005, 500 people got some form of health screening, 135 kids received close to 450 immunizations (many getting 3 shots each), and 19 pints of blood were donated. At least 200 underprivileged families received over 13,133 fresh produce items, 600 children received school supplies, and 80 people signed up for library cards (Demangin, 2005). The fair also served to educate the public on a host of issues and worked to get people involved in their community. As an example, 400 people visited the Houston Police Department's table for men against domestic abuse and over 250 people picked-up voters registration information or county service literature (Demangin, 2005).

⁶⁷ PSA testing, Prostate Specific Antigen, is a screening for prostate cancer.

⁶⁸ CHIP stands for Children's Health Insurance Program.

And these successes, glossing over many other contributions, were matched and in many ways exceeded in the 2006 fair (Williams, 2006).

Father Roland suggests, “each year it just keeps getting better and better.” And this certainly appears to be the case. Walking around the fair I got a sense that it is a major community event, one that helps to meet the needs of many Houston and Alief families. As a mother of five describes to a local news cast, “I am not sure what we would do from year to year if it were not for the fair, the kids need their shots and school supplies are so expensive these days” Talking to people working at the fair they seem to understand that the event is important too. For some it is just work. For others, it is a matter of faith and a moral duty to help.

Talking specifically to many Filipino-Americans, they oddly suggest that it is just another “Church function.” One in which they are called to give care and aid to those in need. Explaining this, a first-generation Filipino-American who was manning the blood drive booth, offers, “It’s no big deal but it’s a big deal, you know what I mean?” Continuing, she suggests that, “It’s a matter of living the word in your daily life” Agreeing, another first-generation Filipina nurse adds,

it’s a big fair but it’s just something we have gotten use to doing... we do a lot of stuff. It is just part our outreach, that is what the Church is supposed to do and they need us to help keep it going.

And this is not over stated. Of the 100 plus sponsors and providers at the fair is PAMAT (Pilipino American Masons of Texas), Couples for Christ, Fil-Am Press, FACOST (Filipino American Council of South Texas), Pilipinas Broadcasting USA, and PNAMH (Philippine Nurse Association of Metropolitan Houston) which provided over 158 volunteers in 2006 (fact pamphlet, 2006). However, beyond this formal list, it is

estimated that there are over 300 plus walk-on volunteers each year many of whom are Filipino (Khan, 2004; Demangin, 2005; Williams, 2006). Although no exact numbers are kept, Father Roland suggests,

We're heavily Filipino-American... if it were not for Filipino nurses and doctors, not to mention the countless number of groups that just show up, it [the fair] would not be near as successful from year to year...I count on them and they always deliver the care she [the Church] needs.

Father Roland, as a first-generation Filipino-American himself, understands what “giving care” in the Filipino-American Community means. He knows that there may be a difference between asking a Filipino to volunteer versus calling them to help. He also knows that in the end, he can depend on many Filipinos in the parish to help even if their numbers are not represented well on official volunteer rolls. Pointing this out, Father Roland explains, “this is their Church and when she calls on them they feel personally responsible, almost obligated to help... and so they do!”

GIVING CARE

Committed to the Church and the broader Catholic universe, many Filipino-Americans engage the community through their parishes and the organizations that they are members. In the case of the Alief Civic Fair described in the vignette above, numerous groups and associations both secular and religious, Filipino or not, were united in a common cause with a singular purpose to help those in need. And it was largely through the Catholic Church that this event was made possible. This should not be a surprise. Religious institutions have historically been the center of charity and community involvement in the United States (Putanam, 2000; Verba et al, 1995; Tropman, 2002;

Regnerus, Smith and Sikkink, 1998). Volunteering is one of the many ways that people express care and compassion for others and get involved in their community (Wilson and Musick 1997). It is one of the most prominent forms of civic participation in the United States and one in which religion plays a major role (Becker and Dhingra 2001; Musick, Wilson, and Bynum 2000; Wilson and Musick 1997; Putnam 2000). By some estimates half of all American volunteerism occurs in a religious context if not through a place of worship (see Putnam, 2000).

Among the few studies of Asian American Catholic volunteerism, however, Ecklund and Park (2007) suggest that formal volunteering may be impacted by internal community concerns that detract Asian American Catholics from community service. Likewise they suggest that as Asian and Catholic, many Asian American Catholics face a double-minority status that equally impacts their civic life. Drawing attention to the low rates of volunteerism among Asian American Catholics compared to Protestants in their own analysis, Ecklund and Park (2007) suggest that messages of community service may not be getting conveyed well to Asian Americans by the American Catholic Church. Given the fact that 68.45% of the Asian American Catholic sample Ecklund and Park (2005) analyze is Filipino-American, their findings are puzzling in light of the ethnographic data of this study and point to the possibility that the Filipino-American case may be unique.

The Church played a major role in helping to bring the numerous groups and volunteers together at the Alief Civic Fair. The chaos of palengke politics may be a viable obstacle for some Filipino-Americans but the Church was able to mediate between groups and individuals in organizing the fair, much as it does every year during Simbang

Gabi. Beyond the institutional mechanisms of Church authority, faith and a shared vision of community also played a role in getting people involved in the fair as Filipino-Americans in the vignette above describe it. At the same time, the Filipino-Americans that officially volunteered at the fair, primarily nurses, were not the only Filipinos helping at the fair. Many people simply showed up to help and assist in any way they could. Were they planning to show up but just did not sign up? If so what does this say, if anything, about their community involvement? Do these individuals hold the same level of commitment to community as those that did sign up? In the following sections, I look at these issues in the context of other events and community engagements. I explore how religious resources, intensive or extensive, can motivate and mobilize Filipino-American participation in the community

Faith and the Dynamics of Filipino-American Volunteerism

On any given Friday night the fellowship and informal discussion at home devotional and prayer meetings in groups such as Palitaw and CFC demonstrate how faith engenders a sense of civic responsibility. They also demonstrate where the opportunity to “get involved” can often originate. In Palitaw and CFC, there are often many community leaders. Although these leaders may not consider themselves as such, they can be important in rallying fellow members to various causes. Recalling John’s emails that brought members of CFC together for the Texas Rally for Life in chapter 5, John was an important mover for what unfolded. And this is true of other groups such as Palitaw. While one member may lead on a certain issue or cause, the group shares leadership. Explaining this, Jake points out in the case of Palitaw,

we really don't have a leader in Palitaw... Stan and Cheryl are big organizers but we are equal...on any given Friday, somebody else leads the groups or we focus on someone's particular needs... this is what I like about this group, no one tells you what to do, we just share our faith.

Clearly Stan and his wife Cheryl are movers in the group but other members are just as active and bring to Palitaw their own concerns and causes.

Most of the members of Palitaw are not only members of multiple groups and causes but have also taken up fundraising on some level or another. Jun, a first-generation Filipino-American member of Palitaw, as an example, is an avid volunteer at St. Michael's Catholic Church and a member of Texas Association of Mapua Alumni (TAMA). Before Jun's wife Louise became ill, the two of them were also very active in the Filipino-American Bicol association as well as active tennis enthusiasts in a local club. Jun and Louise still maintain their contacts and even get out to several community functions but since Louise became ill, the frequency has decreased. Fred, also an active member of Palitaw, is a Mason and an active member of St. Catherine's Catholic Church. He and his wife Alice are very involved both in the parish and the wider Filipino-American community. Alice, as an example, frequently bakes for community fundraisers. Likewise Jake and his wife Dina are members of St. Michael's and frequently help out in the parish and often sing a church events and fundraisers. Lyn and her husband Ricardo are very active at St. Catherine's, members of the choir, the San Lorenzo Center, and are frequent participants in several secular Filipino-American Associational events. And these are but a few examples.

The members of Palitaw, and other Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups in Houston, often bring to their respective groups a number of causes from a host of other formal and informal groups. It is through their common bond as Catholics

and their fellowship with each other that many members of these home devotional and prayer groups share in the causes and projects of other members. Whether these members are also “officially” members of the other groups themselves or not, one person’s cause or project can become that of another. On one evening I observed Palitaw, as an example, this sharing of causes was the focus of discussion.

After praying the Rosary, singing hymns, and reading from the Bible (Philippians 3:12-21), the members of Palitaw turn to their experiences from the week as examples of how they can better learn to live their faith. Trying to motivate the group to open up even more, Stan offers,

we must be able to see where our faith matters, put it in context or [if] it is irrelevant! We need to ask ourselves if our faith is growing... are we putting it into action, are we living the faith and seeing where all of this matters in our lives

Each member shares what the scripture means to them and how they see their week and lives more generally. They talk about their projects in the community and what God would want them to do in each case. Adler, looking to lighten the mood a bit after an hour of serious contemplation, points out, “You know I was lucky this week and although I did not see it then, my actions are important—God is watching, and I am thankful he caught me in a good moment!” Many laugh and agree. Offering one last message of hope and instilling a sense of obligation Jay exclaims, “Lord help us do your will, help us put our faith in action and bless our efforts as we attempt to build a community and lives worthy of your Son’s love.” With this said, the group transitions into the evening’s fellowship, now near midnight, but still going strong.

Moving to the kitchen and dinning room, the discussion of church and community projects returns but over food. The food is important. As Lyn points out, “without the

food and conversation then the group would fall apart—it is part of our culture.” However, the food does not just fill the belly as Marzan and Maison (2001) have rightly noted. Food is a social lubricant for many Filipinos, it is the *grasa* or grease that often facilitates conversation and creates a comfortable atmosphere that can seal a deal or insures that people will help in a cause. “Okay guys, so you are going to be at the church Saturday right? We [PAMAT] need your help!” Fred announces. Responding, while a few offer reasons they cannot be there, most say “yes.” No sign-up sheets are passed around but a contract of sorts was made. No one was asked to officially “volunteer” but many agreed that they would help.

VOLUNTEERISM FAITHFULLY REDEFINED

Participation in Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups such as Palitaw and Couples for Christ can lead to community involvement. Group members bring to these weekly fellowships their own projects from other groups and rally the members around their causes. Certainly not everyone joins these other groups nor do they always find the time to help, but these groups appear to generate a sense of caring and interest that extends well beyond the boundaries of the group. Throughout my four years of observation, many Filipino-American Catholics in Houston were seen *volunteering* in countless civic endeavors. In fact interviews were often interrupted or made difficult to schedule due to the busy civic lives of community members. In interviews, however, there was often a curious absence of the words volunteer, volunteering or volunteerism in respondents’ descriptions of the various “civic things” they do. This was not an error in transcription but a deliberate selection of words by the Filipino-Americans interviewed.

Although many used the words, particularly those that discussed their community life through email or on community listserv groups, this was often in response to the questions I had asked.

Sitting down with various focus groups I explained how all that they say they do or what I have observed does not match with what I was finding in the survey results on volunteering. I also explained that other social scientists had reported similar findings (Ecklund and Park, 20007). I pointed out that according to my data only 44% of the Filipino-American sample in the SCCB survey volunteers. It is not a low percentage but it does not match their active community lives. Laughing at my observations, Arnold, a first-generation Filipino-American member of Palitaw in his mid 60s, suggests,

Volunteering means signing up, putting your name on the line—I can't do that, no time, I just show up and help when I can, when they need me the most...it's just a matter of helping, being there for those in need, and giving care—*gawad kalinga!*”

Offering further clarification, Danny, a first-generation Filipino-American member of CFC in his mid 40s suggests in another focus group,

its just a matter of being generous, to love our neighbors as I love my self but most of all to love God above all things... you give care and that is it.

And as Ken, also a first-generation member of CFC concurs,

It starts with the individual...every little thing that you do, you just share your ideas, help with charities, attend community forms and projects... you contribute to change.

Throughout interviews many Filipino-American Catholics repeated these thoughts.

Volunteering can mean something else for many Filipino-Americans in Houston. Volunteering is seen as a formal commitment but to *give care* is a matter of faith and a

spiritual obligation to *participate* in community life. Alluding to this fact, Father Roland points out,

Volunteering is a funny thing but I depend on groups like PAMAT, CFC, Palitaw, etc... after some time in the parish you learn who you can call for help and that is how you have to put it—I need help, not can you sign-up and volunteer for X or we have project Y, just ask of those who care and they will be there.

This perspective on volunteerism, a Filipino-American perspective, is perhaps unique compared to the broader findings of Ecklund and Park (2007) on Asian American Catholics. What many Filipino-Americans see themselves doing is not volunteering but giving care, providing aid, or simply participating in their community both within and beyond their parish.

Building on the ethnographic findings, I turned to the SCCB survey to find measures other than formal volunteering that might better capture the ways in which many Filipino-Americans in Houston define volunteerism. Looking at a measure of *participation* versus volunteering, i.e. *in the past 12 months, have you participated in X*, the results provide a plausible explanation for how the Filipino-American case may be unique to the broader findings on Asian-American Catholic volunteerism in previous studies (Ecklund and Park 2007). It is a matter of *how* we phrase the question rather than a lack of involvement. Although results must be taken with a certain amount of caution, as *participation* can mean a host of things, they provide an alternative view of Filipino-American volunteerism and the role religion can play more generally in mobilizing Asian-American Catholics to participate in community life.

Table 7:

**OLS Estimates of Filipino American Group Involvement (non-religious) with Standardized Estimates in Parentheses
SCCB Survey 2000- Christian Sub-sample**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4		
Age	.00(.08)			.00(.08)		
Gender (Male)	.99(.20)	**		.44(.10)		
Education	.31(.17)	*		.13(.07)		
Income	.10(.07)	*		.11(.07)		
Citizen	1.11(.19)			.53(.12)		
Ethnic Group Participation		2.14(.22)	**	1.53(.16)		
Religious Group Participation		2.31(.38)	***	1.85 (.31)	**	
Catholic			1.77(.28)	**	1.30(.21)	**
Weekly			-.13(-.03)		.22(.05)	
Church Activities			2.17(.41)	***	.8(.16)	
N	101	101	101	101		
Adj. R-sqr	0.07	0.22	0.17	0.29		

* = p<.05 ** = p<.01 *** = p<.001

Note: Analysis was also run with the squared dependent with identical results

Using a measure of participation versus volunteering reveals a completely different story. Whereas only 44% of the SCCB Filipino-American sample “volunteer” for various groups and organizations, 75.96% say that they have participated in the same groups. Looking at findings in table 7, religious resources appear to play a major role in mobilizing Filipino-Americans to participate in increasing numbers of civic organizations and groups. Unlike the possible bias inherent in questions pertaining to volunteerism,

asking Filipino-Americans if they have *participated* in a civic group in the last 12 months appears at face value to match what many in Houston would understand it to be, giving care or aid through participation. One might add that this understanding of participation, given the ethnographic accounts, centers on visions of a common good that are largely shaped by religious commitments to the Catholic Church and religious groups outside the Church. And the findings in table 7 support this.

The findings suggest that Filipino-Americans who are members of religious groups such as Palitaw and CFC are significantly more likely to participate in increasing numbers of civic groups. Rerunning the analysis with logistic regression with the same results, members of these religious groups are roughly 4 times as likely to participate in other groups. Findings also suggest that being Catholic and participating in church activities also significantly increases the likelihood that Filipino-Americans are involved in an increasing number of civic groups. Weekly church attendance, however, does not have the same effect. In fact it is participation in religious activities outside of or in addition to worship service that appears to have the greater impact. Looking further at the standardized estimates in table 7 which test the strength of these effects, in the final model it is being Catholic and a member of a religious group that has a greater impact on civic participation whether we label it as volunteerism or not.

Being involved in one group can lead to being involved in others. For many Filipino-Americans in Houston, helping out in causes and projects of their fellow home devotional and prayer groups members is an obligation of faith. Although most would not question others participation or even measure its frequency, the covenant shared in

Palitaw, as an example, compels members to help each other. And the same can be said of other groups such as Couples for Christ. Explaining this, John points out,

though my wife and I have only been in the CFC community for eight and a half years, I would say that one could not get enough reason why anyone actively involved in the community will not be inspired or challenged. For us, community life either parish-wise or CFC-wise has always been in one of our top priorities.

Continuing he offers,

It is here [CFC] where we experience first-hand, the shift—gradual and drastic, of our values and way of life...in the community we learned that the more we give ourselves, the more life becomes vibrant and fulfilling...it is this premise that my wife and I along with the many members who experience the liberation from life's mundane existence, that we make ourselves available for God's work

To be a member of these groups can be transformative. It changes many Filipino-American lives by instilling an understanding of faith through works and engenders a deep spiritual commitment to working in the community or as John puts it making your self, "available for God's work."

Participating in the Alief Civic Fair, Simbang Gabi, Loves and Fishes, or even Lyn baking hopia for the San Lorenzo Center, *is* volunteering in all the traditional senses of the word. And religious resources and networks often provide the opportunity for them to get involved. Subsequently, the more people get involved the deeper their commitment to their church, home devotional groups, and their community often becomes. Explaining this, Dan points out,

I believe that there are several stages in [the] realization of community... when I first joined the community [CFC], I started not littering, I learned to volunteer—as you put it, more in school and get more involved. I started to lead people in prayer, and support others emotionally where they were not part of the community. I started giving and helping more to the poor including the homeless.

This sentiment is shared by many of members of religious fellowships interviewed, impacting not only what they increasing do to help but where they help.

COMMITMENTS TO CHURCH AND CHARITY

Looking at this idea of *giving care* more closely, there are a host of ways in which the community life of Filipino-Americans reveals its unique character. Keeping in mind that showing up may be as deep a commitment to help as physically putting a name down on a volunteer roll, the walk on informal volunteers at the Alief Civic Fair that opens this chapter, the helpers at Simbang Gabi, or even Lyn baking hopia, are acts of volunteering in all the traditional senses of the word. And it is religious resources and networks that provide the opportunity for them to get involved and mobilize their participation. Simply because many Filipino-Americans in Houston interviewed cannot or do not want give an exact time when they will arrive does not mean that they will not be there nor does it mean that people do not count on their participation. These acts of care may not be seen as volunteerism by many Filipino-Americans interviewed but they are acts of charity nonetheless.

Turning once again to findings from the SCCBS survey, religious resources play a major role in mobilizing Filipino-Americans to participate in charities. Unlike the possible bias inherent in questions pertaining to volunteerism, asking Filipino-Americans if they have *participated* in a charity group or function in the last 12 months appears at face value to match what they would understand it to be, charity.

Table 8:**Odds Ratios of Filipino-American Participated in Charity Organization SCCB Survey 2000- Christian Sub-sample**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.01(.00)			1.01(.00)
Gender (Male)	0.72(.35)			0.37(.42) **
Education	1.02(.14)			0.96(.15)
Income	1.45(.13) **			1.46(.13) **
Citizen	0.79(.43)			0.53(.49)
Ethnic Group Participation		1.06(.61)		0.41(.79)
Religious Group Participation		2.11(.39) **		3.62(.52) **
Catholic			2.99(.50)	5.53(.63) **
Weekly Attendance			1.89(.38)	2.35(.42) *
Religious Participation			4.38(.39) ***	3.71(.46) **
N	185.73	185.73	185.73	185.73
-2 L Log	206.02	209.71	190.61	173.09

* = p<.05 ** = p<.01 *** = p<.001 ~.06

Results suggest that Filipino-American Catholics are 5.53 times more likely to say they have participated in a charity organization or group than Protestant Filipino-Americans. This is not all that surprise. Catholics may have fundamentally different views of poverty than Protestants (see Tropman, 2002; Kersbergen 1995). The Catholic ethic, as Tropman (2002) describes it, is based on community not society. This ethic implies a strong connection to others. It is a helping or charitable ethic versus the more

achievement driven ethic of Protestants Weber described. However, it is not simply being Catholic by identity that matters to participation in charities but active involvement in religious networks. Filipino-Americans who attend church weekly are 2.35 times as likely to be involved in charity work. Those who are active in parish or church activities are 3.71 times as likely to participate. Likewise members of groups such as Palitaw and CFC are 3.62 times as likely to say they participate in a charity or social service organization.

For these Filipino-Americans, home devotional and prayer groups are often an avenue that leads to civic participation through the parish or the Catholic Church itself. The more involved they become in these groups, the more their obligation to community service often grows. Pointing to this, Dan notes,

I believe that there are several stages in [the] realization of community... when I first joined the community [CFC], I started not littering, I learned to volunteer—as you put it, more in school and get more involved. I started to lead people in prayer, and support others emotionally where they were not part of the community. I started giving and helping more to the poor including the homeless.

This sentiment is shared by many of the members of religious fellowships interviewed.

Lyn, as an example, offers,

when I am at the store I usually just pick up an extra can or two for the poor—it's no big deal, it's really not charity but I hope it helps a little... Father Roland says every little bit helps? Most of us [members of Palitaw] do it, so I guess it adds up.

Like many others interviewed, Lyn expresses a sense of care for her community and even through small acts attempts to render charity to those in need.

Given the findings to this point, this study points to a plausible explanation for why some scholars have found a discrepancy between the volunteerism of Asian American Catholic and Protestant as well as why the Filipino-American case may be

unique (Ecklund and Park, 2007). These discrepancies may also be a matter of *place*, where social scientists think of volunteerism occurring. Turning to this, in the next section I highlight how many Filipino-Americans are participating in acts of transnational volunteerism and charity.

GAWAD KALINGA

Throughout the four years of this study, many Filipino-Americans were observed participating in their ethnic communities, their Catholic parish, and in the greater Houston community. From time to time these efforts were also directed towards raising money for college students in the Philippines or helping out disaster relief efforts in the Philippine provenances in which they were born. On numerous occasions several members of the Houston Filipino-American community described “vacations” to the Philippines that were by any other definition acts of volunteerism and charity. These vacations were essentially outreach and service to community and country. As Tim, a first-generation Filipino-American points out,

It really was just a vacation... we worked hard while we were there but it was fun and what more could you ask of a vacation than to see your fellow brothers and sister move into a new home and a new life

Even among those who have not gone back to the Philippines to get involved in projects directly, discuss their future plans in this way. Highlighting this, Janis, a first-generation Filipina-American nurse and member of Palitaw points out,

We [she and her husband] plan to go to the Philippines this summer for a vacation and we thought that while we were there we would see what we could do to help and perhaps plan better a way to help every summer

Again, many Filipino-Americans interviewed see these acts as anything but formal volunteerism. While there are many examples of these transnational projects to draw from, perhaps none are more compelling than the work many Filipino-Americans are doing in the Philippines through Couples for Christ.⁶⁹

In 2001 CFC ministries initiated Gawad Kalinga (GK)—literally taken from the Tagalog phrase *to give care*, as an integrated and sustainable alternative solution to the problems of poverty not just in the Philippines but the world. The approach called for a concrete plan to rebuild the nation, by harnessing what many see as the best of the Filipino spirit, faith and patriotism. Turning to Filipinos in diaspora, CFC calls on “people of faith” to rebuild their home. Explaining his connection to *home* and his own involvement in GK, Mark, points out,

Home is where the heart is. We now live in the US but still consider the Philippines our homeland. The miracle which brought my wife and I together in the US came from the same God who tells us to support Gawad Kalinga all out.

Continuing Mark suggests, “somehow, our mission is here [United State]... but we are becoming Bayanihan, a uniquely Filipino word for becoming a hero to each other.” With the launching of GK777, CFC has set out to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years and it is Filipinos in diaspora that are driving these efforts.

What started as a CFC mission has quickly expanded to a multi-sectoral partnership with secular sponsors such as McDonald’s, Pepsi and Coke all driven by a vision of a new Philippines with no more slum, violence or corruption. More than charity

⁶⁹ It is important to note that the Filipino-Americans engaged in the work of CFC are not all CFC members but come from a host of groups such as Palitaw or in some cases are not affiliated with a group and act individually.

work or simply building homes, GK is nation building through holistic community renewal. Explaining this approach Mark states that,

This task of nation building comes with comprehensive and proven programs for education, health, livelihood, and community empowerment. Everything is integrated and holistic. "No more slums!" is the resounding battle cry of this full-scale war against poverty.

Continuing, Mark points in interview to the spirit driving the efforts in the Philippines,

No loans are given, no interest is charged, no profits are made. Only the Spirit of giving provides. The enormity of this task makes it foolish to think it can be done... well, not by 2010! But the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom [1 Cor 1:25]. And day after day, everyone witnesses the impossible. No movement gathers momentum this fast—no revolution or upheaval of this kind. This is wildfire. This is the blaze of the Holy Spirit.

The project is ambitious but many Filipinos, including Mark and his wife see it as the only way the problem of poverty in the Philippines can be healed. Quoting scripture and calling on the Holy Spirit, it is through faith that many see the task coming to fruition. GK is not, however, about evangelism. As Mark points out, GK is building durable and secure homes but the program also provides other physical structures such as drainage systems, water and toilet facilities, schools, livelihood and community centers, multi-purpose halls and clinics.

Gawad Kalinga is a holistic approach. Beyond the physical structures GK provides value based education for pre-school children and vocational education for street children up to 13 years old, scholarships are also provided for some who may pursue higher education. For many who do not pursue higher education and the majority of adults outside of these programs, GK conducts livelihood and skills training seminars, provides start up capital and materials for microfinance and micro-enterprise, and assists in the marketing of GK communities' products such as food from backyard farming and

poultry raising. Through the LUSOG⁷⁰ initiative GK logs the health profiles of every family in a GK community and monitors their status through a volunteer team of doctors and paramedical practitioners. As part of this outreach, parent education regarding proper nutrition and hygiene is a requirement for all living in a GK village.

To empower these communities further GK assists in the founding of neighborhood associations in each community to inculcate stewardship and ensure accountability, cooperation and unity. Guidelines for community living are decided upon by the members themselves and no religious vow of faith is required. Although CFC has established numerous chapters in these villages, this has been by the choice of the villagers themselves, not a requirement for aid or continued participation in GK programs.⁷¹ Perhaps the most astonishing example of this removal of religious control can be seen in Mindanao where CFC via GK is building villages for Muslim Filipinos. This is going a long way towards bridging the long historic and violent divide between a Christian majority and a Muslim minority. The animosity of civil war and strife have largely been set aside in order to give care where it is needed the most, regardless of religious affiliation. Pointing this out, Lisa, a first-generation Filipina-American member of CFC offers, “bottom line, they are all children of God.”

While the Filipino Diaspora was brought about by differing circumstances than that of the Jewish Diaspora, and while globally dispersed Filipinos are not building a new

⁷⁰ LUSOG is a specific program in GK; the name is taken from the Tagalog word for healthy.

⁷¹ This is a point of contention among members of XCFC. Although some level of informal pressure to join CFC must exist on some level, CFC has not been evangelizing in these villages. As a result, CFC has in the last four months split over the issue forming two groups: 1) CFC GK which will continue the project as it began and 2) CFC FFL, Foundations for Family Living, which has, at an institutional level, divorced itself from GK and now focuses exclusively on family life and evangelization to others. At the grassroots level however, Filipino-Americans in Houston in both camps continue to work together on projects including GK, although on a more individual basis.

nation from nothing, the parallels suffice in forcing us to question what we know about the relationship of religion and immigration, and the transnational connections that engages immigrants in the civic space of multiple nations. Do transnational religious lives lead to transnational civic engagements? And in what national sphere are transnationals more engaged, host or home?

Although these questions are largely beyond the general scope of this study, it is important to note that the notion of giving care that is so important to the community engagement of many Filipino-Americans in the United States appears to carry over into their community involvement abroad. Participating in GK is for many Filipino-Americans in Houston simply a matter of expanding the bounds of faith and family. Explaining this, Lilly, a first-generation Filipina-American member of CFC points out,

Gawad Kalinga is simply one of the seven pillars [of CFC]. Couples for Christ are about self transformation to a higher level with Jesus Christ at the helm. So, I say—my husband and my son and his wife and their son are not “first” to me, Jesus Christ is. However, with Jesus Christ endless love and forgiveness for my sins for I am a sinner, I am able to give back and love my husband, my son, my daughter-in-law and grandson with all of my heart in accordance to my Covenant with Jesus Christ. With my Covenant I am able to forgive and focus on what Jesus Christ wants me to do. Now I see the whole picture of what Christianity is all about. I praise and thank the Lord for the grace of knowing the Truth... Less for Self, More for Others, Enough for All.

And give of their selves they do.

Almost every member of CFC who is a part of GK has a story to tell but it is not a matter of pride that they note their sacrifices, it is a testament to what they claim is a miracle in the making through their faith. Whether it is Kristi and her husband Mark who gave up the down-payment on a new house to build homes in the Philippines through GK, little Tex who went door to door at the age of eight selling his sketches in Houston to build homes for GK, Rose who sold her car and home to build an entire village, or

many others who have run marathons and raised money through other actions and drives, GK embodies a spirit of faith and community that demonstrates what many Filipinos in diaspora can do for their homeland while still giving back to the communities in which they physically live. As Lita describes it, “CFC engages us faithfully here and there... to truly renew the face of the earth, we need to answer the command of God.” Expressing a similar sentiment, Kristi also offers, “life in the US is not easy... but here, the hardship that you endure bears fruit.”

As of September 2006 GK has built over 1,140 communities in 64 of the Philippines’ 80 provinces and housed over 500,000 people in a nation in which 70% of the population is landless (ANCOP report, 2006: www.gawadkalinga.org). The project has begun to expand beyond the Philippines to Indonesia, Cambodia, and Papua New Guinea. As Dan puts it, “[GK] is one of the most successful exports of the country; God has blessed the effort.” To this point, direct U.S. Filipino support has resulted in countless labor hours and nearly 2 million dollars of aid a year since 2003 (ANCOP report, 2006: www.gawadkalinga.org). Not only are Filipino-Americans giving of themselves but they are returning home or elsewhere whenever they can to physically do the work. It is a remarkable effort. Even the Filipino-American social pundit Perry Diaz notes,

For those who do not believe in miracles, I suggest that they go to the Philippines and visit one of the project sites of Gawad Kalinga (GK) 777. Yes, miracles happen and a miracle is now in progress in more than 500 sites all over the Philippines. I have witnessed the miracle in progress. However, I don’t think I can truly express what I saw and felt when I visited several Gawad Kalinga villages. As he continues, “GK777 is bayanihan [being a hero to others] in action...it brings out the hero in every Filipino.”

For many, this heroism is not a matter of personal glory but spiritual glory, one that gives meaning and purpose to their lives as they engage civil society in two nations. Pointing to this fact, Tim offers that,

Gawad Kalinga put a meaning to the CFC community. I believe that my wife and I would not have stayed in the CFC community if we did not see that it is meant for the good of the less fortunate brethren.

Like many other Filipino-Americans interviewed in Houston, community is not just about faith but purpose and vision. For many Filipinos, GK offers a needed sense of meaning in engaging and building community. This does not exclude, however, being involved in the United States as well. As Kristi puts it, “faith is empty without works” and these works, reflected in various projects and acts throughout this chapter, demonstrate how Filipino-Americans are faithfully both Filipino and American.

Chapter 8: Conclusion, Assessing Religion and the Civic Life of Filipino-Americans

O Virgin of Antipolo to you we lift our every woe may your love and guiding presence remain with us where every we go...you are our guide on our journey you calm our fears an you light our way...(from the hymn, O Birhen Ng Antipolo)

In 2001 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued the pastoral letter *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*. A landmark statement, the letter sought to 1) publicly acknowledge the increasing presence of Asians in American Catholic parishes and 2) highlight the rich diversity of culture, tradition, and religious practices they bring to the Church. At nearly 2.5 million people and growing via immigration and native birth,⁷² Asian Americans Catholic are an increasingly important but sorely understudied part of the demographic transformation of American Catholicism (Warner, 2005; Jasso et al 2002; 2003). Among the Asian groups making the greatest impact on the Church are Filipino-Americans. Filipinos represent the second largest source of Catholic immigration to the United States, second only to Mexico.

While scholars have increasingly begun to explore the impact Hispanics are having on the American Catholic Church and conversely how the Church and religious participation impacts their life (see Espinosa et al, 2003; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001; Diaz-Stevens and Stevens-Arroyo 1998; Deck, 1994; Levitt, 2003; Menjivar, 2003), the case of Asian American Catholics lies virtually unexplored. Like the Hispanic American

⁷² The *Asian and Pacific Presence* estimates that 83.0% of Filipino Americans (1.54 million), 29.0% of Vietnamese Americans (0.33 million), 17.0 % of Indian Americans (0.29 million), 12.3% of Chinese Americans (0.30 million), 7.0% of Korean Americans (0.07 million), and 4.0% of Japanese Americans

case, what is potentially most significant about the growth of Asian American Catholics is not just the diversity itself but also the future impact these populations may have on the relationship between religion and civic life in the United States.

Most research on Asian American civic life focuses solely on voting with less studying other forms of political and community participation (Lein et al, 2001). Even fewer focus on the role of religion (Lein et al, 2001). Among the few studies addressing religion and Asian American civic life, Ecklund and Park (2007) suggest that Asian American Catholics: 1) do not participate in civic life to the same degree as Protestants, 2) may currently face internal community concerns that detract from civic participation outside their parish, and 3) may not adequately receive teachings of community service from the Catholic Church (Ecklund and Park, 2007:242). Cherry (forthcoming) finds that Protestant Asian Americans are more likely to vote and be interested in politics than Asian American Catholics but in terms of other community measures such as participating in a community project or neighborhood association they find that being Protestant is not a significant predictor of civic participation. Both studies demonstrate that religion is an important resource for the civic lives of Asian American Christians but the full picture of their civic life remains under explored, particularly Asian American Catholic and hence the case of Filipino-Americans. This study has attempted to paint this broader picture.

WHY STUDY FILIPINO-AMERICANS

(0.03 million) are Catholic (see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) 2001 *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*. Washington, DC: USCCB).

Filipino-Americans are an excellent case for studying Asian Americans and Asian American Catholics more specifically. They are the second largest Asian American population and steadily growing (see findings from the National Immigrant Study, Jasso et al 2003; USCCB, 2001).⁷³ Constituting a very diverse population, Filipino-Americans come from over 7,000 islands and bring with them a multitude of cultural and religious practices. Although Filipinos have lived in the United States for over 200 years and are one of the oldest Asian immigrant groups in the country,⁷⁴ it was not until the passage of new immigrant legislation in 1965 that their numbers began to dramatically increase. Today the Filipino-American population is estimated to be 4 million people with 66% of the community being foreign born (see U.S. Department of State: Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 2007; U.S. 2000 Census). The Filipino-American community is also growing rather quickly. From 1990 to 2000, as an example, the Filipino-American population grew 48% and by some estimates the community will exceed that of Chinese-Americans in the near future making them the largest Asian American ethnic group in the nation. Filipino-Americans represent 68.45% of the Asian American Catholic sample in the SCCB survey and are the only Catholic Asian American ethnic populations with sufficient numbers for statistical analysis. While these distinctive characteristics make

⁷³ According to the 2000 U.S. Census there are roughly 2.4 million Filipino-Americans in the United States, second only in numeric size to Chinese Americans. However, it is estimated that Filipino-Americans may surpass Chinese-Americans as the largest Asian ethnic group in the U.S in the near future (see Bonus, 2000).

⁷⁴ Filipinos first came to the United States immediately after the American acquisition of the Philippines from Spain in 1898 (see Posadas, 1999 or Pido, 1985 for a general history).

Filipino-Americans unique they are oddly one of the least studied Asian American groups (Warner 2005; Agbaayani-Siewert and Revilla 1995).⁷⁵

The American Catholic Church estimates that 83% of the Filipino-American population is Catholic and ethnographic findings point to the Church playing a central role in both their personal lives and the community. Filipino-American community newspapers in Houston, as an example, are replete with ads for volunteering opportunities that are either directly associated with the Church or groups who support the aims of the parish in the wider city. These advertisements highlight the role the Catholic Church can play in shaping Filipino-American views and interaction with civic spaces. On-line Filipino-American listserves and blogs also highlight the role of Catholicism in shaping views on political candidate by editorializing the stance of the Catholic Church on key issues such as abortion. Although these examples point to the central position of religion and the Church more generally for many in the Filipino-American community, the dearth of research on religion and Filipino-Americans remains a rather curious neglect.

Mobilizing ethnographic data on the Filipino-Americans community of Houston, Texas as well as survey analysis of the Social Capital Community Benchmark (SCCB) Survey, the present study set out to rectify this gap in the literature and explore the relationship between religion and community participation among Filipino-Americans. The preceding chapter focused on four sets of hard or extensive religious resources: 1) Religious Institutions, specifically denominational divides between *Catholics* and

⁷⁵ Filipino-Americans are also one of the least visible Asian American Catholic ethnic groups due in large part to their English proficiency and their surnames being wrongly identified as Hispanic in Catholic parishes (see USCCB 2001; 1994).

Protestants; 2) Involvement in church through active *weekly attendance*; 3) Involvement in church through other activities not associated with regular attendance such as Bible studies—*church participation*; and 4) Involvement in *religious groups* that are not affiliated with a church. Pointing to the voices of the Filipino-American community itself and important new survey findings, this study sheds light on the role of religion in the civic life of Filipino-Americans in Houston and beyond.⁷⁶ In general, results suggest that the Catholic Church and religious participation more generally play an important role in facilitating the community participation of Filipino-Americans. In fact, Filipino-American Catholics are significantly more likely to participate in various forms of civic participation beyond voting than Filipino-American Protestants.

Unlike to previous studies, religious participation in addition to or outside of weekly church attendance was found to be a significant predictor of civic participation beyond voting (Ecklund and Park, 2007). Subsequently, church attendance was *not* found to have a consistent impact despite what might be anticipated from the literature on religion and American civic life (Putnam, 2000). While the work of Ecklund and Park (2007) support these last two findings in the general Asian American population, their conclusions about the volunteerism of Asian American Catholics are not found in the Filipino-American case which may be unique.

The understanding of Catholicism sought in this study points to the fluid nature of religious resources across both institutional and non-institutional spheres. Filipino-American religiosity is dynamic. It is a lived religion that exists in the streets, in their homes, and in the Church. Hence theorizing the impact of Filipino-American religious

⁷⁶ Given the fact that Filipino-Americans represent 68.45% of the Asian American Catholic sample in the

life on their civic life must capture the vibrancy Catholicism plays in bridging the spaces between *home*, real or imagined, culture and church life itself. Many Filipino-Americans in Houston get involved in civic life because they *believe* that God commands them or because they *feel* that they doing the “work of the Lord” through their groups and churches. It is a vow of faith and an intensive resource that is just as powerful in mobilizing Filipino-Americans to civic life as more extensive or material resources. Reviewing the findings from the previous chapters, in the following sections I highlight were religion impacts the civic life of Filipino-Americans and summarize what the findings mean for future studies.

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE FILIPINO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

When many Filipino-Americans talk about politics, they speak about a specific Filipino brand of politics. Their political interests span continents and political arenas much like their lives and their understandings of home (see Espiritu, 2003). Filipinos in diaspora remain connected to home both as the physical location in which they live and as a deep emotional bond to the Philippines themselves. Through newspapers, Filipino television, and on-line chats and blogs, many Filipino-Americans stay informed about their community of residence, their region of birth, the Philippines more generally, and every thing Filipino—from politics to the latest gossip about their favorite movie stars.

In doing politics, Filipino-American political activism can likewise engage their interests not only in the United States but in the Philippines as well. It is said that wherever two or more Filipinos are gathered, they form an ethnic association. Not far

SCCB survey, these new analyses speak directly to the findings of Ecklund and Park (2007).

from the truth, the proliferation of these ethnic associations in the Filipino-American community is astounding. Ranging from small gatherings of five or six to groups with membership in the hundreds, every city in which Filipinos live in large numbers, including Houston, has at least one association for every ethnic region of the Philippines, every Island, every major city, and every town. Historically, these associations have served as a means of conducting a Filipino politics of their own when shut out or made to feel unwelcome in mainstream American politics (Bonus, 2000). Without a doubt American racism and discrimination have played a major role in shaping Filipino-American politics. When Filipino-Americans need to act as a community versus a region or small group, however, it is the Church and religious resources to which they often turn.

Looking at the data presented in chapters four and five, one of the key questions was the degree to which Filipino-American ethnic associations are able to generate political interest among Filipinos versus the Catholic Church and other intensive and extensive religious resources. Building on Lein's findings (2004) that suggests that Asian Americans are mobilized into participation beyond voting more by ethnic associations than church attendance, chapters four and five also question the degree to which the Filipino-American case may be unique given the historical ties of Catholicism to the community. Looking at results from the SCCB survey analysis, participation either in ethnic organizations or religious groups did not significantly affect Filipino-American political interest. Weekly church attendance and participation in activities outside of or in addition to attendance, however, are significant predictors of political interest. In fact looking at table 2 Filipino-Americans who attend church weekly are 2.19 times as likely

to be interested in politics. Being Catholic, although not significant, is not a hindrance to their political interests. And these findings are likewise reflected in the ethnographic data.

Many Filipinos-Americans in Houston expressed an interest in political issues that centers on religious topics and ethical dilemmas such as the right-to-life in which the Church has clear and stated positions. As the seat of authority on major social issues, the views of priests and even more so of the Pope carry considerable weight. Those who attend church weekly are more exposed to these messages and hence the most effected. Conversely, the fact that many Filipino-Americans in Houston complain about the nature of politics in their ethnic associations, what gets described as “crab mentality” or “pioneer syndrome,” may further reflect the primacy of religious effects over secular effects in sparking their interest in politics. At the same time, the emotional draw to issues such as abortion many Filipino-Americans expressed in interviews highlights the more intensive resources that can drive their interests.

Turning from interest in politics to actually voting for presidential candidates, religion was first and foremost what many Filipino-Americans in Houston talked about in shaping their choices. I argue in chapter five that things changed dramatically between the Clinton years when Filipino-Americans voted largely for democrats and their support for Bush and republicans after 2000. A large part of this shift involved changing party affiliation based on religiously charged issues such as the right-to-life, gay marriage, and stem-cell research. When Kerry was refused communion by Cardinal Ratzinger and wavered on traditional Catholic positions to these issues, many Filipino-Americans supported Bush and his administrations because of their conservative values.

Religion also shapes Filipino-American participation in politics beyond voting. Looking at results from the SCCB survey analysis in chapter five, religious resources predict whether or not a Filipino-American signs a petition, rallies or marches for a given cause. These more extensive resources also predict the likelihood of increasingly being involved in these forms of political activism. Filipino-American Catholics are 3.77 times as likely to have participated in some form of politics beyond voting and those who participate in church activities beyond attendance are 1.95 times as likely to be involved as well. This again is not what Verba et al would predict, however, it does support Lein's (2004) finding in the general Asian American population that weekly church attendance has little to no effect on participation beyond voting. The lack of ethnic association effects in these models counters Lein's second finding that these type of organizations are stronger predictors of participation than religious resources. What matters ultimately is being Catholic.

Filipino-Americans who are Catholic are significantly more likely to be engaged beyond voting. Unlike being involved in one form of activism, the likelihood of being involved in more than one, increasing political engagements, is dependent on religious participation. In fact Filipino-Americans who participate in parish life in addition to or independent of Church attendance are 2.29 times as likely to be involved in more than one form of political activism. Comparing this to the ethnographic findings, it was not Church attendance that necessarily brought members of Couples for Christ to the Texas capital to march. It was intensive resources and the issues themselves. Being involved in these religious groups can lead to Filipino-Americans debating the issues in relation to Filipino understandings and the position of the Church itself. It is in these settings, in

Filipino homes, that an intimate bond is forged. And this bond can facilitate Filipino-Americans ability to share their own agendas and causes thereby mobilizing their fellow members in the group. This may also lead to increasing involvement in like-minded political groups. Reviewing the survey findings presented in table 5 of chapter five, participating in a religious group such as Palitaw significantly ties Filipino Americans to other political organizations (11.11 times as likely to participate in political groups and organizations). Conversely, Filipino ethnic associations fail to link the Filipino-American community to these political interests groups. Religion largely appears to be the driving force for many Filipino-Americans' civic life. Being involved in a religious community shapes not only how they see issues but how they act. Subsequently, being involved in a religious community can also shape how Filipino-Americans understand and build community.

RELIGION AND COMMUNITY LIFE AMONG FILIPINO-AMERICANS

According to Filipino-Americans interviewed in this study, the Filipino-American community is currently faced with a host of issues that thwart its attempts to build community and mobilize some semblance of a collective voice. Where other Asian Americans outwardly appear to put aside many of their differences and form a viable source or sources for community mobilization, many Filipino-Americans in Houston and elsewhere suggest that, 1) the vast ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the Filipino community creates natural cleavages that are not as pronounced in other groups and 2) the divisive nature of Filipino-American ethnic associations has historically been a stumbling block that other groups have not had to face on such a grand scale.

Residentially, Filipino-Americans are also not centered around a single ethnic enclave or business district even on the West coast where they reside in greater numbers (Agbayani-Siewert and Revilla, 1995; White, 1986). There is virtually no consistent pattern of residential or commercial concentration that characterizes larger Filipino-Americans communities in the United States making unification physically difficult. Even in smaller Filipino-American communities such as Houston, relative to Los Angeles, the issue of unity looms largely.

Many Filipino-Americans in this study see palengke politics as one of, if not *the*, barrier to Filipino unity. Ethnic schisms among regional groups and the divisiveness of the crab mentality or pioneer syndrome were repeatedly pointed out by Filipino-Americans interviewed as a serious stumbling block for community building. In fact, recalling the heated blog exchange in chapter six, Filipino-Americans in Houston have failed to this point to build a community center despite over twenty years of planning and massive fund raising among a growing population. Filipino-Americans do not lack the resources nor have they let opportunities pass them by. In-fighting, scandal, and associational politics has prevented them from moving forward. As a result, many Filipino-Americans have turned to Catholicism as a source of unity in their community not just for inspiration but as an institutional model.

Filipino-Americans largely see the institutional structure of the Church as a strength for community organization. Recalling the events surrounding Simbang Gabi, the Church intercedes on behalf of its own interests and for the good of the parish to insure that what needs to get accomplished is done without succumbing to divisive politics and campaigns of self recognition. By establishing clear boundaries, a bond is

forged for groups within the parish and a network of community linkages is opened for these groups to the wider community. At the same time, religion acts as a common bond and source of inspiration. It is an intimate and intensive resource. For many, being Filipino is synonymous with being Catholic. Leaders who hold this view thus depend on a shared sense of religious covenant as they move within and across groups and associations. Hence, community is not often about place so much as it is about purpose and religion plays a central role in defining this purpose for many Filipino-Americans. Religious involvement, particularly in home devotional and prayer groups, can likewise facilitate contact with these leaders as community is being built.

Looking at survey findings presented in table 6 of chapter six, Filipino-Americans who say that they have a personal friend who is a community leader are those who are tied into religious networks. In fact, Filipino-American Catholics are 3.84 times as likely to say they have a close friend who is a community leader and those who are active in church life beyond attendance are 2.48 times as likely to say they are close friends with a community leader. What is more striking is the strength of being a member of a religious group in predicting friendship with a community leader and the complete lack of any effect from being a member of an ethnic association. Members of religious groups such as Palitaw and CFC are rough 10 times as likely to say that they are close friends with a community leader. This does not necessarily suggest that community leaders are found only in religious fellowships. It is in these smaller groups, however, where intimate connections are often made and it is through this religious bond that leaders can be produced. Not surprisingly, it is also within these groups such as Palitaw and CFC that intensive resources that mobilize people into community volunteerism are found.

Survey findings presented in table 7 and 8 of chapter seven, suggest that Filipino-Americans are significantly more likely to participate in increasing numbers of other groups, including charity organizations, as a result of their participation in religious groups. Additionally, being Catholic and participating in parish or church life also significantly increases the likelihood that Filipino-Americans are involved in an increasing number of other groups. What matters is religion and Catholicism more generally. Although these findings speak volumes about the importance of religious resources, both intensive and extensive, to Filipino-American community life, the findings also speak to the recent findings of Ecklund and Park (2007) on the community volunteerism of Asian American Catholics. Ecklund and Park suggest that being involved in the community through acts of volunteerism is somehow lacking among Asian American Catholics. Whether generalizable beyond the Filipino-American case or not, this study makes important strides towards clearing up the picture given the fact that Filipino-Americans represent 68.45% of the total Asian American Catholic sample in the SCCB survey. Simply put, the Filipino-American case may be unique.

Throughout my four years of observation, many Filipino-American Catholics were seen *volunteering* in civic endeavors. In fact interviews were often interrupted or made difficult to schedule due to the busy civic lives of community members. However in interviews there was a curious absence of the words volunteer, volunteering or volunteerism in respondents' descriptions of the various civic things they do. Volunteering for many Filipino-American Catholics is not seen as a formal commitment but to *give care* is a matter of faith and a spiritual obligation to *participate* in community life. Focusing on measures of formal volunteering such as those found in the SCCB, e.g.

Just tell me whether you have done volunteer work for each of the following in the last 12 months, it is likely that the case of Filipino-American Catholics is different.

Turning again at table 8, which focuses on *participation* versus volunteering i.e., *in the past 12 months, have you participated in X*, a different picture than that of Ecklund and Park (2007) emerges. Rather than just 44% of Filipino-Americans volunteering in the community, changing measures suggest that 75.96%, a significantly higher percentage, participate in the same community groups and organization. Whereas Ecklund and Park found that Asian American Catholics volunteer less than Asian American Protestants and messages of civic service may not get conveyed well to Asian American Catholics, this was not found to be the case for Filipino-Americans. Not only are Catholics highly involved in the community, religion plays an important part in mobilizing their participation. Whereas Ecklund and Park (2007) found that church attendance was not a significant predictor of volunteerism, these new findings suggest that attendance significantly impacts community participation. Conversely, table 7 and 8 reinforces Ecklund and Park (2007) findings that participating in church activities significantly increases the likelihood that Asian American will get involved in civic life. Simply attending weekly service does not necessarily connect people to civil society but participating in other church activities may increase both the opportunity to develop civic skills and the opportunity to get involved in the community. A person is also just as likely to participate in the community as a result of being involved in a religious group not affiliated with their church as attending church or participating in church activities outside of worship services.

As members of these home devotional and prayer groups describe it, being involved with CFC or Palitaw is transformative and it changes their lives by instilling an understanding of faith through works. Their involvement in these groups engenders a deep spiritual commitment to work in the community. And again, the sense of community these Filipino-Americans describe is not bound to the physical location in which they currently live. Subsequent ethnographic findings point to the fact that immigrants can be transnational actors. Any discrepancies in Asian American Catholics' volunteerism, hence, may be a matter of place, where scholars traditionally think of volunteering occurring. Religion is one of if not *the* key social arenas of transnationalism (Cadge and Ecklund, 2007). By participating in transnational religious organizations immigrants can access resources not only in their new homes but also in their countries of origin (see Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Looking at the Filipino-Americans community in Houston, this would certainly appear to be the case. The Catholic Church is a truly transnational institution, one which spans borders and influences the daily lives of its parishioners wherever they reside and wherever they have come from (Levitt, 2007). However, as Casanova (1997) readily points out, the transnational character of Catholicism can easily be taken for granted. While transnational studies that have increasingly demonstrated the strength and resiliency of Catholic religious networks across borders in the case of Hispanic Americans (Levitt, 2003; Menjivar, 2003), little to no attention has been drawn to the case of Asian American Catholic and their transnational lives.

The "vacation" accounts of Filipino-Americans involved in Gawad Kalinga in chapter seven, suggest two things about their transnational lives. One, even in

participating in community projects that span borders this participation is not seen by Filipinos as volunteering. Simply put, volunteering *means* something different even in a transnational context. Second, religious resources and more specifically the universality of a Catholic identity facilitate these transnational projects. Whether they are active members of an American Catholic Church, Couples for Christ, Palitaw, or even all of the above, what remains salient across these contexts is the fact that they are Catholic. Additionally, while this identity and subsequent participation in Catholic religious networks facilitates their involvement in the Philippines it does not preclude their participation in the United States but rather encourages it.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study has made great strides in correcting a rather curious neglect both within sociology and Asian American Studies. For whatever reasons, Filipino-Americans have been sorely understudied. Among the few studies that exist, religion is all but absent in the analysis. Filipino-Americans are a vital part of the on-going demographic transformation of the United States. As the second largest Asian American community it is odd that so few studies of Filipino-American civic life exist. Likewise, as the second largest source of Catholic immigration to the United States, it odd that the Filipino-American community is not also seen as a more important part of the study of religion and American civic life. Although this study does not fill in these gaps completely, by focusing on Catholicism and religious resources, it has attempted to tie the contemporary issues that many in the Filipino-American community face to the historical importance religion has played, and still plays, in shaping their civic lives.

In pointing to the saliency of religion in the civic lives of Filipino-Americans this study does not claim to be setting a new agenda but correcting an obvious neglect. This study did not start off as an exploration of religion in the civic life of Filipino-Americans but began as an exploration of the civic life of Filipino-Americans. It is religion that emerged immediately as the most important variable. Religion often matters to Filipino-American civic life and the preceding chapters stand as a testament to the power of religious effects in their community. Although survey findings reinforce much of what we already know about religious effects on American civic life in general, ethnographic data point to the importance of emotion and religious covenant that are less explored and more difficult to analyze in current survey data. Subsequently, these findings suggest that we need to continue to move the discussion of religion and civic life in a more transnational direction and farther away from the exclusive social capital model of Putnam et al much as Lichterman (2005) and others have already begun to do.

Filipino-Americans are not simply rational calculators but people of faith embedded in moral orders that often engender intimate commitments to their community. For many Filipino-Americans, their lives revolve around religious covenants, deeply held emotional bonds to the Church and a universal Catholic faith. Unlike ethnic associations this bond is not regional but universal and can permeate all levels of religious life from the Church itself through parish affiliates and religious groups that stand outside of Church authority. One of the key insights this study has made is in uncovering this relationship and the central role Filipino-American home devotional and prayer groups play in generating these intensive resources that can connect members to their churches and their community.

Groups such as Palitaw and CFC are as Filipino and they are Catholic. With access to a common language and food, these groups are an important means by which being Catholic and being Filipino are conjoined. In these groups intimate networks provide effective and well worn paths of disseminating information and recruiting volunteers for civic life including the various projects each member brings to the group from his or her own Filipino association, parish, church, or personal cause. Unlike the groups studied by Wuthnow or Lichterman, Filipino-American religious groups cross parish lines and draw from members across zip codes. Ritually, the service and fellowship found in these groups serves as a cohesive point around which a Filipino identity is reinforced through interpreting or making Catholicism their own. As an intensive resource, this more lived side of Filipino religiosity deepens an understanding of faith, builds on the values that can forge community bonds, and in doing so provides the spiritual commitment that engages Filipino-Americans in civic life.

Future studies will need to keep the present findings in mind as the field moves forward in exploring the civic life of Asian American Catholics. Asian American Catholics represent a very diverse group both socio-economically and culturally. Coming from Vietnam, Korea, India, and the Philippines to name a few, each group has its own distinct and historically unique relationships to Catholicism. Civic life, hence, in these cases may take on different meanings. Religion may also play varying roles in mobilizing their civic involvement depending on the context and the community. This, I would argue, necessitates the unpacking Asian American Catholics as a unit of study. To understand Asian American Catholic civic life social scientists must understand what

civic life *means* to all involved, not as surveys may carve it up but as Asians see it and in their own words.

Scholars must also seek out and collect better data on Asian American Catholics. Existing surveys that contain Asian American Catholic samples are limited not only in the scope of civic and religious measures asked but rarely contain sufficient numbers of Asian American Catholic ethnic groups beyond Filipino-Americans that allow for cross group or inter-Catholic comparisons. Acknowledging this fact, Filipino-Americans are still the largest Asian American Catholic group, the second largest Asian American population, and are clearly deserving of greater scholastic attention. Filipino-Americans are not civically disadvantaged by their active involvement in the Catholic Church nor are they shying away from civic life in comparison to Filipino-American Protestants. As the preceding chapters suggest, Filipino-American Catholics are leading vibrant civic lives and it is their religious life that not only informs the ways in which they see their community but also mobilizes them in community projects that span countries. However one might categorize Filipino-Americans hyphenated identity, this study demonstrates that they are just as faithfully Filipino and American as they are American and Filipino.

Appendix A

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The Dependent variables are broken down into two categories 1) political measures and 2) communal measures. Although there is considerable overlap in these arenas the measures are discussed below in the same order they appear in the respective chapters. Beginning with the political measures, the nine dependent variables selected are: *Interest in Politics* representing an interest in politics with higher numbers representing higher rates of political interest; *Vote*, voting in the 1996 presidential election (yes=1); *Participation beyond voting (dichotomous)*, an index of three political engagements beyond voting—signing a petitions, attending a political rally, and protesting or marching—indicating if a respondent had done any of the three (yes=1); *Participation beyond voting (continuous)* which measures the same three engagements on a continuous scale with increasing number indicating greater participation. *Participation in a Political Organization*, participated in a political group in the last twelve months (yes=1).

The community measures are as follows: *Friend of a Community Leader*, have a personal friend that is a community leader (yes=1); *Participation in community volunteerism (non-religious)*, an index measuring increasing participation in 14 identified non-religious civic groups in the last 12 months. The specific question in the SCCB survey asks, *Have you participated in X group in the past 12 months*; the groups are as follows: youth organization, parent teacher association, veterans association, neighborhood organization, elderly group, charity or social organization, labor group,

professional association, fraternal group, political organization, art and or hobby group, self help group, sports association, and internet based organization; *Participated in Charity Organization*, participated in a charity or social welfare organization in the last twelve months (yes=1).

INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS VARIABLE

Religious resources are divided into four main areas for comparison: Religious affiliation follows the modified version of the scheme used by Steensland et al (2000) adopted by previous studies focusing on Asian Americans (see Ecklund and Park, 2005; 2007). Given the aims of the study—looking specifically at differences between Protestant and Catholic Filipino-American participation in community volunteerism, and the numeric limitations presented in the data preventing the aggregation of Protestant denominations, Christian and Protestant have been collapsed into one category, *Protestant*, with *Catholic* constituting a second category (Protestant is used as a dummy variable in most analyses); *Weekly Church Attendance* is used as a dummy variable measuring frequent attendance (yes=1) versus less than weekly; *Church Activities*, participate in church activities other than services (yes=1); *Religious Group*, member of a religious group not affiliated with a place of worship (yes=1).

CONTROL VARIABLES

Socio-economic and demographic control variables are measured as follows: *Education*, education measured using a seven point scale with each representing a higher level of education attained—from less than high school to graduate training; *Age*, measuring age in years; *Gender* with yes = male; *Citizenship* (yes=1); And *Income*

measured in six self reported categories for household income—ranging from less than \$20K to \$100K or more. Due to the lack of specification of two categories prior to recoding (less than \$30K and \$30K or more), the complete scale has been reduced to the six point scale used here (see Ecklund and Park, 2005 for similar concerns); and *Ethnic Group Participation*, member of an ethnic group (yes=1).

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Vita

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