

ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**A CASE STUDY OF THE SELF-IDENTITY OF THE PEOPLE OF
LOOBAN OUTREACH CHURCH IN VIEW OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP
WITH THEIR MOTHER CHURCH**

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ABSTRACT

The study of identity is foundational in understanding not only *who we are*, but also *what we can become*. This research examines the development of self-identity in “Looban”, a marginalized, squatter-relocation community, on the outskirts of Metro Manila, Philippines. It focuses on the dynamics of social interaction between “Mother-church”, a large, affluent church from the philippine upper/middle class, and “Looban Outreach Church”, a mission outreach of Mother-church comprised largely of the social and economic bottom of philippine society.

Social Identity Theory serves as the theoretical framework for this case study. It understands that people will do whatever it takes to negotiate a “positive and distinct” identity for their own group, even if it means adopting another group’s identity. To this end, group identity serves to create and maintain a sense of *self-esteem*. The youth in Looban indicate a strong desire share in the identity of mother church, however, their social context seems to keep this desire from fruition.

Philippine social structure is organized as an interpersonal hierarchy of relationships that seem to mimic familial relationships. This hierarchy tends to prescribe and maintain the nature of interactions between differing social classes. Those of higher social class or position function in parental roles as caretakers,

providers, and educators. As those of lower class or position are provided for, they, in turn, owe their loyalty and respect to those who have provided. As mother church has sent leaders to aide in the development of the outreach, most of these leaders have carried with them the strong social identity of mother church. Thus, under the *sakop* framework, the roles and expectations of both mother church and Looban have been clearly defined and static, providing little social mobility. As Looban has tried to negotiate a “positive and distinct” identity for themselves, they find themselves at a split. Are they a functioning part of mother church’s identity? Or are they just a charitable endeavor?

This study utilizes interviews and focus-group discussions combined with participant observation to give an ethnographic picture of the identity formation that took place between these two strongly contrasted socioeconomic identities.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Background of the Study

Looban (an alias, pronounced “loh-oh-bahn”) is an urban-poor resettlement community that lies just outside of Metro-Manila. For its size and large population, very little is commonly said or known about the 171-hectare, government-allocated plot of land at the edge of Laguna Bay. For a number of years, the muddy plain saw very little activity other than the daily deposits of garbage that were collected from around the southern parts of Manila and left to decompose on its shores.

The great migration to the community was initiated by government proclamation 704 issued on November 28th, 1995 under the former president Fidel V. Ramos. This proclamation officially designated Lupang Looban as a “socialized housing project.” From an initial 124 families, a bustling community sprang out of the muddy floodplain with in just a few short years. Many of these early settlers literally built the community with their bare hands, moving to the area from economically depressed sub-cultures in Rizal Province as well as from

the surrounding areas in Metro-Manila including Marikina, Makati, and Quezon City¹.

There is little exact information known about the present population of the community. The most conservative estimates from barangay leadership hold the community's population to be approximately 60,000 people,² however the Asia Development Bank has published estimates as high as 125,000 inhabitants.³

Amid this rapidly developing community, public health concerns and environmental issues have been just a few of the issues that have been raised. Until its closing in 2003, the Looban Area served as one of the 9 major garbage-dumping sites of the Metro-Manila area. The site closed when it reached capacity in 2003. Because of this history, the Looban community presently sits atop nearly 2 million cubic meters of decomposing garbage and it has become synonymous with rampant concerns for both public health and crime. One news article appearing in the *Philippine Inquirer* quotes one public official as saying that Lupang Looban, "has become a sanctuary for informal settlers, a disposal site for domestic and industrial waste and the subject of social clashes due to land tenure and ownership conflicts."⁴ Notorious for such public identification, the

¹ Kito Ramos. Interview by author, 22 September 2009, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Digital recording.

² Kito Ramos. Interview by author, 22 September 2009, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Digital recording.

³Asian Development Bank, *The Garbage Book*, (Mandaluyong City, MM: Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, 2004), 72.

⁴ Jerry Esplanada, "Special Report: Squatter proliferation worsens LLDA garbage dumping woes." *Philippine Inquirer Online* 10 December 2003. http://www.inquirer.net/globalnation/sec_prf/2003/dec/10-05.htm (Accessed 9 Oct. 2009).

Lupang Looban Resettlement is not only geographically “marginalized” on the outskirts of Manila, but also suffers from deep sociological marginalization as well.

Context of the Looban Outreach Church

In 2002, a fire ravaged through a community known as “Pinestra” (about 10 kilometers from the Looban community). Following the devastation, several families took the opportunity to pickup what things they had remaining and start over again in Looban. Many of these families had been a part of an urban-poor outreach ministry of a large, affluent church (this church will be referred to hereafter as *mother church*). As members of the devastated community relocated, mother church took the opportunity and made a bridge to the, now rapidly-expanding community of Looban.

Mission groups from mother church started to hold simple services in the community. They would gather in any open space to hold Bible studies and outreach fellowships.⁵ Their mission outreach became known as Looban Outreach Church.

At this time, the community was little more than a dumping ground in the middle of a floodplain. The leaders would often need to drive four-wheel drive vehicles to navigate the unwelcoming terrain. One leader recalls that there were very few houses at that time and boots were needed to travel down the narrow

⁵ “Mother church Pastor”, Interview by author, 16 September 2009, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Interview Notes.

and muddy path to the ministry site in Looban. During those days, leadership and laity from mother church would hold Bible studies and to conduct evangelistic crusades in the community. At times they would have evangelistic film showings for which they would need to bring a generator, because there was no electricity in the community at that time.⁶

Perhaps one of the biggest changes to the outreach in Looban was in 2005 when Looban Outreach Church took shape in the form of a building. The project was a joint effort between a Work and Witness teams from the United States and groups from mother church. Under the direction of mother church, Looban Outreach Church was given a wealth of resources in staff, programs, and materials such as sound equipment, drums and the basic “furniture” that would be expected to come with the church “package.”

The Work and Witness team spent three weeks constructing the frame of the church building on the campus of the local seminary for the denomination. They transported the completed pieces to the Looban community for final assembly. One of the lay ministers from mother church comments that the building was finished in only three weeks and it was different than any other building that can be found in Looban.⁷ After the building was completed, it quickly became the permanent site of the feeding program and several of the weekly Bible studies for the members of the Looban outreach.

⁶ Pulpit pastor, Interview by Author, 22 February 2010, Interview transcript, 3-7.

⁷ Pulpit pastor, 36.

Context of Mother-Church

The municipality in which mother church is located also has its own unique identity. It is an urban municipality in the province of Rizal with a population of 262,485 people as of September 2009⁸. Although it shares in many of the same economic hardships found throughout the Philippines, it carries a well-respected distinctiveness. The socioeconomic and physical profile for the municipality commends the municipality for its active economy, hosting a number of big manufacturing industries⁹ especially its garment industries which supply demand both domestically and internationally.¹⁰ These industries generate substantial employment opportunities and contribute greatly to the economic growth of the area. On November 9th 2007, SM Prime Holdings opened a new 91,920 square-meter SM Supermall. The mall is well known in the area and has developed into a prime *tambay* (hangout) area for youth and adults from around the area.

Mother church is well-known and respected for its programs held in the municipality. The church's high-end, well-produced, energy-filled youth services attract a few hundred youth from around the area. These youth gatherings are often hosted by a well-known radio disk-jockey, who serves as a youth pastor at

⁸ National Statistics Office, Republic of the Philippines. (n.d.) Population and Annual Growth Rates by Region, Province, and City/Municipality: 1995, 2000, 2007: 2007 census. Accessed 15 September 2009; available from <http://www.census.gov.ph/data/sectordata/2007/municipality.pdf>

⁹ These industries include: The Philippine Automotive Manufacturing Corporation (PAMCOR), Steniel, Fibertex, Capital Garments, National Panasonic, Singer, PHILEC, and Pacific Products. *Taytay Socio-Economic and Physical Profile Guide*. Section 5.1, 2.)

¹⁰ National Statistics Office, Republic of the Philippines. (n.d.), *Taytay Socio-Economic and Physical Profile Guide*. Section 5.1.2. (Taytay, Rizal: National Statistics Office, 2004), 55-56.

the mother church. Sunday nights will sometimes feature testimonies from celebrities who have come to know Christ, along with performances from leading bands and singers in the area. Progressive groups of youth and adults from the area seem to resonate with the lively messages and innovative means of communicating Christ to the equally progressive area.

Amid the progress, behind the shopping and business centers, and despite the growth, the municipality still shares in the reality of the 30% (2003 est.) of Filipinos that are living at or below the poverty line.¹¹ Mother church has played an active role in working among these groups who have been affected by the widespread cycles of poverty. Mother church has involved itself in many projects around the area. Food, clothing, even micro-economic projects have been facilitated by ministry teams desiring to share Christ's love to the hurting people of the area.

The Relationship

Mother church has a great deal of clout in the Looban community. Mother church leadership continually provides for and nurtures the community, attempting to train Looban Outreach Church to be able to do what mother church does. Simultaneously, they minister to the Looban community in ways that address the issues of their poverty, providing them with feeding programs, relief goods, and other ministries while simultaneously interpolating a gospel message.

¹¹ The World Factbook, CIA.gov. Accessed 16 Sept 2009. Found at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html>

One member of mother church leadership notes, “if you want to minister to the poor, it must be holistic—they don’t buy [accept] spiritual things very easily without something that they can get first.”¹² This particular philosophy of “holistic” ministry typically illustrates mother church’s approach to inter-socioeconomic ministries in Looban and other less affluent areas around the area.

It is important at this point to consider what is meant by mother church’s usage of the term “holistic.” To be “holistic” is typically understood to be ministry to the *whole* person. Paul Benefiel, in a paper submitted to the Association of Nazarene Sociologists of Religion, defines “holistic” as considering “the total needs” of a person. To be holistic, by his definition, is not only meeting spiritual needs, but also physical, emotional, social, and other needs as well.¹³

In efforts to be holistic, mother church has not only developed the outreach church, but also tried to help with many of the community’s social and economic needs as well. Nearly every step of Looban Outreach Church’s development as a church has been guided by mother church. This being the case, Looban Outreach Church has remained closely-tied with its mother-church. The success of mother church’s youth ministry, called *Youth Corps* (an alias), has inspired a smaller version of the program at Looban Outreach Church entitled

¹² Mother church pastor, Interview by author, 16 September 2009, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Interview Notes.

¹³ Paul Benefiel, “The Doctrine of Holiness as a Holistic Philosophy of Ministry” (Paper presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the Association of Nazarene Sociologists of Religion, Kansas City, MO, March 6, 1984).

“*Mini-Youth Corps*” which features much of the same music, terminology and catch-phrases that can be found at mother church.

Mother church admits a need to develop indigenous leaders within the Looban community, who will be more capable of understanding the context and sociological themes of the Looban community. Mother church leadership is presently mentoring one young adult perceived to be from the community how to lead mother church’s ministries in Looban. The church hopes that this youth will someday be able to lead in place of the mother-church leadership, although the transition of leadership has been slow and still goes unrealized.

Despite all the resources and energy that have been put into the Looban outreach, the leadership feels that its relationship with Looban is not moving forward. Mother church Leadership notes that Looban is dependent upon mother church.¹⁴ Very few of the members of Looban Outreach Church have taken ownership of the ministry efforts of the mother-church. Staff, resources, and funding have been poured into the Looban project from outside the community; however, Looban remains a mission outreach of mother church.

One youth minister from mother church who serves in the community comments that Looban Outreach Church seems to be following mother church blindly—readily accepting the forms and patterns presented to them from mother church without developing their own identity.¹⁵ Mother church leadership

¹⁴ Mother church leader, Interview by author, 10 August 2009, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Interview Notes.

¹⁵ Mother church leader, Interview by author, 10 August 2009, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Interview Notes.

admits that the Looban community greatly appreciates and accepts the resources of food and support. The youth love the contemporary music at Mini-Youth Corps; however, leadership states that they are not developing into a self-sufficient community. Although, mother church sees Looban as a great ministry opportunity in an underprivileged community, the people of Looban Outreach Church appear to be the receptors of mother church outreach efforts.

Looban Outreach Church is unqualified to be a church on its own for several reasons. District Leadership identifies “the three S’s” which are presently required for a church to be officially organized. They must be “self-supporting,” or financially able to fund ministries and daily expenses without outside funding. Secondly, Looban Outreach Church must be “self-governing,” meaning that they must develop their leadership enough to have a pastor and a full church board. Lastly, they must be “self-propagating,” or showing that they are able to reach out to other people and plant new churches.¹⁶ At this point, Looban Outreach Church is unable to meet any of these requirements. Therefore, the Metro-Manila District Church’s denomination does not recognize Looban as an organized church. It is only a mission-outreach or a “preaching-point” under the supervision of mother church.

Mother church has been in this mother-daughter relationship with Looban for about 9 years. Both the Denomination’s Metro-Manila District and mother church had hoped that Looban could have developed into a sustainable, self-

¹⁶ District Leadership, Interview by author, 4 December 2009, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Interview Transcript.

sufficient church community, but the daughter church is not advancing in this direction. Looban's identity appears to be meshed with that of mother church. Looban has been unable to become a fully functioning church with its own identity.

Research Problem and Sub-problems

Both the Looban community and mother church have distinctive identities of their own. Each entity is informed by its own indigenous values and worldviews. However, the identity of Looban Outreach Church seems to have been ambiguously intermingled with that of mother church. The people of the Looban Outreach Church are indigenously from Looban, but in many ways they seem to look and act like the people from mother church. Thus, this study asks, *“What is the self-identity of the people of Looban Outreach Church in view of their relationship with mother church?”*

This question focuses on Looban Outreach Church's identity and the understanding of themselves that is created within their present interactions and on-going relationship with mother church. This study understands that identity and interaction are both reciprocal and interrelated. The formation of Looban's self-identity is informed by their interactions with mother church. Similarly, mother church's interactions with Looban are also influenced by the ways that they perceive and identify the people of Looban. It is often the case that one's perception of another becomes the reality in which one relates to that other. Thus, there is a vital importance in understanding the way (or ways) that Looban

Outreach Church understands itself because it is upon this self-understanding (or self-identification) that they will live and act.

The sub-questions of this study seek to uncover the effects of mother church's identification *of* and interaction *with* Looban Outreach Church. These questions are as follows:

1. What are the implications of the perceived identity(ies) of Looban Outreach Church?
2. What important values and expectations are expressed by mother church in this relationship?
3. What elements of this relationship perpetuate dependency?

As a whole, this study asks, "how do the people of Looban understand themselves in view of Mother church and what does it mean that they understand themselves in that way? It seeks to examine the interactional context of Looban Outreach church and mother church to uncover and describe the identities and roles that are created in their relationship with one another.

Theoretical Framework

Much of the theoretical considerations for this study come out of the Social Identity approach of social psychology, culminating largely in the works of Henri Tajfel and John Turner.¹⁷ Simply put, this theoretical approach states that when a person belongs to a group, they are very likely to derive a significant portion of

¹⁷ Michael A. Hogg and R. Scott Tindale, *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 433.

their self-identity from that group. They also enhance their identities by comparing their own group (the *in-group*) with other groups (*out-groups*) that are not like them.

A group's identity is formed on the basis of "fuzzy" sets of characteristics that "*define and prescribe* attitudes, feelings, and behaviors which categorize the one group and distinguish it from the other groups."¹⁸ These categories can be any sort of distinguishing characteristics, such as ethnicity, race, social class, etc. *In-groups* and *out-groups* are formed and defined based upon observed patterns of similarities and differences. By making such categorizations, people sharpen their identities as they compare themselves to out-groups, or those groups with whom they do not identify and assign particular identities to those perceived social groupings.¹⁹

A great deal of Social Identity theory has to do with inter-group relations. It is concerned with how people understand themselves as members of one group in comparison with other *out-groups*. Specifically, it looks at the particular consequences of such categorizations, such as ethnocentrism and social stereotyping.²⁰

Social Identity theory also affirms that social planes are not always level. Certain groups carry more social power and/or influence than others. If given

¹⁸ Michael Hogg, "A Social Identity Theory of Leadership 5," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, (2001): 184-200, 187.

¹⁹ Naomi Eilmers, Russel Spears, and Bertjan Doosje, *Social Identity: Context, Commitment, Content*, (New Jersey:Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 1999): 8

²⁰ Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory" Vol. 63, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, (2000): 224-237: 226.

the opportunity, members of less salient social groups are likely to take on the characteristics and likenesses of foreign social identities, for the purpose of achieving a more positive and distinct social identity for themselves.²¹ Groups with a stronger or more *salient* social identity often have more social influence, carry a greater social power, and are often ascribed authority.

Simon and Oakes, two recent proponents of this theory, discuss identity and social power. They distinguish both *conflictual* and *consensual* means of social power. Conflictual power is the power by coercion, which involves one group dominating another and controlling by authority. Consensual power is power by influence. In this kind of power, one group affects another group in such a way that the affected group ascribes power and authority to the group who did the affecting. Most power relationships deal with both conflictual and consensual types of power.²²

In a Philippine context this is particularly relevant. Philippine culture commonly exhibits a high-power distancing between social groups of unequal power. Geert Hofstede defines power distance as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.”²³ Thus, in contexts with a high power distancing, members of low-status groups accept and expect domination

²¹ Turner, J.C. Social influence. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991). 171.

²² Bernd Simon and Penelope Oakes, “Beyond dependence: An identity approach to social power and domination.” *Human Relations* 59. (2006), 116.

²³ Geert Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2001), 98.

by other high-status groups, and will often concede power to those of a stronger social identity. These concepts of power distancing and the Philippine social hierarchy are important to consider in this particular case. The Looban Community and the Community of which mother church is a part are at great variance with one another in terms of social power. Thus these concepts are important in an effective framework for understanding the relationship between the two entities.

In view of this, it is also significant to mention the Philippine cultural value of Smooth Interpersonal Relations (SIR). This concept is defined as a way of going about interpersonal relationships in such a way that it avoids the outward appearance of conflict.²⁴ Almost synonymous with this term is the concept of *pakikisama* which is defined as “concession” or “going along with” another person or group of people for the purpose of outwardly preserving the “SIR” value system.²⁵ *Pakikisama* concedes one’s personal likes and dislikes in order to identify with another person or group of persons (at least on the surface) for the purpose of maintaining a harmonious relationship. At its best, this cultural value seeks harmony with others and with oneself; however, it is also possible that it can force one to “go along” with other particular social conventions at the expense of one’s own identity.²⁶

²⁴Frank Lynch. “Social Acceptance Reconsidered,” found in *Philippine Society and the Individual* Editor: Frank Lynch. (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1984), 36.

²⁵Frank Lynch, 36.

²⁶Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano. “Filipino Values and Our Christian Faith.” (MM: OMF Literature, 1990), 24-25.

One's group identity is important because it both *describes and prescribes* who a person is and how they will act in that society. Having a strong identification as a part of a group is vital in the creation and maintenance of self-esteem, and the reaffirmation of the self.

Conceptual Framework

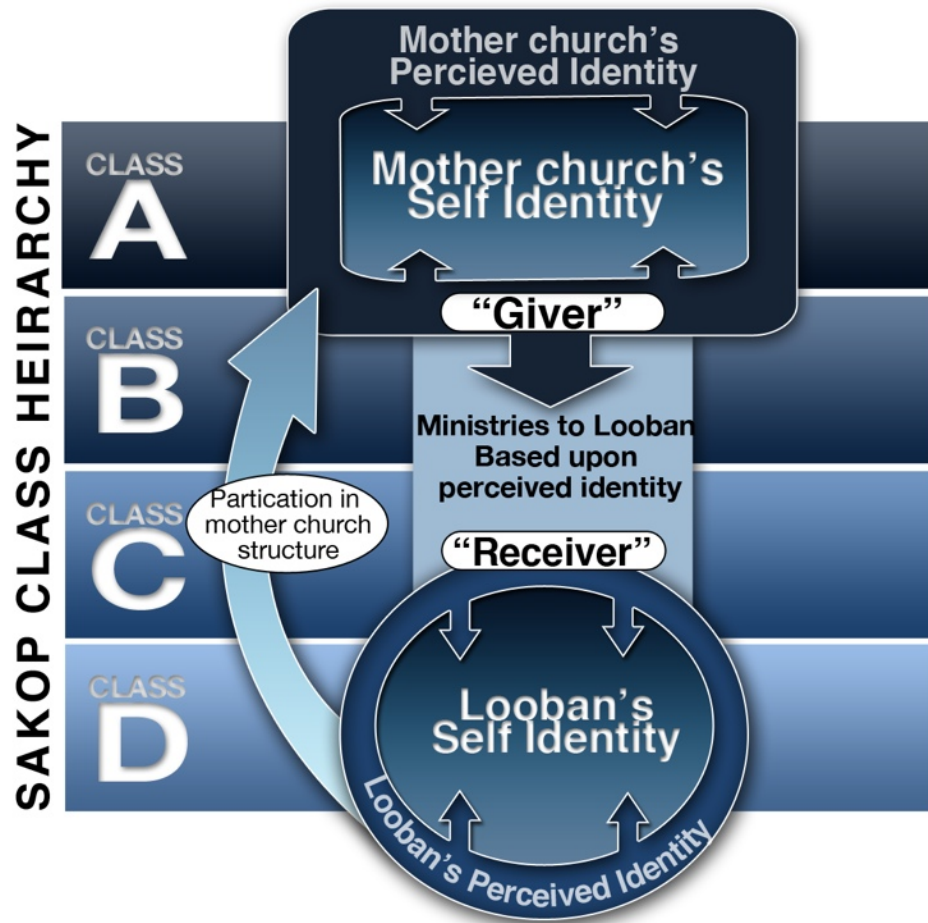


Figure 1 shows the two distinct identities of mother church and Looban Outreach Church. Each group has their own understanding of themselves (Self-Identity). As the groups interact with one another, there are particular perceptions that are formed on the basis of the ways in which the two groups interact with one another, and each group interacts with one another on the basis of those perceived identities. This process takes place within a social class hierarchy which effects the ways in which the two groups interact.

Looban and mother church have their own respective self-identities. These self-identities are the ways in which they understand themselves in terms of their qualities and potential. As these contrasting identities of mother church and Looban Outreach Church interact, *perceived* identities are formed of one another based upon the ways in which the two groups interact. The two groups interact by mother church providing ministries to Looban Outreach Church and Looban participating in those ministries that are provided for them.

There are two identity layers defined for both Looban Outreach Church and mother church. There is the inner-layer of self-identity (how the group perceived themselves) and the outer-layer of perceived identity (how the group perceives the other). There is an interrelation between the inner layer of self-identity and the outer layer of perceived identity.

It is important to note that Looban and mother church exist on greatly differing social and economic planes. In this context, the process of identifying the self and other takes place within a hierarchical class system of *Sakop Values*,²⁷ which tends to prescribe the nature of interactions between these differing social classes. This value system, in turn, influences the nature of the identities and interactions between the groups.

Presently, Looban Outreach Church seems to be living amid two possibly conflicting identities: one that is truly theirs and another that is borrowed or imposed. Social Identity Theorists affirm this possibility noting that individuals

²⁷ Tomas D. Andres and Pilar B. Ilada-Andres, *Understanding the Filipino*. (Quezon City: New Day Publishers), 1987. 56.

can identify themselves in terms of “a range of identities within which contradictory interests are embedded.”²⁸ The question remains, *What is the self-identity of Looban Outreach Church in view of their relationship with mother church ?*

Significance of the Study

The study of identity is significant because it is foundational in the formation of not only *who we are*, but also *what we can become*. Seriously asking questions of identity and perceived identities within intergroup relationships can be vital to the effectiveness of those relationships. This is especially true when undertaking the difficult task of communicating between starkly contrasted social, cultural, and economic identities. Without critically making such considerations, it is easy to generalize or to assign a particular, *sweeping* identity to a given group of people, and consequently fall short in the assessment of one’s own role in relation to that group of people.

It is my personal hope that this study will bring about a deeper understanding of marginalized people groups who are often on the receiving end of outreach and humanitarian aid. I hope that this study will be effective in clarifying a positive and distinct identity for the people of Looban. But more importantly, I hope to clarify the strengths and abilities of such groups of people. It is my hope that their story will bring about a sense of respect for the diversity

²⁸ Simon Bernd and Penelope Oakes, "Beyond dependence: An Identity Approach to Social Power and Domination." (*Human Relations* 59. 2006.), 127-128.

of ideas and perspectives that could be offered by a wide range of social identities. I hope that such an understanding will serve as a tool to better equip and partner with such groups of people so that they can truly be empowered to minister and lead in their own rites and identities in ways that are most effective for them.

More directly, I hope to aid those interested in church planting to understand some of the social dynamics that are taking place between “mother churches” and their outreaches. Looban provides a prime example of these dynamics. I believe that there are important things to be learned by looking in-depth at a relationship such as this.

This study will attempt to investigate some of these very basic questions to aid potential church planters, organizations, and churches to have a fuller understanding of the dynamics in communicating between such diverse cultural and socioeconomic groups.

Scope and Delimitation

The narrative of this study comes from recorded interviews and dialogues that were held January to March 2010. In addition to the interviews, I have sat in on church meetings and fellowships, attended regular church services and participated in activities in the Looban community from January 2009 until March of 2010. This is an etic, qualitative study examining the self-identification of the people of mother church’s outreach in the Looban community. Specifically, this research focuses on the roles assumed and the self-identities that are adopted in the relationship between the diverse social and economic

entities of mother church and Looban outreach church. The study examines the role that the Philippine social hierarchy (*sakop* values) plays in the relationship between the two churches. Also, the study considers the implications of the particular attitudes and postures held by the mother church Facilitators in Looban outreach church and the Looban community. In particular, this study hopes to uncover what of these attitudes and postures might prevent Looban outreach church from becoming a self-sufficient church in its own right.

Definition of Terms:

The following a list of several key terms defined as they will be used in this study:

Barkada - A term for a *Filipino* friendship group used to describe a close, intimate group of friends in which the relationships are relaxed, tolerant, and guided by the principle of *pakikisama*.

Church - A community of confessors who gather together for holy fellowship and ministries.²⁹

Etic Research - Research that is approached from the “outside,” in which the researcher does not share in the direct identity of the context of research. This is contrasted to *emic* research in which the subject of research shares in the identity of the researcher.

***Kasama* / Patron-Client Relationships** - a kind of informal sharecropping agreement between landlords and peasant farmers based on a mutual sense of

²⁹ Blevins, Dean G., Charles D. Crow, David E. Downs, Paul W. Thornhill, David P. Wilson. *Manual: Church of the Nazarene, 2009-2013*. (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2009), 37

utang na loob. This kind of relationship is characterized by mutual obligation and long-term dependency.³⁰

Outreach Church - A group sponsored by the local church or district who meets regularly with the goal of becoming an organized Church.³¹

Pakikisama - a sense of getting along with one another in which the desires of the one are often suppressed for the desires of the group.³²

Perceived Identity – one’s particular interpretation or understanding of another’s potential and qualities.

Priesthood of All Believers - The Christian belief that *all people* who are in Christ are qualified to do the ministry and work of Jesus Christ.

Sakop values - an interpersonal hierarchy of relationships that seem to mimic familial relationships.

Self-Identity - the recognition of one’s own potential or qualities.

Utang na loob - A debt of gratitude; A characteristically strong sense of obligation for gratefulness that is treated with great seriousness in Philippine culture. ³³

³⁰ Willem Wolters, *Politics, Patronage and Class Conflict in Central Luzon*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 24.

³¹ Blevins, 339.

³² Niels Mulder, *Inside Philippine Society: interpretations of Everyday Life*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1997), 121..

³³ Rolando M. Gripaldo, Ed., “*Filipino cultural traits: Claro R. Ceniza lectures*”, (Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), http://books.google.com/books?id=hXJe6vKMjroC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed: January 3, 2011).

Values - the principles or standards of a person's behavior which are at the core of one's worldview.

Worldview – the way in which one understands the world and society around oneself. This is the filter through which one interprets the meanings of actions and interactions with others.

Assumptions:

The present study assumes that:

1. Every social group in human society has its own unique identity.
2. There are an infinite number of differences or variations from one group to the next.
3. Differing groups influence each other through interaction.
4. Group identity is of great value in that it informs us not only of who we are, but what we can become.
5. Group identity inevitably leads us into action in that knowing who we are informs us of what we can do.
6. Group identity and its interactions with other groups are both reciprocal and interrelated to one another.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Foreign Literature

The work of Peter Berger and Hansfried Kellner entitled: *Sociology Reinterpreted: An Essay on Method and Vocation* lay a good foundation for the present study at hand. This small book provides a wonderful overview and reinforcement of *etic* qualitative research. They talk in-depth of the value of standing outside and establishing a greater kind of distance within one's own mind, giving the researcher a greater sense of control. Without this particular kind of distancing it becomes easy for the researcher to become subsumed into the context of the research, which can endanger accurate listening and interpretation of the research data. This work provides some strong prolegomena for this specific research endeavor.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire describes social group interactions, in which he details two major groups: *The Oppressors* and *The Oppressed*. In this social context, the Oppressed seek liberation from there oppression, however, there is fear in such liberation. Rather than seeking true freedom, it is often the case that the oppressed merely imitate the ways of the oppressors, becoming oppressors themselves. This is because the very thoughts of the oppressed have been conditioned by the oppressors. The oppressors have

provided the very system and paradigm in which the oppressed operate. This is described as a kind of social phenomenon in human society. The only way for the oppressed to seek true liberation is for them to recognize that they are oppressed. He believes that liberation must rise up from within the oppressed themselves and provide true autonomy and responsibility.³⁴

Providing a useful theological backdrop for the larger cultural milieu of this study is Rodney L. Henry's book, *Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church*. Henry describes a troubling "split" which occurred between religion and reality inside of the Filipino psyche that usually sees reality as a seamless interconnected reality. This split occurred as a strong Catholicism was overlaid on an indigenous Filipino spirituality. He writes, "Catholicism has little or nothing to say about the everyday concerns of the Filipino. There was no theology of weather, fishing, hunting, where to build a house, or how to cure a spirit-caused sickness. The Filipino assumed that this was the domain of his own spirit-religion."³⁵ This is an important picture of the uncritical intermingling of two very distinct world-views, and the dangerous repercussions therein.

The work of Roland Allen, entitled *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* provides a relevant plea to organized, institutional Christianity. Allen was an Anglican missionary who served in China from 1895 to 1903. Although, his work is over 100 years removed from the world of today, he still has much to

³⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970), 48.

³⁵ Rodney L. Henry, *The Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church*, (Denver, CO: International Academic Publishers 2002.), 11-12.

say in regards to contemporary missiological paradigms. He writes with great concern for an “organized” or institutional missions structure, which seems suffocate the work of Christ within China. He discusses the nature of the “spontaneous expansion” which seemed to characterize the mission movement of the New Testament church, and how that fervency seems to have been stifled in present society. He points out, “There is a horrible tendency for an organization to grow in importance till it overshadows the end of its existence, and begins to exist for itself.”³⁶ Allen argues that the spontaneous expansion begins with an individual expression of faith, following from the “unexhorted and unorganized activity of individual members of the church” that share the gospel truth which they have found for themselves.³⁷ This meant that the church would have to take the *priesthood of all believers* very seriously; everyone was called to minister. The priesthood was not only for the educated and ordained. For this to happen it would require that the power structures of conventional Anglicanism would have to topple, and empowerment would have to go to the people.

Approximately one-hundred years after Allen’s experience of the rapid, spontaneous expansion of the Church in China. A group of missionaries met in Virginia to discuss a similar church growth phenomenon that seemed to be wild, unstructured, but completely God ordained. The group defined these phenomena as “Church-Planting Movements,” and in a book, under that very title, David

³⁶ Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, (Grand Rapids:Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1962), 100.

³⁷ Allen, 7.

Garrison writes of their findings. “Within a very short time, newly planted churches are already starting new churches that follow the same pattern of rapid reproduction.”³⁸ He notes that these phenomena are indigenous, taking place within people groups or interrelated population segments. As a qualification, he notes that this is not a revival, nor is it to be confused with “mass evangelism.” It is not a church growth movement, nor did it originate in the west, rather it is the case of the west noticing something already in progress and trying to figure out what was happening.³⁹ These movements actually seem to have very little interest for numbers; rather they happen interpersonally. A person whose life has been changed tells another of the reality of what has transpired in his or her life.

Garrison and the group of missionaries in Virginia narrow down ten observed characteristics of such movements. Of these ten characteristics, there are two major concepts of *Local Leadership* and *Lay Leadership*. Garrison details the importance of leadership and ministry rising out of the people. He encourages the usage of “unpaid, non-professional, common men and women” in the leadership of churches. Once again, this seems to fall back on the concept of taking our affirmation of the *priesthood of all believers* quite seriously.

One author who cannot be overlooked is anthropologist, Paul Hiebert. Hiebert has written several valuable books, which deal with the intersecting

³⁸ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*, (Virginia: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 22.

³⁹ Garrison, 23-24.

points of theology, and anthropology. In one book, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, he notes the dynamics of communication across cultures.

Specifically in chapter 7, he speaks about critical contextualization and the difficulty of translating abstract ideas into concrete symbols for transmission and conceptualization by different people situated in different worldviews holding different biases and a different identities.⁴⁰ Theology must be communicated into particular human contexts—the mere transmission of a message, decorated to look and sound like the people to whom it is address is grossly insufficient. Without critically contextualizing the gospel, we run the risk of either losing the meaning of the message entirely, or we run the risk of there being additional meaning added to the message communicated.⁴¹

Delving deeper into these anthropological issues of communication, Hiebert writes the book, *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies*. This particular book details specifically various types of societies, describing the typical mentality and organizational structuring that is found within them. He points out the various levels of Social Organization and the dimensions of social relationships as they function within these societies. This gives a useful look at the planes of social reality into which the gospel must integrate, and details these realities within the context of a variety of greatly contrasted social paradigms. Hiebert makes it clear how easy it

⁴⁰ Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1985), 142.

⁴¹ Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 157.

is to miscommunicate the gospel. The gospel must be “incarnated” into these particular human societies. He notes, “Just as the infinite Creator became incarnate as a human to reach finite people, so the divine revelation must take flesh in human languages and cultures.”⁴² The gospel must live in a particular time, place, and setting, alongside of the people to whom it is communicated.

Paul Hiebert continues and qualifies this thought with his book, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* going more deeply into the relationship of the gospel message to human culture. Hiebert notes that “the gospel must not be equated with any particular human context, not even the biblical cultural context.” He writes that it is vital to remember that “the gospel is distinct from human cultures, but this does not set the two in opposition to each other.” Rather, he holds that they are “two separate, yet interrelated realities.” In this, the gospel is understood to be *transformative* of culture. He says, “In transformation, we must begin where people are and help them grow just as God begins with us, where we are and leads us into maturity and faithfulness.”⁴³

The book *Costly Mission* was written by American missionary, Michael Duncan. Duncan worked as the director of a community development mission among the urban poor of Metro Manila in 1988. Through their mission organization, the Duncan’s were able to provide loans and micro-enterprise

⁴²Paul Hiebert and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal Peasant, and Urban Societies*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1995), 370.

⁴³ Paul Heibert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2009), 31.

financing to people living in the slums. Duncan narrates the high social cost of the giving and economic support that they had provided in the community. Most notably Duncan describes cultural concepts such as *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) negatively effected their mission efforts and brought trouble to the surrounding community.

Jonathan Bonk provides a useful work entitled *Missions and Money*⁴⁴ detailing the social effects of affluent missionaries, and the further repercussions of an influential identity tied with the message of the gospel. Although, this work is not specifically about the indigenous context in which the gospel is being communicated, it is vividly about the inadvertent social communication and negative relational costs that affluence brings about as missionaries (or mother-churches) enter into a new cultural context, Bonk summarizes this in a quote from Bernard Quick, “Economic Power is still the most crucial power factor in the western missionary movement. It is still the most important way that the western missionary expresses his concept of what it means to ‘preach the gospel.’” This seems to carry specific relevance for this particular area of research, being that the two churches at the center of this study come from such greatly contrasted economic contexts.

Simply and honestly, John Trueblood writes the book, *The Incendiary Fellowship*. This book dares to ask some very important questions about the nature of church as we have come to know it. Trueblood writes strongly of the

⁴⁴ Bonk, Jonathan J. *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

depth and meaning of what he calls the “Incendiary Fellowship” which was known among the early Christians. He notes Christ's words in Matthew 12:6 that, “Something greater than the temple is here” pointing out Christ’s action in sending out a team of workers. He says that these workers were sent out “not to perform a ceremony, but to liberate and heal. Instead of hiring priests, He [Christ] entrusted the future to ordinary persons.”⁴⁵ Trueblood draws attention to the fact that there was something very basic, very exciting, and very real, that initiated and motivated the people of the early church, and quite paradoxically, it had very little to do with complex organization, great finances, or an abundance of material resources. Rather, this kind of fellowship merely emerged out of Christ-imbued, human relationships.

Trueblood continues to detail what he calls “a contemporary Christian delusion,” which is the thought that somehow a church’s greatness is entailed in its organizational ability. Trueblood seems to approach the “system” of the Christian church from an etic approach, examining the structure seemingly from the outside, yet notably having an insider’s knowledge and experience of the whole of contemporary church practice. He takes note of the social and cultural impressions that have become so deeply engrained into the essence of what we understand the church to be. He notes the incorporation and organization of the vast body of western Christianity and the remaining cultural fingerprints of

⁴⁵ John Trueblood, *The Incendiary Fellowship*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), 9.

Greco-Roman Christianity on the whole of our present expression of Christianity.⁴⁶

Beyond this, Trueblood brings attention to what seems to be a present obsession with “marketing” the church. He describes a paradigm in which the Church is presented with banners, billboards, and advertisements, making the church appear more as a “thriving business, of which the pastor is the CEO.”⁴⁷ The question then becomes, if the church participates in an identity such as this what might this communicate to people living in an area such as Looban? What does an image such as this have to communicate sociologically? He notes that such a business model is an impediment to the central message of Christ.

George Barna and Frank Viola answer some of these questions in their book entitled, *Pagan Christianity?* In this book, they chronicle the historical progression of Christian tradition, tracing the formation of many of the practices commonly affirmed and practiced within mainstream Christianity. This book asks the very forward question: “how much of what we do in religious circles, actually has precedent in scripture?” Tracing the paths of Christian history and culture Barna and Viola demonstrate that a large portion of what we practice comes not out of scripture but out of the surrounding pagan cultures and contexts in which the Christian faith has developed.⁴⁸ This research offers some important questions to be asked of *how we do what we do* and *why*, bringing up

⁴⁶ Trueblood, 16.

⁴⁷ Trueblood, 28.

⁴⁸ Frank Viola and George Barna, Preface to *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of Our Christian Practices* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), xxviii.

important foundational considerations of what the biblical model of church was intended to be and calls into question popular culture assumptions of what the “Church” looks like.

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger follow a similar line of thought in their book entitled, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*.⁴⁹ In their book, Gibbs and Bolger take a present-day sociological approach to church as Christian community. Although, they specifically deal with postmodern cultures, they provide some helpful deconstruction of present church structure and polities, once again calling attention to a more biblically-based, organic understanding of church. In doing this, they take a critical look at tradition and culture, paying specific attention to the human entities that lie behind it.

Foreign Studies

John Turner’s work with Henri Tajfel on the social identity theory was greatly referenced in solidifying the theoretical framework for this particular study. For the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Turner writes an article entitled, “Explaining the nature of power: A three-process theory”, in which he gives a good basic understanding of his understanding of power among groups.

⁴⁹ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

His three-process theory poses that psychological group formation produces influence and this influence is the basis of power.⁵⁰

Michael Hogg is another prolific writer for the social sciences, writing much in regards to identity, which is a large consideration for this present study. In the *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, he writes an article entitled, “A Social Identity Theory of Leadership.”⁵¹ In the first section of this work, he does a wonderful job of differentiating between the various terms and theories within the Social Identity paradigm of thought. His descriptions here provide a clear conceptualization and communication of the key thoughts and theories that have been applied to the present theoretical framework.

Simon Bernd and Penelope Oakes draw from many other areas of research within the Social Identity Theory and develop the “Identity Model of Power.”⁵² They build on self-categorization theory; understanding that holding a shared identity with a salient higher-level group creates a kind of consensual power that is brought about through the identification with that group.

Local Literature

Filipino Social Psychologist, Virgilio Enriquez underscores the importance of the return and preservation of Filipino indigenous cultural values. He notes

⁵⁰ John Turner, "Explaining the Nature of Power: A Three-process Theory." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 35, (2005): 1-22.

⁵¹ Michael Hogg. "A Social Identity Theory of Leadership 5". *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, (2001): 184-200, 187.

⁵² Bernd, Simon and Penelope Oakes, "Beyond dependence: An Identity Approach to Social Power and Domination." *Human Relations* 59, (2006): 105-139.

the common misunderstanding that Philippine culture has no indigenous religion of its own, but that it merely borrowed all of its religious ideas from the United States and Spain.⁵³ Enriquez argues that this is not the case. Filipino indigenous religion offers a strong system of values and cultural moral philosophy, which should not be ignored. These values are best captured in the culturally rich concept of *kapwa* which places a strong value and focus on others above one's self. Enriquez argues that the many invading religious and philosophical forms over the past few centuries have jeopardized these values.

Melba Maggay also writes a similarly themed book entitled *Pagbabalik-loob* which deals specifically with Philippine moral recovery and cultural affirmation in view of the mix of various invading cultural themes. She points out the phenomenon that family and relationships seem to take over as an alternative source of power in the Philippines in view of governmental powers which have often been regarded as “unresponsive, or worse, a monster which is to be kept at bay.”⁵⁴

Throughout this phenomenon, Maggay writes that there has been expressed an alienation from formal systems of power. There seems to be a contradiction between an inherent communal orientation and a certain anarchic individualism in the way that Filipinos relate to power. Maggay points to the strong colonial forces of imposed forms and ideas to be blamed for this perceived

⁵³ Virgilio Enriquez. *Pagbabagong-Dangal: Indigenous Psychology and Cultural Empowerment*. (Quezon City: Akademya ng Kultura at Siklolohiyang Pilipino, 1994. 15.

⁵⁴ Melba Magay, *Pagbabalik-loob: Moral Recover and Cultural Reaffirmation*, (Quezon City: Akademya ng Kultura at Siklolohiyang Pilipino and Institute for studies in Asian Church and Culture), 5.

cultural contradiction. Oftentimes, throughout history the forms and governmental systems have been given to Filipinos, rather than allowing the systems to naturally grow out of the people themselves. Thus, there has been alienation from the “powers that be” and power has seemed to remain within the *sakop* or social/familial relationships.

Melba Maggay also writes *Communicating Cross-Culturally: Towards a New Context for Missions in the Philippines*. Maggay is the author of numerous books and studies dealing with Philippine religiosity and sociology. She paints a very intricate picture of the many cultural and ethnic layers that comprise the Philippines, and offers a helpful approach to communication of the Gospel in the Philippines.

Maggay provides the reminder that “what we say is not exactly what is heard, and what we see is not exactly what is there.”⁵⁵ To a large extent she says that *what you see is what you get*, explaining that people often only see what they have been trained to see. As we approach scripture with this understanding it must be realized that the task of communication becomes incredibly complex, as one negotiates between the *text* and *context*. Maggay then provides a compilation of reflections of particularly notable western missionaries as they experienced the Philippines.

Separate from the main drive of this book, Maggay raises some interesting questions about what biblical training in a particular perspective or paradigm of

⁵⁵ Melba P. Maggay, *Communicating Cross-Culturally: Towards a New Context for Missions in the Philippines*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1989), 3.

thinking might do to indigenous leaders who are being trained for ministry in their particular context. Is it possible that the paradigms in which they are trained might actually train them to see only through a filtered lens of what is presented by the text of scripture, and possibly inhibit them from effective communication as they begin to filter even their own context through that particular lens?

Maggay also writes the book, *The Gospel in Filipino Context*. This book comes largely from the same background as the previous book, but addresses more specifically the issues of what the preaching looks like in a distinctively Filipino context.

Tomas Andres makes an interesting cultural values assessment in his book, *Understanding the Filipino*. He speaks of the "*bayanihan*" mindset, noting that there is a certain cultural value in "being a hero" or "giving assistance without expecting compensation." This spirit is bolstered by surrounding familial authoritative values in which Filipinos are raised as children.⁵⁶

This is a part of the *sakop* value of Filipinos that stresses an interpersonal hierarchy of relationships. In such a cultural milieu, individual issues do not matter as much as personal allegiances to the head. *Sakop* features hierarchical social relationships that seem to mimic familial relationships. Within the *sakop* understanding, the mother is responsible for the children, and children owe their

⁵⁶ Tomas D. Andres and Pilar B. Ilada-Andres, *Understanding the Filipino*. (Quezon City: New Day Publishers), 1987. 56.

allegiance and gratitude to the parents, whether they are literal, biological parents, or figurative societal "parents" such as a mayor, pastor, or president.

F. Landa Jocano also offers a very thorough description of the value framework in Philippine society. He describes the value of *kapwa* or "being on equal terms with others". This value often seeks a "shared identity" with the people in the group of community of which you are a part. Jocano says, "*kapwa* unifies one's self with other selves" meaning, "being one with the group."⁵⁷ The values of *sakop* and *pakikisama* flow in and through this value framework. This concept demonstrates the high values that Filipinos place on relationships and the identities that are formed on the basis of those relationships.

In terms of the present study at hand this carries a particular significance as we question the intermingling of the mother church and Looban outreach church. This particular value would seem to reinforce the issue that Looban seems to be straddling two very distinct identities.

In addition to this, there are numerous books coming out of the liberation theology movement which provide a strong integration of theology and practice, especially as it pertains to social reconstruction and work among the poor. Liberation theology takes a critical look at the political systems that inform and prescribe social life. Leonardo Mercado provides a detailed analysis in a wide range of books and essays. Writing as a Filipino, from within a Filipino context, Mercado makes a great contribution in regards to this study, entitled,

⁵⁷ F. Landa Jocano. *Working with Filipinos: A Cross Cultural Encounter*. (MM: Punlad Publishing House, Inc, 2001.)

Inculturation and Filipino Theology which examines "the process by which there comes about an ongoing integration of the Christian Experience of a local church into the culture of its people."⁵⁸ The ongoing background question of this study will be to critically examine what that means, in the reality of a particular culture. Mercado writes from within the Catholic Church which has become heavily a part of, and nearly inseparable from, the larger Filipino culture.

Helen Graham also provides a very solid Philippine perspective of liberation theology. She summarizes:

". . . Liberation theologians, in their personal contact with the plight of the majority of their peoples in various third world countries and equipped with a certain background in the social sciences have found in the biblical traditions paradigms or models of the experience of the oppressed poor. The roots of both contemporary liberation theology and the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are to be found in concrete social reality read and experienced in the light of faith on a God who hears the cry of the oppressed."⁵⁹

These particular theologians offer an approach to theology that is wonderfully aware of sociology and culture, taking full recognition of the plight of the marginalized, and integrating deeply with the communities into which they are involved.

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano writes *Filipino Values and Our Christian Faith*; in her book, she delineates the balance between the various facets of Filipino culture, and the values of Christian faith. One of these values which is of particular interest in regards to the present study is the chapter entitled,

⁵⁸ Leonardo N. Mercado, *Inculturation and Filipino Theology*, (Manila: Divine Word Publications), 1992. 23."

⁵⁹ Helen Graham, *Liberation Theology and The Vatican Document: A Philippine Perspective*, (Quezon City: Claretan Publications. 1986), 27.

"Brocade, Facades, and Edifice Complex." In this chapter, she describes the cultural predilection towards "splashes of colors and buntings, shows and parades, songs and dances."⁶⁰ This is not to say that these things are inherently wrong, rather she is describing an inclination toward valuing outward presentation, elaborate religiosity and processions. She brings up some important questions in regards to the rightness or wrongness of such values. These considerations are important especially in regards to a possible understanding of why certain "tokens" or symbols provided by mother church might take on special cultural interest for people in Looban.

Local Studies

Perhaps there is no one more appropriate to describe this dynamic tension than Melba Maggay. In, *Filipino Religious Consciousness*, she takes a communicative approach to the communication and unfortunate miscommunication of the Christian gospel in the context of the Philippines. She notes that her study is for the purpose of stimulating more sensitive thinking in regards to Filipino religious consciousness and to move toward "bridging the gap between it and the various streams of Christianity that are coming in contact with it."⁶¹ She notes the phenomenon of how Christianity first arrived in the Philippines, and how what was termed "conversion" might have been more

⁶⁰ Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano, *Filipino Values and Our Christian Faith*, (Mandaluyong, MM: OMF Literature, 1990), 62.

⁶¹ Melba P. Maggay, *Filipino Religious Consciousness*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2004), 6.

accurately described as a transaction in which "Dark-wooden *Anitos* were exchanged for saints with Caucasian features."⁶²

She deals largely with the readily accepted Western modes of religious thought and practice that have found their way into Filipino religious thought. She concludes that truly Filipino thinking needs to be directed towards developing a theology that genuinely empowers our people instead of deepening abject subjection to the powers— whether foreign, political, economic, religious or supernatural. She argues that evangelism must be willing to tap into that underlying animistic cultural foundation which still craves an encounter with the supernatural, rather than a rationalistic encounter with theological propositions. She concludes that such an encounter might not only make the gospel more Filipino, but possibly more Christian as well.

F. Landa Jocano writes another especially useful book entitled *Slum as a Way of Life*. This book is particularly interesting because it is a descriptive study of life in an area which is very near, and similar to the present area where this study is taking place. This particular study was written in 1975 and is centered just outside Metro Manila in a underprivileged community referred to as, "Looban" (a name which I borrowed for this study). It provides a useful description of a great variety of the aspects of living in such a community, from physical descriptions of housing, to the sociological functioning of the street, to gangs, and even sexual practices.

⁶² Maggay, *Filipino Religious Consciousness*, 14.

Jocano notes the strong social function of the Filipino community. The *kalye*, or the street is the social substrate upon which a large portion of community life exists. Jocano goes as far as to say that Looban is defined in the street. It is the central hub for social contact, where communication happens, having as much to do with a person's identity as one's own household. Jocano adds, "the street is the common denominator where alliances begin and where affective links between the different social and territorial units in the neighborhood are established."

This book was also useful in giving a perspective of the strong identity and need for self-identification in a community such as Looban. This was particularly illustrated in the social phenomenon of gangs in the Looban community. Young men represented most gangs ranging from 15-35 years old, often coming from broken families, which were commonly found in Looban. Jocano notes that there are no definite goals around which the prevalent gangs are organized except the desire to seek the security and identity of the *barkada*.⁶³

As a whole, this book aids the researcher's understanding of life within the community. Given the strong social and relational identity of communities such as Looban, the book raises some critical questions as to how communication might best be undertaken in such a context.

⁶³ F. Landa Jocano, *Slum as a Way of Life*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1975), 102-103.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH, METHODOLOGY, AND PROCEDURES

Method of the Study

This case study examines the relationship between mother church and Looban outreach church. It employs purposive interviews combined with participant observation in order to simply narrate what exists in the relationship between the two churches. This study analyzes the thoughts, perspectives, and feelings of both members of leadership from mother church and the lay members outreach church in Lupang Looban. It attempts to uncover the various perceptions that both Looban outreach church and mother church might have of themselves and each other and examine what those perceptions might mean. The study investigates the past and present activities and events of mother church's ministry outreach in Looban, dealing with the opinions, perspectives and feelings involved the context of that relationship.

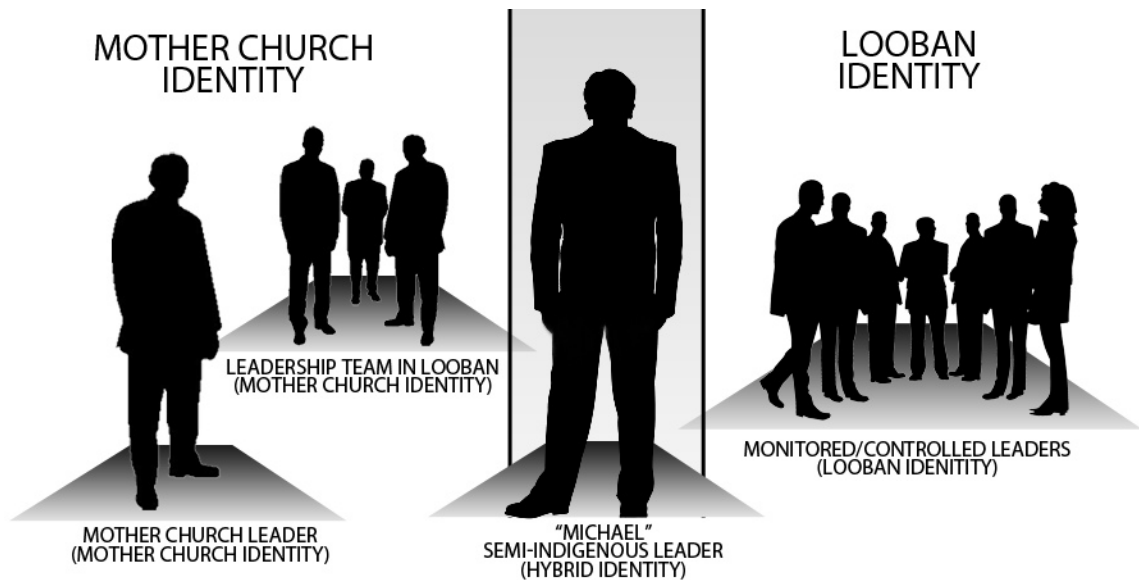
The case study method was chosen to complete this research because it frees the author to "tell the story" of what exists between the two groups. Such narrative allows for discussion and analysis of the dynamics and complexities of human relationships and feelings, which is often needed in qualitative research.

Specific salient members involved in the relationship between the two groups were chosen for an extensive interview/dialogue. The narrative and

themes of the relationship, provided by these interview/dialogues were then joined with the extensive ethnographic experiences of the author in order to offer a fuller, more descriptive picture of the relationship between the two groups.

It is significant to note that this is an etic study. I am not from Looban, and I am not from mother church. I am a member of neither social group. As a foreigner, my social membership is unique. This is advantageous in that it has given me a kind of “social mobility” to move between groups. This has given me the unique opportunity to witness the varied and dynamic images and perspectives that both outsiders and insiders hold of these communities.

Sources of Data



The data for this study came from a careful selection of respondents coming from various perspectives of the relationship. The largest portion of the data for this study was taken from four highly involved leaders in the Looban outreach church. This group of four carries out nearly all of the weekly and scheduled activities of the Outreach Church. Three of this group are originally from the mother church and they carry with them the identity of the mother church. These three were among the first people in the community to begin the outreach there. The fourth member of this leadership team is "Michael". He has lived in Looban for only a few years. When he moved to the community, he first attended services at the Mother Church, from where he took involvement into the Outreach in Looban. He has a hybrid identity and demonstrates identification with both Mother Church and Looban carry its identity.

In addition to the Leadership Team in Looban is a Leader from Mother Church who has a vested interest in the Outreach. He is an important leader from and has strong influence over the decisions made in Looban Outreach Church.

Lastly, a significant portion of the dialogue in this study was taken from a focus group discussion composed of seven monitored or controlled youth leaders of the Looban outreach church. These are indigenous youth who have been given positions in the work of the outreach, however, they are monitored closely and controlled by members of the Leadership team from the mother church. Many of them serve as indigenous Sunday School teachers and small group leaders.

Interspersing these interviews are comments and insight from one important church leader from the denomination's district.

Altogether, twelve people were interviewed from various perspectives of the outreach church in Looban. In all of the interviews, respondents were invited to discuss perceptions and perspectives on the Looban outreach church community, mother church's presence in the community, and their feelings and perspectives on the status and goals of the present relationship.

The second source of data was drawn from the context, which is the surrounding physical, political, economic and socio-cultural environment in which these respondents go about their lives. This is the social substrate that gives meaning and interpretive value to the interactions and identities of the people being studied, and gives context to the questions asked in the interviews.

This data was gathered through extensive participant observation of the Looban Outreach Church communities and among the leadership of mother church. From these observations, I have specifically looked for patterns in the relationship that might uncover feelings and perceptions of Looban toward mother church and mother church toward Looban. For over a year, I maintained a regular presence in the community, joining in the life of the Looban as much as possible, establishing rapport and making careful observations of the interactions between Mother Church and Looban Outreach Church.

Research-Gathering Procedure

This case study was conducted through a series of individual interviews and one focus-group discussion. For the individual interviews, each respondent was individually engaged in a guided interview/dialogue (in English). All sessions were recorded and transcribed. These sets of data were then analyzed and compared among themselves in order to qualitatively assess the worldviews, feelings, perceptions, and self-identities of the respondents.

The focus-group discussion was conducted in both English and Tagalog. I lead the seven respondents in a discussion with a Tagalog-speaker to serve as a mediator. The respondents solely spoke in Tagalog, while I offered my questions and comments in both English and Tagalog. The mediator aided in clarifying the questions as needed. The discussion was recorded, transcribed, and then translated into English, to be used for this study. These sets of data were then analyzed and compared alongside of the individual interviews. The original

Tagalog text of the quotations used in this interview can be found in the footnotes of Chapter 4.

Given the sensitive nature of the interview topics and the possible reluctance to give straightforward answers, the interviews were structured so that the questions were asked indirectly. In order to accomplish this, broad open-ended statements lead the interviews. Seemingly peripheral questions were asked, in order to better infer the feelings lying behind the story being told. This was done in order to avoid leading respondents into giving any specific or “expected” answer that might please the interviewer, rather than directly representing their own views. The intention was to lead respondents into directed, open dialogue, in order to reveal more open answers and underlying opinions as the interviewer and respondent “talk around” the given subject matter.

Data-gathering Instruments

The purpose of this study is to “tell the story” of mother church’s presence in Looban and describe the self-identities negotiated by the relationship. This study will count on many different respondents coming from different perspectives of the relationship between the two churches. Respondents will be classified into two main groups: those directly involved with the Looban community and one respondent from district church leadership who is significantly (yet, indirectly) involved with Looban in order to gain an *involved outsider’s* perspective on the relationship.

The interview process does not follow a particular set of questions, rather this study uses interview guidelines or protocol by which the respondents are led in conversation. As the respondent uncovers pertinent information, the interviewer explores particular statements and sentiments expressed by the respondents, rather than mechanically adhering to a set of prescribed questions.⁶⁴

Both entities interviewed following similar protocols, and engaged into discussion regarding the relationship between the two groups. The protocols for the people actively involved in the Looban community were as follows:

1. Tell me about Looban.
2. What is mother church?
3. If leadership from mother church were to leave Lupang Looban and not come any longer on Sundays, what would happen to Looban Outreach Church?
4. What would Looban Outreach Church look like if people from Looban started the church and pastored it from the beginning? What would Looban look like?
5. What do you think Lupang Looban needs most of all?
6. What gifts or abilities do you see in the people of Lupang Looban?
7. Why are you not a fully organized church?
8. What are the steps for Looban to become a fully functioning church?
9. Where do you see Looban Outreach Church in 5 years?
10. How do people from Looban feel about people from mother church?
11. How do people from mother church feel about people from Looban?

The interview with the leader from the district of mother church's denomination followed similar protocol.

1. What is Lupang Looban?
2. Who are the people there?

⁶⁴ Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 64-65.

3. What are the difficulties of successfully planting a church in a community such as Looban?
4. How do people from Looban typically think of groups such as mother church?
5. How do outside “mission outreach” groups generally think of Looban?
6. What could a church like mother church offer to Looban?
7. What do you think Lupang Looban needs most of all? Why?
8. What gifts or abilities do you see in the people of Lupang Looban?
9. What are the steps for Looban to become a fully functioning church?
10. How do people from Looban feel about people from mother church?
11. Where do you realistically see Looban Outreach Church in 5 years?

The ethnographical observations will focus primarily on the values, worldviews, and interactions taken from the social and contextual interactions of mother church leadership and the indigenous members of the Looban community. These observations will be recorded primarily through careful field notes that will be taken both contemporaneously with observations and as reconstructions immediately following an ethnographic observation.

CHAPTER IV

- DATA AND ANALYSIS

Looban represents many things to many people. For the uninvolved many, it is just another squatter community where the unnameable “others” of Philippine society find their dwellings. For the visiting relief workers following a recent and disastrous typhoon, “*Kawawa*” (*pitiful*) became a nearly synonymous term for Looban when the former dumpsite-turned-community became an expansive lake, as flood waters engulfed a massive portion of the area. Investors see the rapidly expanding community as easy cash, while for nearly 100,000 Filipinos, “*bahay ko*” (my home) is a far more fitting nomenclature. What it is to each person, of course, all depends on how each person interacts with it.

Identity and interaction stand at the heart of this study. These two terms are understood to be related and reciprocal. Our identities are formed by how we interact with the people and world around us, and our actions are influenced by who we understand ourselves to be. Thus, if we attempt to answer questions about the reflexive perceived self-identities between mother church and Looban Outreach Church, we must first examine the interactions between the two groups.

The Relationship Between the Churches

The relationship between mother church and Looban Outreach Church is that of parent and child. The parent looks after the needs of the child, including its leadership and financial support based upon the understanding that the child is not yet capable of taking care of itself.⁶⁵ The goal, in this model, is that the young and developing church will eventually gain independence. Before it can be independent, the church must be able to generate enough revenue to support its own pastor, pay its bills, and maintain its own facilities. Secondly, the church must be able to govern itself, making its own decisions through a church board that it is independent of the parent-church. Lastly, the church must be capable of being a parent-church itself, that is, it must be able to plant other churches. Because of the context of the Looban community, there has been some difficulty in reaching a point where these three goals are able to be sufficiently met. Essentially, the child has had some difficulties in imitating its mother. The turn-over of leadership has not yet happened for Looban Outreach Church, mother church is the parent and Looban is the developing child, learning from the parent how to stand on its own.⁶⁶

Looban Outreach Church began with a simple outreach. This is a typical beginning for most urban poor church plants on this district of the denomination . In this model, a local church will start a church plant by

⁶⁵ District leadership. Interview by author, 19 January 2010, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Interview Transcript, line 45.

⁶⁶ District leadership, 47.

conducting a simple “outreach ministry” which provides something for the community, such as a feeding program, a film-showing, or evangelical outreach program. Once the leadership from the parent-church has made sufficient connection with the community, they will begin holding regular worship services at the site and try to develop a weekly church program with regular attendance.⁶⁷

Once the outreach has formed regular church services, it will be referred to as a “recognized church,” or a “mission church.” This means that the district recognizes the outreach as a church with a leadership and government in development. It is during this process that the recognized church begins to develop its own offering and begins to support itself; however, it is still an outreach--and not able to officially be a church in the denomination.⁶⁸

The final step, and goal of this process is for the mission-outreach to become an “organized church” which is fully recognized by the district. However, this requires that the church is able to lead and support itself. This was the development model used by mother church. First, a feeding program was started in the Looban community. Children would gather and eventually the program leaders would get in contact with the parents of the children. After this, a weekly church service, patterned after mother church services was started with similarly styled worship and preaching, and the relationship between the two

⁶⁷ *ibid*, 99.

⁶⁸ *ibid*, 100-101.

groups began to form.⁶⁹ The hope that somehow throughout this process, the necessary shift from *outreach* to *church* would happen, but it has yet to be seen.

An important leader from the district (*referred to as "District Leadership" from here on*) is in charge of the oversight of "outreach-churches" like Looban Outreach Church.⁷⁰ The leadership believes that the Looban Outreach Church is developing, but not in a way that will be beneficial to both the mother church and the local church. The leadership asserts that the way that they are presently developing, "[Looban] will continuously be a burden on the mother church, and it will create a continuous dependency on the part of the local people in [Looban]."

District Leadership has noticed that leadership in Looban always tends to be equated with assistance, such as the feeding program. In other words, the people who are doing the ministry, giving the food, and providing the relief, those are the ones who are in charge of the church. District Leadership feels that the ability to make decisions is a very important factor in leadership. The District is aware that the people of Looban are often assisting with many of the outreach programs, but the decisions of how much money will be spent, what kind of food will be given, those decisions are all made by outsiders--they do not come from Looban. District Leadership says, "I believe, if they will be given the opportunity to decide and be given responsibility and to be accountable for their actions, then they will develop."⁷¹

⁶⁹ Mother church Leader, 106.

⁷⁰ District Leadership, 5

⁷¹ District Leadership, 81-82.

In this relationship, it is important to consider a few factors. Mother church and Looban Outreach Church are two entities of greatly unequal status and power. Mother church generally represents the upper ranks of Philippine society and Looban is at the very bottom. Mother church has provided land and a building for the people of Looban, as well as utilities. They have staffed the church with workers who regularly provide worship services, food and donations to the people of the community. It is important to ask here what are the outcomes of a relationship such as this? In Philippine society, one almost inevitable outcome in a context such as this is *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), or the feeling that something is owed in return for a particular favor given.

More specifically, the social context of the relationship between mother church and Looban runs parallel to a particular kind of class relationship, called a “*kasama* relationship” which has been deeply rooted in Philippine society since the 18th century.⁷² The center of this kind of relationship was a kind of informal agreement between landlords and peasant farmers. The landlord would supply the peasant farmer with the land, advance seeds and financial help for the planting and harvesting of the field, while the farmer would in turn till and farm the land, often using his tools and animals. In this way, the two would work together each providing a need of the other. In addition, the landlord would often be obliged to help the farmer with his daily needs, often giving him advances without interest.

⁷² Willem Wolters, *Politics, Patronage and Class Conflict in Central Luzon*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 24.

This kind of relationship pivoted on the concept of *utang na loob*. However, the landlord was the more powerful figure, and was in a position to determine the price of the goods, thus controlling the *utang*. As time went on, problems arose in that issue of *utang* kept the peasant farmer in a constant position of dependency on the landlord.⁷³ The resulting cultural phenomenon is a system of inter-class relationships that are based on mutual obligation and long-term interdependency.

This is the social background of the *sakop* values system that is seen in Philippine culture. This system stresses an interpersonal hierarchy of social relationships that seem to mimic familial relationships.⁷⁴ Within the *sakop* understanding, the parents are responsible for the children, and children owe their loyalty and gratitude to the parents, whether they are biological parents, or figurative societal "parents" such as a mayor, pastor, or other form of group leader.

The parent-child model of church planting calls for the parent to initiate, plant, and empower the child to be independent and then move on.⁷⁵ The ideal is that the parent and child learn to function independently of one another free of *utang na loob*, or a socially-based debt of gratitude. However, the present social and cultural context may require just the opposite. This could create particular

⁷³ Wolters, 25.

⁷⁴ Tomas D. Andres and Pilar B. Ilada-Andres, *Understanding the Filipino*. (Quezon City: New Day Publishers), 1987. 56.

⁷⁵ District Leadership, 44-46.

difficulties in constructing a healthy and productive relationship as is ideal in the parent-child model.

The Leadership Team and Their Interactions

The leadership team in Looban (referred to as *Leadership* from here on) consists of 4 members of mother church, who serve in the community on a volunteer basis. The team is composed of a coordinator, a lay pastor, a pulpit-pastor, and a younger member from the mother church youth group who serves as a youth leader in Looban. The coordinator and lay pastor carry a great deal of responsibility for Looban. The coordinator manages the feeding program on Saturdays, while the lay pastor conducts Bible studies in homes, and does pastoral visitation all throughout the week. Pulpit-pastor visits the community once or twice a week ministering and delivering the Sunday sermons on a weekly basis.⁷⁶

The pulpit pastor arrives in the Looban community on his motorcycle every Sunday at about 8am. He is met there by lay-pastor and coordinator, who are brought by a service tricycle which takes them from their home which is outside of the Looban. It takes about 20 minutes to travel the long road and through the dry and dusty--or muddy and water-laden streets of Looban (depending, of course, on the season).

⁷⁶ Pulpit pastor, Interview by Author, 22 February 2010, Interview Transcript, 132.

Worship usually consists of a mixture of English songs (many of which can be heard at mother church *Youth Corps*) and a small selection of favorite Tagalog songs. Preaching is generally done by Pulpit-pastor, who is in charge of the preaching for the outreach. Only recently has children's Sunday School been offered during the morning worship. These classes are usually led by the older Looban youth, following curriculum and direction of Coordinator, who manages Christian education in Looban. Following the services, three Sunday School/ small groups gather: the *Kananayan* (adult women), the *Katatayan* (the adult men), and the *Kabatayan* (the youth). Coordinator serves as the leader for the *Kananayan*, Lay-pastor for the *Katatayan*, and Michael for the *Kabatayan*.

The Youth Leader, Michael (*an alias*), remains quite busy and is in charge of leading the youth and the worship on Sunday Mornings. The other members of the Leadership comment that Michael is unique in that he is perceived as *from* the Looban community where they have been ministering. In regards to identity, this makes Michael quite different, although, is somewhat of a hybrid. Although he lived in Looban briefly, he was initially a member of mother church, has participated in their ministries, been a part of their small groups, and has been under the mentorship of one of their youth pastors. Michael and his mother moved to the Looban area from Laguna, however, Michael only resided in the Looban community for a short while. He has more recently taken employment in mother church.

One member of the lay-leadership comments that the four of them in leadership have been very busy with the ministry in Looban. This is the first time

that they have been able to create a full 12-month calendar of events for the church. The leader adds, “I think the leadership inside the church is quite good.” She explains the process of decision-making for the leadership team; the four of them will talk together and make plans, after about an hour of deliberations, they will come to an agreement, settle, and commit. She explains the importance, in this process, of having open communication among the team that is united with a common ambition.⁷⁷

The coordinator boasts that Leadership in the Looban outreach is better and busier than ever. Following a recent typhoon, Leadership, along with the mother church brought relief to many people in Looban. Leadership counts this as a blessing in disguise, as it has increased their attendance and allowed their ministries to flourish. Leadership envisions more livelihood programs for the community, a school, and a greater capacity to develop the Looban community in the near future.⁷⁸ This would be in addition to an already busy weekly schedule. Presently, on a weekly basis, the Leadership provides Sunday Morning worship, a youth service (“Mini-Youth Corps”) on Sunday afternoons, as well as home Bible studies, a feeding program on Saturdays, and other special events that are scattered throughout the calendar.

The pastoral staff usually wear *Barong Tagalog* or *Camisa de Chino* with black pants as their general Sunday attire, excluding Michael, who dresses much

⁷⁷ Outreach coordinator, Interview by Author, 8 February 2010, Interview Transcript, 118.

⁷⁸ Outreach coordinator, 122.

more casually, often sporting a Youth Corps T-shirt and Jeans. During rainy seasons, the Leadership from mother church will often have to either wear boots or change into these clothes upon arrival in the community, since the trip into the community tends to be a muddy one.

Sunday afternoons in Looban belong to the youth. The youth begin gathering for Mini-Youth Corps at or around 2pm. Not too long ago, these services had been led by a youth leader from mother church. However, in more recent day, Michael has entirely taken over the program, leading the songs and giving the message.

The feeding program has been a long-running ministry of mother church. It is supported through a monthly gift of about 14,000PHP (~\$300) to mother church from a donor in the United States.⁷⁹ Coordinator began working with the feeding program in Looban in 2005. She would come to the community for several hours every Saturday morning. At this time, they had no tents or buildings and were forced to conduct the simple program under the heat of the morning sun. The ministry was small but rewarding. They would put on a simple program for the children and provide them with a hot meal of rice and *ulam*. Coordinator comments that she loved her ministry with the children, “the children were very eager to smile and to form lines to get their food.”⁸⁰

Apart from feeding program and weekly services, Leadership began involving themselves in the community through home Bible studies. Lay-pastor

⁷⁹ District Leadership, 48.

⁸⁰ Coordinator Coding: 16.

was responsible for the development of many of the home Bible studies that have been done in the ministry. He comments that it has been slow development from the time that he first began ministering in 2000.⁸¹ These Bible studies would often be held in the homes of the local members of Looban Outreach Church, often at the request of the Leadership. Leaders indicate that they had some difficulties in operating a ministry such as this, in that there was poor attendance and a lack of cooperation from the home owners.⁸² Regardless, Leadership felt that bible studies such as this were significant in helping to nurture the spiritual lives of the people in Looban, while keeping them connected with the church.

Aside from ministering within the community, Leadership has also, at times, brought the people of Looban to mother church to join for fellowship and special services. Usually during these times, special programs are held, meals is served, and/or donations of clothing and necessity items are given. Most recently, mother church held a "family day" for the people in Looban. About 500 people from the Looban community were brought to mother church taking multiple trips with one van. Several members from mother church met with the people from Looban, played games with them, and distributed donation packages.

Through the efforts of the Leadership from mother church, the outreach has been able to expand. The feeding program and surrounding outreach programs were considered a success as people kept returning week after week.

⁸¹ Lay pastor, Interview by Author, 8 February 2010, Interview Transcript, 12.

⁸² Outreach coordinator, 74; Pulpit pastor, 68.

Coordinator recalls that several of the regular youth present today were products of that very program.

Development of Local Leadership

There is a unanimous indication from Leadership that they desire to see strong leadership from the youth, however they show some ambiguity as to whether Looban is capable of such leadership. Coordinator believes that it will be difficult and take a long time to develop lay-leaders in Looban, “it will take time for a *kapwa-Looban* to believe that God can change the lives of some [of the] Looban people. It will take time--except in the case of Michael. Michael is from Looban. Other than Michael, we have no leader any more coming from Looban. So, we are praying for another Michael to be raised up by God.”

The Pulpit-pastor indicates that he has tried to aid in the development of leaders from the adult men by assigning them positions in the church, such as chairman, co-chairman, treasurer, and so on. Pulpit-Pastor allowed the men to think of the roles through which they could serve in the church, and then assigned them titles so that they would sense that they were leaders.⁸³ It might be important to note here that the Leadership still made the decisions and controlled all of the church's funds, despite the assignment of these roles. Preaching-Pastor explains that he did this so that they would realize that one day

⁸³ Pulpit pastor, 104.

they would be on their own. He has also instructed for Looban Youth Leader to do similar role assignments with the youth⁸⁴.

When asked about the gifts and abilities of the other youth within the community, Coordinator laughed and jokingly mentioned two particular youth who are believed to be especially unfit to lead. This leader then cites reasons, on the basis of maturity, that would make these persons unsuitable. The leader's list continues, mentioning several more inadequate leaders, and a couple who would be ideal as assistants. After some additional thought, this leader is able to name two youth (present Sunday School teachers) who are believed to have the attitudes of a leader.⁸⁵ Coordinator does admit to seeing strong leaders from Looban. She specifies, "specifically leaders with submissive hearts, because every time you talk to them and I name my plans, they are not arguing. They follow."

In addition to this, members of the leadership team list, "cooperation," "willingness to continue what has been planned," and "a willingness to follow commands" as positive characteristics of potential leaders in the community. Mostly these characteristics deal with the fulfillment of the plans of the mother church in the community.

This is a very telling statement made by Coordinator. Coordinator implies that the Leadership is looking for leaders who do not make decisions for themselves. They are looking for leaders who will not stray from the course that the present leadership has set. This would seem to indicate a lack of trust in the

⁸⁴ Pulpit pastor, 105.

⁸⁵ Outreach coordinator, 165

abilities of the people of Looban and a fear that they might not continue in the path presently defined for them. Why look for leaders who are defined by their ability to follow? This seems to be a contradiction.

Coordinator indicates that, given a commitment to the ministry, Leadership is able to delegate work to the people in Looban. Coordinator names a few tasks such as the assembling of children for feeding program and cleaning the church. One of the reasons that Coordinator has an aversion to allowing members in Looban to lead is that they lack confidence or have fears of leadership. She mentions two youth who are skilled in music, but states, “they cannot handle Bible studies, because they told us that they are afraid to teach.”⁸⁶ So far, only Michael has been given the opportunity to lead and make decisions.

One member of the Leadership notes that, as a developing church, it is necessary that they try to take care of Looban’s needs, improve their living conditions, and help them to take care of their families. She believes that if these needs are addressed, and Looban is given sufficient food on their tables, then they will be able to worship Christ more. By doing these things for them, they are allowing them to worship Christ.⁸⁷ This leader sees a great future involvement in the Looban community, including a school and a livelihood program, as well as a bigger church building.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Outreach coordinator, 169

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 147.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 122.

Why Looban is still not ready

Leadership in Looban cite and imply a number of various reasons that make it difficult to raise up a leader from the Looban community:

Looban is poor. Looban leaders have been waiting for the Looban project to generate enough money to support a full-time pastor, but Looban doesn't seem able to bring in enough money in its offerings. One member of the Looban leadership explains that many of the people are dependent upon collecting loose garbage to earn a living, so only a very few people have any money.⁸⁹

Looban is poorly educated. Many of the people in Looban are not fully educated. One leader from Looban explains that Leadership must spend extra time with the people from Looban because of this factor.⁹⁰ He adds that it is important that Leadership preaches to them using the simplest Tagalog, because there are many things that they are not able to understand. He says that, "the words [we use] are the simplest Tagalog that we have, but some of them, they do not understand, because some of them stopped school, and never finished; that's why we need to take time, especially with the Bible."⁹¹

Looban is a big investment. The outreach is the recipient of various funds and assistance from churches abroad, missions teams, and NGO's. District Leadership notes that there is fear that Looban must be able to perform for its

⁸⁹ *ibid*, 45.

⁹⁰ Pulpit pastor, 93.

⁹¹ Pulpit pastor, 99.

sponsors, “If Looban will die, what answer will [the leadership] give to these people who are interested in the development of Looban?”

Looban cannot do it as well as mother church. District Leadership believes that there is a fear that if the leadership would allow Looban to lead, they will not be able to deliver the same results as what the mother church would be able to deliver.⁹² Essentially, there is belief that the outreach would be sacrificing quality of work if they would allow Looban to lead. District Leadership believes that Leadership in Looban have fears because they want to ensure that the Looban project is operating well.⁹³

In addition to these reasons, Leadership commonly cites numerous social problems in the community such as gambling, drinking, gossip, and violence. They mention that this is a part of the “mindset” of the people in Looban.⁹⁴ This is never directly connected to Looban’s inability to lead. However, this perception seems to stand forefront in the minds of the Leadership and is presented as a notable part of the identity of the people of Looban.

District Leadership says that the inherent problem here is that Looban is being measured by a foreign standard. Looban Outreach Church is not mother church. But, it seems that they feel that they need to be like mother church in order to be sufficient for self-leadership. District Leadership notes that they should be measured with respect to their own context. He adds, “we might think

⁹² District Leadership, 89.

⁹³ District Leadership, 110-111.

⁹⁴ Outreach coordinator, 79.

that if they will take the lead--they are not efficient in doing [the work], but we don't know what the people are thinking. They might see [their work] as 'super-efficient' because that is their level. Point is--they should be given a chance."⁹⁵

A Mother Church Leader takes a different approach

One notable leader from mother church (*referred to as 'mother church Leader' from here on out*) has been particularly disappointed with the Leadership at Looban Outreach Church. He believes strongly in mother church's responsibility to train and educate the people of Looban to do things for themselves. He believes that the present leadership has failed to do this and that much of the interaction throughout the years has been "ineffective." He says that a great deal of the interaction between the mother church and Looban Outreach Church has been limited to the feeding program, support, and relief work.⁹⁶ In the relationship between the two groups, "There is a giver and a receiver--and Looban is always the receiver." He adds, "I think they are dependent, because they have been groomed to be dependent; they were cultured to be dependent, and this is the sad reality of the relationship."⁹⁷

About three years ago, mother church Leader set out to help develop the youth of the church. He wanted to build relationships with the youth of Looban, mentor them, and help empower them to do the ministry for themselves. He

⁹⁵ District Leadership, 92-93.

⁹⁶ Mother church leader, Interview by Author, 27 January, 2010, Interview Transcript, 74.

⁹⁷ Mother church leader, 76.

committed to go to Looban every Sunday to hang out with the youth there and share the word of God.⁹⁸ He indicated that this kind of interaction was qualitatively different from what had been done previously. Each week, he would bring some of the other mother church youth with him and they would play guitars and share Christ with the youth of the community. It was not easy at first, the leader says that it took a while for him to “break through” to the youth in Looban. He recalls how shy they were at first. Their self-esteem seemed very low. He recalls that most of his conversations were “one way”; he would talk to them and they would answer back, but there seemed to be very little connection beyond that.

Mother church Leader observed that social class had much to do with the difficulties in his interactions. Mother church Leader and the youth from mother church would often relate with the youth in Looban as elder siblings or mentors, giving the youth encouragement and support. He notes that it was during these early interactions that the people of Looban began to take note of the living standard of the people at mother church in comparison to themselves. “They knew about who we are, about how we are living--you know, our status is kinda way better than theirs,” the leader commented. “I think that’s when they realized how far [apart] ‘we’ and ‘they’ are, in regards to status.”⁹⁹ The youth make reference to the trips that they have made to mother church. They indicate that they are happy to be a part of *Youth Corps*, but simultaneously ashamed because

⁹⁸ *ibid*, 15.

⁹⁹ *ibid*, 23-24.

they feel poor and *pangit* (ugly) in comparison with the other youth at mother church.¹⁰⁰

It took nearly two years until mother church Leader began to see this pattern of one-way, question-response communication to change. Eventually, these awkward interactions began to seem more like friendship, however their self-esteem still seemed to remain low.¹⁰¹ Mother church Leader recognizes the issue of their self-esteem and notes that this makes the delegation of leadership very difficult in that the youth often doubt their ability to lead. He believes that empowerment must come through encouraging them, and allowing them to realize that they can do it too. Mother church Leader believes that mother church presence in the community is vitally important to encourage the people of Looban and show them how to minister, however the people in Looban should be the one's to do the ministry.¹⁰²

Mother church Leader indicates that leadership in Looban should empower the local people to do things for themselves--given that they have been provided with adequate training and education. He adds that the Leadership should have a strong involvement and interaction in the lives of the people in Looban, so that they can learn to teach, preach and organize themselves. Then, Leadership should let go and allow the people to continue using the skills that

¹⁰⁰ "Michael", Interview with author, 28 January 2010, Interview transcript, 336.

¹⁰¹ Mother church leader, 18-20.

¹⁰² Mother church leader, 84-86.

they have been given by mother church to continue the ministry.¹⁰³ In regards to livelihood and community development, he indicates that there is a time and a place in which it is good to give relief, but the more important thing is that the people are trained to graduate and have jobs.¹⁰⁴

Mother church Leader critiques the present leadership saying that they do not fully trust the people in Looban and that prejudice against education and status are largely why they are not accepted. He then gives his own requirements for leadership, and adds a very telling qualification. He comments that, “as long as they have a relationship with Jesus and *they have gone back to work or school*, then they are ready to lead.”¹⁰⁵ The leader critiques the Leadership for their prejudice against the people in Looban, only to supplant another qualification based upon education and economics!

Mother church leader vies for the liberation of the people in Looban. He believes strongly in their empowerment, however he gives a very salient point. His foremost requirements for leadership are having a job or enrollment in school, following their relationship with Jesus. By “work” and by “school” the leader once again implies that their poverty and education stand in the way of them being able to lead themselves. What is mother church leader’s answer to this dilemma? The mother church must help fix the poverty and the poor education, then Looban will be able to lead.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, 78-79.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, 132.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, 71.

The implied message here is that the people in Looban are not able to manage themselves in a full sense without outside help. Before they can lead themselves they must first be able to rise to meet the standards set by the mother church. However, the very structure of the mother church requires well-organized finances, programs and staff, which are not readily available to the Looban community. Thus these resources must be brought from the outside in order to help Looban to fit the imposed structure.

It is important to consider the expectations placed onto the people of Looban at this point. If they are to be empowered, what are they to be empowered to do? The imposition here is that mother church gives the structure, sets the programs, and Looban is then “freed” to follow the course that has been set for them by the mother church. But, what is their destination? If they are given a “Mini-Youth Corps,” what is its end goals? No doubt to be like the real *Youth Corps*. If they are given the blueprints for the mother church’s administration and structure, what will they build? No doubt, they will attempt to build another mother-church. This is not something that they are prepared to do, nor does it fit the community of Looban.

What Makes Michael So Different?

Mother church Leader notes that he had spent years in Looban, looking for the right person to lead in Looban. His search came to an end when he found Michael (who currently is the youth leader in Looban). He says that, with Michael, he knew “this is the person.” Michael was perceived to be from Looban,

but had already been attending church at mother church.¹⁰⁶ Michael recalls that it was the mother church Leader who “fully integrated” him into the life of the mother-church. Michael started attending Youth Corps and before long, Michael was also a part of the small group ministry at mother church. Membership in this ministry is requisite for people who wish to be in leadership at *Youth Corps*. Michael faithfully attended both of these ministries, and became a part of the youth group at mother church.

Several of the Leadership cite Michael as standing out among the other Looban youth. They indicate that Michael is unique, and “has a different kind of life from the ordinary Looban youth,” they cite that he “is working for his family,” he is putting himself through school, he is respected by the other youth, and he does not join with *barkadas* (tight social grouping) in Looban.¹⁰⁷

Michael is doing something that many of the youth in Looban have not been able to do. He is living outside of the perceived identity that it commonly held for the other youth in Looban. Michael carries a different social identity from the other youth. The Leadership points out that Michael did not join with the *barkadas* in Looban. This indicates that Michael might not have had strong relationships or a solid identification with Looban at the beginning. Michael confirms that he had an early dissociation from the Looban community. He did not want to attend church in Looban, because it was a slum area and he did not like the community when he first moved there. Michael recalls that he knew

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Outreach coordinator, 158.

about the church which met in Looban, but he notes, “I didn’t like going to church there in Looban because it is *pangit* (ugly),” citing the broken shacks and the people standing by, playing cards and discussing with one another.¹⁰⁸ It was on the basis of his dissociation from the Looban community, that he began attending church at mother church.

This is another important factor to consider, unlike the other youth in Looban, Michael did not start at Looban Outreach Church. Before ever entering the church in Looban, Michael was a member of the youth group at mother church.¹⁰⁹ He started attending mother church in Taytay, shortly after moving to the Looban area from Laguna.¹¹⁰ It was during this time that the Looban lay-pastor and coordinator noticed Michael, and began to build a relationship with him. Michael says, “They introduced themselves to me and tried to build their rapport.” He notes that he was not aware of it at the time, but they were starting to “disciple” him to lead in Looban.¹¹¹ At mother church, Michael became involved in *Youth Corps* as well as the *Youth Corps* small-group ministry at mother church. Michael’s membership in this small group ministry is significant in that it serves as the training ground for all *Youth Corps* leaders. Membership in these small groups is required for all potential youth leaders at mother church.

¹⁰⁸ “Michael”, 39.

¹⁰⁹ A common term used for someone who is a regular attender of *Youth Corps*.

¹¹⁰ “Michael”, 38

¹¹¹ “Michael”, 50.

One great factor that made Michael so different was that he did not carry the common identity of Looban, rather, he had taken on the identity of the mother church--at least to some extent.. Michael kept regular attendance in the programs and services at the mother-church, joined in its small groups, and had been taken under the mentorship of one of their pastors. It is possible that what made Michael ideal for leadership, was his likeness and identification with the image and structure of the mother church.

This is significant in that Michael did not initially see himself as coming from Looban. Michael had only recently moved to the area, so his identity was not strongly that of either Looban or the mother church. Because of Michael's ambiguous identification, he was given a social mobility that the other Looban Youth, would not have been able to have. Michael was able to at least marginally identify himself with both the mother church and with Looban and thus it was possible for him to "pass" as a potential leader.

Michael Starts His Ministry in Looban

On August 6, 2006, Looban Outreach Church celebrated its first service in the new building. This was Michael's first time to attend church in the Looban community. Michael indicates that he was immediately asked to be involved with the work in Looban. He started his ministry in Looban Outreach Church by managing the overhead projector during worship services. Michael notes that it was in these early days of standing in front of the church that he was deeply affected. He had been reading his Bible and listening to the words of the songs.

He notes that it was during one of those moments that he was standing before the church, singing and managing the transparencies, that God spoke to him, and he began to cry. Michael recalls, “I think that, at that moment, God spoke to me clearly, saying ‘that was you before’ and ‘this is you now’ and I felt comforted. Maybe that is the reason that I kept on going.”¹¹² Michael notes that what happened during that service was something that had been building between he and God--something that was not directly connected with the service itself or with the ministers of the church.¹¹³

Along with Michael, mother church Leader was able to start a new Sunday Afternoon youth service in Looban Outreach Church, called “*Mini-Youth Corps.*” mother church Leader indicates that he leads by example. At first, He would lead the youth gatherings, preach, and play the guitar during worship, while Michael served as the song leader. He served as the leader of the gatherings for some time before he and Michael “swapped places.” Mother church Leader recalls that, at first, Michael was uncomfortable with standing in front and speaking because mother church Leader was there listening. The youth leader reassured him, “I’m here. I’m your *kuya* (older brother), your mentor. You don’t have to be shy.” Mother church Leader recalls that after Michael would finish giving the message, he would always complement him and then give him some tips on public speaking and structuring his sermons. Mother church Leader also trained Michael how to take down notes from sermons and how to lead devotions.

¹¹² *ibid*, 71.

¹¹³ *ibid*, 72.

Eventually, this led to Michael taking some subjects at the bible school extension which met at mother church.¹¹⁴

“Modeling Leadership” for Looban

Mother church Leader’s approach to leadership seems to fit well within the ideals of leadership described by the District Leadership. District Leadership suggests that the mother church should “little by little” expose the people of Looban to the leadership, so that they feel that they are in control, noting the importance that they feel that control is coming from within the community, rather than from the outside.¹¹⁵ The mother church Leader sees a great importance in modeling leadership, teaching and training the people of Looban to do the ministry. Mother church Leader notes that he is committed to empowering the youth for leadership, and helping them to see that they can to it too.

As a part of the developing relationship between the youth of Looban and mother church, the mother church Leader would often bring the large yellow cargo truck from mother church into the Looban community so that after the *Mini-Youth Corps* meeting, the youth could load into the truck and attend the main *Youth Corps* at mother church. Mother church Leader and the Looban missionaries seem to be in agreement that these kind of excursions are useful in

¹¹⁴ Mother church leader, 48-49.

¹¹⁵ District Leadership: 39-40.

building a strong relationship between mother church and Looban Outreach Church.

The Looban youth indicate that they greatly enjoy going to *Youth Corps*, however they indicate that it is a mixture of joy and envy. Many of these youth consider *Youth Corps* to be their “inspiration” in what they do at Looban Outreach Church. The Looban youth want to be able to replicate the style of mother church, but they are not fully able to. One youth admits, “one of the reasons that I go to *Youth Corps* is to get their style and to learn how they do what they do and why there are so many people going there, but they are not answering my questions of how they do things. I want to know what they are doing to have so many youth.”¹¹⁶ This comparison of abilities and seeming inabilities leads to envy in the youth. One comments, “it creates in us envy because their program is well done, and they are doing things well, like how they play music.”¹¹⁷

Whether they have intended it or not, mother church has set a particular standard for ministry. The implication here is that the youth are coming to mother church to see how to do the ministry and it is this implied standard that they are following at Looban Outreach Church. The youth openly comment that

¹¹⁶ Focus group of 10 Looban youth, Interview by Author. 14 April 2010, Interview Transcript. 15.

Original Tagalog: “*isa sa mga hangarin ko kung bakit ako nag-je-Youth Corps ditto kasi kumukuha rin ako ng style nila kung paano yungj ano, kung paano yung ginawa nila kung bakit nagging ganoon karami yung ano, minsan tinatanong ko yung ibang ano kasi iba yung sinasagot sa akin e, hindi ako sinasagot ng mga tinatanong ko e. Kaya ayun, gusto ko malaman sana kung ano yung ginawa nila bakit nagging ganoon karami iyong youth nila.*”

¹¹⁷ Focus group of 10 Looban youth, 13.

Original Tagalog: *Parang nakakainggit kasi parang maayos naka program lahat ng ginagawa nila mas maganda iyong tugtugan siempre mga music lover maganda talaga.*

Youth Corps is their inspiration, they state that they go to mother church to get their style.¹¹⁸

Let us return for a moment to Social Identity Theory. It is natural that people organize themselves into individual groupings, based upon similarities in characteristics, which serve to increase their *self-esteem*.¹¹⁹ *Self-esteem* is an important concept here, simply for the fact that mother church has much, and Looban Outreach Church has very little. Social Identity theory also affirms that people will do whatever it takes to negotiate a “positive and distinct” identity for their own group, even if it means adopting someone else’s identity. The youth in Looban indicate an attempt at such a shift in identity. They would like to join and be a part of the more salient social identity, but they cannot do it fully.

Michael “Connects”

Michael offers something unique. There is a mutuality in the way that he relates with the youth in the community. At the same time, he indicates somewhat of an ideological separation from the goals of mother church in his leadership of the youth, and is very clear in asserting his identity apart from the Leadership.¹²⁰ He indicates that much has changed within *himself* from those early days when he was attending mother church. Before he started working in

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 13.

¹¹⁹ Michael Hogg. "A Social Identity Theory of Leadership 5". *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, (2001): 184-200, 187.

¹²⁰ “Michael”, 135.

Looban, he recalls that he avoided Looban Outreach Church altogether (even though his mother lived there) because of the low-status of the community. He notes that God put compassion in his heart to feel what the youth in Looban feel, to live like them, to share and to help physically. He notes that he used be full of pride, but it has lessened through his work in the Looban Community.

Michael critiques the leadership style of the Leadership noting that they have a strong tendency to be very controlling. “[Lay-pastor] just keeps on commanding the youth, ‘kailangan gantio, kailangan ganito’ (you have to do this, you have to do that). This troubles Michael, because he fears that young christians will see this kind of behavior from the more mature christians, and they will think that it is proper behavior. Michael indicates that he is troubled by the example that this leadership style might be setting. He comments that the people in Looban automatically think that whatever mother church does is the best thing for them. They expect that everyone who comes from mother church is skilled in what they do and are equipped in God’s word, “but they are wrong,”¹²¹ he adds. Michael quite frankly states that it all comes down to a matter of respect for the people in Looban.

Michael notes that he does not point his youth to the leadership of the church, but he points them to God. Michael counsels, “you know you don't have to look up to people, to the ministers, or even to me; you just need to look up to God and pray, read his word and God will bless you.” Michael notes that many people seem to naturally follow the people of mother church, assuming that they

¹²¹ “Michael,” 315.

know best. He indicates that they do this because of the differences in social position; because the people of mother church are from a higher social class, they are automatically assigned respect. He indicates this social structuring is the reason for their low-self esteem.¹²²

Michael sees a lot of leadership potential coming from the youth in Looban. He states this frankly and without a moment's hesitation. Just as plainly, he admits that the leadership from mother church do not see that potential. In regards to the youth's capabilities for leadership, he responds, "I think [they can], because it emanates." He believes that their leadership abilities are demonstrated by their actions, and by the passion with which they serve. Immediately Michael launches into a story about one of the youth. "Like Lenny, he is a speechless person (he is shy, speaks very little). He doesn't talk well or keep on speaking, but when he speaks. . . everybody listens." Michael recounts a particular instance in which a conflict had arisen between the youth and the Leadership of the church, regarding how funds would be spent. The Leadership had one opinion and the youth had another, at that moment this particular youth, one who usually never speaks, spoke up and offered some common grounds on which the two groups could agree. He settled everything with just a few words.¹²³ Michael adds, "And I know that they are blessed with Lenny."

As for the abilities and maturity of the other youth. Michael seems to nearly get lost in telling stories of their qualities. "And I saw a very good thing in

¹²² *ibid*, 305.

¹²³ *ibid*, 184.

Herbie,” Michael continues, “He is really obedient to God. You know what happened to him? His brother is in jail and he is really hurt because of that. He feels so sad. On top of that, his brother’s wife just died. He has been carrying all of the burden.”¹²⁴ Michael recalls the previous Sunday when Herbie stood up to speak in church. He tells that Herbie began to open up to the church, telling the biblical story of Job, referencing all of the tests and trials that he had been experiencing in his life. Herbie began, “I really thank God that I have been here in this church,”¹²⁵ and he told everyone that he saw love there. Herbie exhorted the congregation from the story of his life and told the crowd that they must all be like Job and remain faithful to God even when it feels that we are carrying all of the burdens in the world. Michael recounts, “I think that was not just a testimony--it was a sermon--because he explained why it happened, why God allowed it [to happen] in order to make us stronger. He allows [things like this] to test if we really trust him.”¹²⁶ Michael warmly reminisced about the spiritual maturity that he had seen in his friend, “and at that moment that he spoke to us teary-eyed, and then when he sat down, he cried. Michael recalls many times that the two of them have shared with one another, they would always close in prayer. “My heart broke every time that I talked to him,” Michael said “because I could feel the experience in him, and I cried. I cried, a lot.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ *ibid*, 188.

¹²⁵ *ibid*, 194.

¹²⁶ *ibid*, 196.

¹²⁷ *ibid*, 198.

During one of their meetings together, Herbie said to Michael, “you know, *Kuya* Michael, I don’t know why I am here. You know, I don’t know why I am still here. Even though, I don’t have money, I don’t get anything from this church, but I am still here.”¹²⁸ Michael then turned to Herbie and said that it was because of God’s Love that he came and continued to come. Michael recalls, that at that moment Herbie slowly bowed his head in silence. As Herbie’s hand began to clench into a tight fist, Michael saw the tears beginning to fall to the table. “Shocking,” Michael recalls, “Herbie did the very, very good cry--from deep within--the table was almost completely wet.” As he recalled the stories of the young people in his group he kept interjecting how blessed he was with each one.

Michael has also been building a fruitful relationship with one new youth at Looban Outreach Church who struggles with gender identity issues. Michael notes a particular softness in this young person’s heart and a sensitivity to God. He notes that transformation is becoming evident in his life. Michael comments, “[He] is Amazing. Every night, he keeps on sleeping in the church, because he wants to read the Bible every night.”¹²⁹

Michael recalls one particular conversation that he had with this youth. The youth had texted Michael asking, “*Kuya* Michael, How can I have faith in God? You see, I keep committing all these sins. Will God forgive me?”¹³⁰ Michael notes that he was blessed to be asked such a question. He is blessed that the

¹²⁸ *ibid*, 217.

¹²⁹ *ibid*, 224.

¹³⁰ Original: “*Mapapatawad paba ako ng diyos?*” “*kasi nagagawa---maraming din naman akong nagagawang kasalanan.*”

youth entrust him with the struggles of their spiritual lives. Michael says that he was blessed because he can see that there is a real change in in this youth. He is feeling a conviction that was not there before. “Michael texted him saying, “. . .God can forgive every sin, as long as we repent and we ask for forgiveness within--deep within our heart.”¹³¹ He has asked them to start journaling, and they talk and share together about what is going on in their lives.

Michael’s approach is different. He has connected with the youth of Looban in a way that no other leader from mother church has been able to connect. He sees strong leadership qualities in the youth of Looban as they are now. He tells them that they are the channel through which God’s can bless others.¹³² This is significant because it focuses on the youth as the doers and the ministers. They are the ones through whom God’s blessing is known--rather than placing that identity on the leadership. He cites the qualities of their passion, their genuineness, and their love, which he believes makes them ready to lead themselves. He does not seem to refer to the mother church for leadership and development.

Michael is greatly pleased with the honesty and openness of the people that he has encountered in Looban. Over and over he comments on how blessed he is by the youth in the community. He cites a time when he told the youth, “You know guys, you think that I am the blessing for all of you, but you’re wrong.

¹³¹ “Michael”, 219.

¹³² “Michael,” 215.

You are all the blessing for me.”¹³³ It is because of these relationships that he continues to minister in Looban. He adds that he cannot find relationships he has found in Looban at mother church. He comments, “They (mother church) have money, they have everything, but I feel the compassion, the passion of being a Christian here in Looban. Every time I talk to the youth, I cry. Actually, I told God, ‘Lord, even though you gave me this responsibility--a very huge responsibility, I don’t doubt to obey. Because of them, I am blessed. I am really blessed.”¹³⁴ He notes that he would much rather serve in Looban than at the mother church.

Michael indicates a particular sense of pride in the qualities of the people in Looban, however, the youth do not seem to see the same qualities in themselves in comparison with the mother church. The Looban youth greatly admire the people from mother church. They especially admire the passion, organization, and talent that goes into the *Youth Corps* program. Reciprocally, they comment on their own inabilities to produce such a program. They very readily note that people from mother church are “respectable.”¹³⁵ However, they often find it difficult to really connect with the youth at mother church and sometimes they even feel rejected.¹³⁶

¹³³ *ibid*, 256.

¹³⁴ *ibid*, 250.

¹³⁵ Original: “*titignan mo yung mga tao doon talagang karespe-respeto*”

¹³⁶ Focus group of 10 Looban youth, 147-150.

The youth seem to readily defer their identity as a church to mother church, indicating that Looban is only a piece of the mother-church. Oftentimes, it seems that the youth are unable to talk about Looban, without also comparing themselves to mother church. One youth directly comments, “mother church is the main [vine] of Looban and Looban is its branch. Looban still can’t stand on its own, so it depends on mother church.”¹³⁷

The youth indicate that in order for Looban to stand on its own, it must be able to do what the mother church is doing. Mother church is the church model for Looban Outreach Church, however, Looban is unable to be like the mother church because they lack the resources, namely money. One male in the group comments, “mother church supports Looban because the people in Looban can’t run the church yet, they can’t do it yet, and mother church helps Looban grow.”¹³⁸ One youth indicates that mother church built a branch of itself in Looban for the purpose of “helping people and saving them and so that many people can go to church.”¹³⁹

The youth indicate doubt in their ability to stand on their own for several reasons. One significant reason is that they lack money. They cite issues such as the inability to pay for the church’s electric bill, and so forth. They indicate that it

¹³⁷ Focus group of 10 Looban youth, 21.

Original Tagalog: *Kasi iyong ano e, mother church diba, iyon ang main ng Looban, tapos branch lang iyong Looban, kasi iyong Looban hindi niya pa kayang mag-isa, tapos dumedepende pa siya doon sa main.*

¹³⁸ Original Tagalog: *mother church iyong tumutulong sa Looban iyong parangsumosoporta, kasi iyong tao sa Looban hindi pa nila kayang magsarili na sila na iyong magpatakbo ng church, hindi pa nila kaya iyon.*

¹³⁹ *ibid*, 45.

is their lack of money that keeps them from growing. One youth comments, “what makes mother church grow is their money and their offering.”¹⁴⁰ Aside from money, several of the youth indicate that large attendance is prerequisite to becoming a church on their own. Mother church has provided feeding programs and relief work which has generated a large attendance for the church. Looban youth indicate that without mother church, this attendance would not be possible, and the ministry in Looban would not be able to stand on its own.

The youth are aware of the implied requirements for standing on their own, but they are often frustrated with their own abilities at meeting these requirements. The youth note that they are markedly less organized than mother church. The comment that they lack unity and are “lazy” at times.¹⁴¹ They note that they sometimes have devotions scheduled for 6, but no one shows up until 7:30. Looban youth comment that they get frustrated with one another when they are not able to maintain such organization. However, they add, “something good is also happening; when we are together, we have bonding, and we get to understand each other why one can’t attend and we correct the negative thoughts we had of one another.”¹⁴² Another youth comments, “Yes, it can stand,” he says. “If [mother church] is gone, of course [Looban] Church would ‘lie low’, but it’ll

¹⁴⁰ “Michael”, 102-103.

¹⁴¹ Focus group of 10 Looban youth, 183.

¹⁴² Focus group of 10 Looban youth, 179.

Original: *pero mayroon ding magandang nangyayari kung magkakasama kami. Kasi pag nagkakasama kami nagkakaroon kami ng bonding-bonding nalalaman namin yung mga dapat, parang naiintindihan namin yung mga dahilan niya kung bakit siya nagiging ganoon. O, nagkakaintindihan kami kung minsan kasi nga nagkakausap-usap kami na minsan nakikita namin bakit kaya ‘di nakaattend si ganito na minsan nag-iisip agad kami ng mali para sa kanya, negatibo para sa kanya.*

keep pushing even though it's hard. It is hard, but it can be done.”¹⁴³ One youth concludes, “I can see in the youth that we are happy when we are together and that is what we want.”¹⁴⁴

Several of the youth were appointed as “leaders” to teach children’s Sunday school classes and lead their own Bible studies.¹⁴⁵ Michael and these youth have kept regular fellowship together. They indicate that something genuine and of their own identity is developing among them. One youth narrates:

“before knowing the Lord while I was still in the province, my life was very different from now, because I hadn’t yet realized what God’s plan for me was. But, when I went to the Church, I realized slowly that I can teach children, or I can lead a Bible study, things like that. I realized I can share the word of God to other people. Before, I was ashamed to carry the Bible. That’s why my life was different before, because I have really gotten to know the Lord in the Church. I really cry hard whenever we pray, and I tell the Lord: ‘Lord, please take control of my life, develop in me what I can do to serve you.’ I said that and it’s like the doors are being opened so I can serve Him more. There is happiness in serving Him with friends whom

¹⁴³ *ibid*, 113.

Original: *pag nawala iyong mother church syempre iyong Looban Outreach Church talagang mag la-lie low lie low yan pero pipilitin pang bumangon kahit na mahirap kakayanin.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, 181.

Original: *nakikita ko lang sa mga youth masaya lang kami ‘pag magkakasama kami at pag iyong hangarin namin iisa lang...masaya.*

¹⁴⁵ “Michael”, 198.

you know are concerned for you.”¹⁴⁶

Many of the youth tell similar stories, indicating a firm faith in God, good deal of capability to lead among themselves, and comfort in the support of the fellowship that surrounds them. However, when they are asked about Looban’s ability to be a church apart from mother church, their self-concept seems to immediately lessen. They seem to realize that something good is happening in their midst, yet, forefront in their analysis of themselves is the fact that that they still do not match up with the abilities of mother church. Michael also indicates that something genuine seems to be developing among the youth. They indicate frustration with themselves that they are not able to hold service on time, and maintain the organization and unity that they see in mother church. Looban seems to be in an awkward and potentially unhealthy position of straddling the line between two social identities.

¹⁴⁶ Female youth, Interview by author, 14 April 2010, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Interview Transcript. 7-10.

Original: yung buhay ko dati, na nakakilala sa Panginoon sa province, ibang iba sa buhay ko ngayon na diyan sa Church, kasi dati hindi ko pa ano, hindi ko pa, parang hindi ko pa nadedevelop kung ano ba talaga yung plano sa akin ni God kung ano ba talaga iyong gusto Niyang mangyari sa akin, pero noong napunta ako sa Church, parang unti-unting nabuksan iyong ano, na kaya ko palang magturo sa bata, na kayak o pa lang maglead ng Bible study, iyong mga ganoon? Na kaya ko pa lang magshare ng word of God sa ibang tao na dati, pag dala dala lang ng Bible, hiyang hiya na ako. Iyon! So sabi kong ganyan, ano e, iyong buhay ko dati ibang iba, iyong nakilala ko talaga Siya diyan sa Church, todo iyak talaga ako niyan kada may prayer, iyak talaga ako, tapos sabi ko, “Lord ano..”, sa prayer ko, sabi ko, “Lord, Ikaw na po bahalang mag ano sa buhay ko, mag control”, tapos sabi ko, “i-develop Niyo pa yung kung ano pa iyong kaya ko, se-serve ko sa Iyo.” Sabi kong ganyan, hanggang sa unti-unting nabubuksan iyong ano, iyong parang mga pinto, something na mga ganoon, para makapag serve pa ako lalo sa Kanya, tapos mas masaya iyong feeling na nagseserve ka sa Kanya na kasama mo iyong mga kaibigan mo na ano, alam mo naman na may concern sa iyo, di ba?

A Matter of Oppression?

The youth feel that they should be able to imitate the programs and style of mother church. The youth indicate that this imitation of the mother church is somewhat prerequisite to being able to stand on their own as a church. The thought here is that Looban came from mother church, it is a branch off of a central root, a part of a greater whole. They have been modeled community development projects that they cannot afford without outside help. Thus, until they are able to imitate the mother church, they feel that their programs and development must be controlled by administrators from the mother church.

Once again, if Looban is going to be empowered, what will they be empowered to do? In the present model, mother church gives Looban its structure, they develop its programs and model the mother church ideal for ministry. Looban is then “freed” to follow the course that has been prescribed for them. But is this freedom at all? Sociologist Paulo Freire would define this as “oppression.”

Freire asserts that there is a fascinating tendency in the dynamic struggle of the oppressed toward liberation that rather than fighting for liberation from the system that holds them, the oppressed will instead adopt the ways of the oppressors and become oppressors themselves. The belief here is that the oppressed develop a certain level of adhesion to the oppressors. Their very structure of thinking about themselves and the greater system of which they are apart has been conditioned *by* the oppressors. Essentially the oppressed

internalize the image of the oppressor and adopt its guidelines for living.¹⁴⁷ Apart from this, the system of the oppressor is all that they know. Walking away from the system and doing something entirely indigenous is frightening for those seeking liberation. At the same time, the way of the oppressor is a strong social convention, thus the image of the oppressor becomes the standard toward which the oppressed strive in their development.

We can take an example from the *Kasama* relationships that were previously described. A peasant farmer, living in an *utang na loob*-driven *kasama relationship* with a landlord, does not dream of a life removed from the oppressive *kasama* system itself, rather he dreams to one day be a landlord who also has farmers working under him, who are also oppressed. This seems like liberation, but it is only a shifting of positions from being oppressed to being an oppressor. Freire argues that is it not directly the oppressor who oppresses, rather, oppression comes from a greater system of oppression of which both the oppressor and the oppressed are apart. Liberation, in Freire's terms, is being able to live outside of the system, seeking true autonomy and responsibility. If Looban must lead, it cannot be done on the basis of the blueprints that have been given to them, but it must be on their own terms.

One of the very basic elements of an oppressive relationship is *prescription*.¹⁴⁸ The behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior,

¹⁴⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970), 46-47.

¹⁴⁸ Freire, 47.

following guidelines that have been set out by the oppressor. Mother church Leader notes that Looban is capable of leadership provided that they are also educated by the mother church. They see a great benefit in modeling leadership for the people in Looban, but this raises a few questions. Looban has been given models, ideas, and guidelines from a stronger social identity. If they are empowered to lead themselves, they will merely continue on in the foreign identity which they have adopted.

Freire believes that, until the oppressed find liberation, they cannot live authentically. They suffer from a “duality” or split-identity that sinks down to their very inmost being.¹⁴⁹ Looban is presently “stuck” between two identities. They are Looban in a very deep sense, yet they feel that they need to be (and want to be) mother church. Looban must figure out what it means to be Looban Outreach Church for themselves. They cannot follow someone else’s blueprint. Liberation must rise up out of the oppressed and provide true autonomy and responsibility.

Ondoy and Its Impact on the Relationship

During a six-hour timespan on September 26th, 2010, 36 centimeters (14 inches) of rain fell on the Metro-Manila area, causing waters to rise 6 meters (20 feet) in many areas. creating the worst flood that the area had seen in 26 years. Looban was said to be one of the worst hit areas. Since Looban is built on a flood plain, it received much of the receding water from the other parts of Manila. This

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, 48.

caused the waters of the nearby bay to rise some 3 meters (10 feet), submerging the community of Looban under a murky soup that remained at waist-level for nearly a four weeks. Many people found themselves without food and drinkable water for long periods of time. During the first week, many people sought refuge in the church, seeing as it is built higher, and was only submerged a few centimeters. However, several of the people staying at the church became very sick due to the surrounding conditions and lack of nutrition.

I, personally, had the opportunity to accompany the denomination's compassionate ministries, as well as the Leadership from mother church on their first trip to Looban Outreach Church following the Typhoon. We arrived there by tricycle, but were only able to come up to the outside perimeter of the community. From this point, we made the several kilometer hike walking on sandbag barriers and, at times, trudging through nearly knee-deep waters. Once we reached Akbai, the housing association of which Looban Outreach Church is a part, we could no longer find the dirt roads that formerly lead us to the church; now, we were met by boats and a bustling provisional docking area. Fitting ourselves into the makeshift rafts, we made our way through the murky waters, bringing our boat ashore at the very threshold of the church's front door.

A few people from the church, whose homes were submerged, had been living at the church for several days with very little nutrition and being physically effected by the diseased floodwaters that surrounded them. The sanctuary of the church was sitting in a several centimeters of water. Church members had moved everything of value on to the platform to protect it from the waters. Several youth

in the church had taken advantage of the otherwise disastrous situation by building a make-shirt raft out of collected styrofoam and netting. They had started a kind-of taxi service, charging 20-30 pesos to take passengers from the edge of the floodwaters to any point with the Akbai area. The funds collected were then used to take care of their needs and the needs of those taking refuge inside the church. One of the members, Tommy, had been a victim of polio and was unable to navigate the floodwaters by himself. The youth would make long trips through the water to the outer ridge of the community to buy drinkable water and foodstuffs for Tommy and a few others who were taking refuge inside of the church. Those gathered in the church would keep each other company at night, reading scripture and singing songs before bedding down on the platform.

Following their assessment of the community, mother church was able to provide extensive relief work to the people in the surrounding community. They connected with non-governmental and humanitarian organizations to bring the relief goods. For about two and a half months following the flood, the Looban community was visited by trucks from mother church bringing bags and bags of relief goods into the Looban community. For the first month, the trucks were not able to come near the church because of the high waters that surrounded the community. Lay members of mother church, along with Leadership would bring the relief goods to the outside edge of the Looban community, where church members would walk to meet them. The relief was organized by assigning numbered tickets to the members of the church days before the relief would actually come. When the truck from mother church would arrive, members of

Looban Outreach Church would line up and receive their support. This attracted quite a bit of attention and drew large crowds hoping to be given something from mother church. By the next week, more tickets had been distributed, this time two for each family. The families were instructed to keep one ticket for themselves and give the other to a different family. As weeks went by, and as more and more relief was brought into the community, the crowds grew larger and larger. Tickets were distributed Sunday mornings following morning worship.

Two weeks following the typhoon, the 9am Sunday service was nearly filled to capacity by 8 am. Many began waiting at the front gate of the church by 7 am, two hours before the service began. The church building was packed. People filled sanctuary to capacity and spilled out the front and side doors, crowding around the windows outside of the building to look inside, while others simply waited outside. Once the Sunday morning crowds reached a certain capacity, the gates at the front of the church would be closed and locked and the people on the outside would be told to come back next week. Many of the youth and other regular members of Looban Outreach Church had relocated themselves to the floor in front of the church, beside the stage. Many laid down cardboard, so that they wouldn't have to sit on the concrete.

It took about a month for the waters to recede to the point where a truck could once again pass through the community to get to the church. It was at this point that relief efforts of the mother church were able to shift to the church building with Looban community. On Sunday mornings, the wings of the stage at

the front of the church would often be filled with bags of clothing and relief packets of rice and noodles. Sometimes the first 10-15 minutes of the sermon were dedicated to the explanation of receiving relief goods and how the ticket system worked. Following the sermon, youth from Looban Outreach Church would help by handing out the packages to the crowds.

The Leadership expressed excitement at the great growth that the ministry had experienced. Coordinator notes that they had been inundated with the work of the ministry, and that the Lord was gracious to expand their ministry and bring many new people through the doors of the church.

Coordinator attributes much of the ministry's growth to mother church willingness to give this kind of assistance¹⁵⁰ She notes, “. . . you notice that before [the typhoon] happened, we are almost 70 (in attendance). But now, after [the typhoon] happened we are almost 400 every Sunday since October!”¹⁵¹ She believes that the Lord opened many doors through the assistance that they were able to give to Looban. During that time, Coordinator says that “the church was so open to help [the people].” She believes that they could feel the love of God through their efforts, and that's why the people in the church keep coming. She notes that the Leadership is hoping and praying that their former attendance would not be returned.”¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Outreach coordinator, 63-70.

¹⁵¹ Outreach coordinator. 63-64.

¹⁵² *ibid*, 70.

Prior to *Ondoy*, Leadership believe that the people of Looban had a very low view of the foreign leadership, because they were not willing to go along with mother church ministry efforts.¹⁵³ One member of the Leadership explains that before Typhoon *Ondoy* they had difficulties conducting Bible studies in the homes of the people, “Sometimes they [would] hide; sometimes they [would] have so many invalid reasons. Sometimes, even [though] they [were] there, they [wouldn’t] join the Bible study.”¹⁵⁴ However, this leader sees it as a blessing from the Lord that *Ondoy* came and opened their eyes (and their doors) to the ministry of the Looban Outreach Church. Another leader comments that before *Ondoy*, many of the people would not bother to join Bible studies, even when they were held in their own house. This leader recalls that people would often refuse requests to have Bible studies in their homes.¹⁵⁵ However, following *Ondoy* this has all changed. Now, people are much more willing to open their homes for the Bible studies and seem to have a higher respect for the Leadership. At the time of my interview, the Looban outreach had a Bible study in homes, twice a day, 5 days a week (Monday through Friday).

Ondoy seemed to greatly change the way that the people of Looban acted toward their leadership efforts. They believe that the typhoon allowed the people of Looban to see the way that mother church loves them. “They realized that they were too far from the Lord previously, and the Looban people opened their mind

¹⁵³ Pulpit pastor, 141.

¹⁵⁴ Outreach coordinator, 74.

¹⁵⁵ Pulpit pastor, 71.

and heart because they realized that the reason that God sent the typhoon is because they are too far [from him].”¹⁵⁶ They note that the minds of the people were opened to this reality, and that it why the attendance had remained high. He adds, “Now, with proper training of the people, the ministry could multiply and be a great ministry,” whereas before, leadership comments that they could not see that the people in Looban had a future.¹⁵⁷ Because of *Ondoy*, leadership seems to indicate that the people are praying and reading their bibles more compared to before. “Our church has done a great part of their spiritual lives.”¹⁵⁸ Thus, they see *Ondoy* as a kind of blessing in disguise.¹⁵⁹

Reflecting on *Ondoy*

Mother church was able to provide a massive relief effort by means of the Church in Looban. It was systematic, well-organized, and provided weekly assistance for the people of Looban which lasted for about six weeks. The assistance continued following the initial relief with a scholarship program, helping the families in Looban to send their children to school. This is a great accomplishment for an “outreach.” If Looban were solely an outreach, this might have been its defining moment. However, Looban Outreach Church is also supposed to be a church.

¹⁵⁶ Pulpit pastor, 60.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, 60-70.

¹⁵⁸ Outreach coordinator, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Pulpit pastor, 144.

Mother church Leader seems to have mixed feelings about the response following *Ondoy*. Following the typhoon, he spent a great deal of time in Looban helping coordinate the relief efforts. From his observations, he believes that *Ondoy* marked a step backward for Looban Outreach Church, that it forced the church to return to basic evangelism and many initial members of the church left because of this. He comments, “honestly, I think Looban Outreach Church, after *Ondoy*, started from scratch. So they started about evangelism again, and actually they lost some members.”¹⁶⁰ Mother church Leader indicates that he believes that many members felt awkward in forming lines to receive support from the church again. He indicates that something in the relationship between the church leadership and the people was broken during that time. He continues, “They somehow went away from the church. . . their lives weren’t changed. You know, they remained ‘babies.’”

Mother church Leader also indicates that giving relief is an acceptable response to a disaster such as *Ondoy*, but relief is to be just that: “Relief.” It is not meant to last forever. He indicates that there is a time and a place in which it is good to give relief, but the more important thing is that the people are trained to graduate and have jobs. “They are not hungry anymore. I think they are not hungry anymore. That is, they need to be led towards becoming successful. . . giving them means to work, telling them how it is in the world. They don’t know that.”¹⁶¹ Mother church Leader believes that physical help is good at times, but

¹⁶⁰ Mother church leader, 119-121.

¹⁶¹ Mother church leader, 132.

mother church should be helping them more in their development and that the church has a responsibility to train and educate the people of Looban.

Michael points out an intrinsic flaw in the interactions between the two groups. He notes, “You know, every time youth in Looban [come to mother church], mother church does relief giving.”¹⁶² Michael says that the youth really do want to come to mother church, but they often feel shy to receive relief goods. “They feel that when they walking in the church that everybody’s looking because they are *pangit* (ugly), they are not *mayaman* (wealthy), they are not rich. You know it effects their self-esteem.”¹⁶³

Michael does not disregard that the relief, and the scholarships help, “It really helps, physically—literally. The scholarships really help, but I’m looking on the factor of spiritual things, and I want that they will grow on that matter, on that factor of their lives, I want them to be nurtured spiritually.”¹⁶⁴

This does not mean that the relief went unappreciated. The relief work following *Ondoy* provided a wealth of goods to many hurting people in need. When asked about what it was like to have mother church as a part of their community. The responses from the youth were almost unanimous expressions of gratitude to mother church for the work that has been done in their community and the support that had been given--particularly during the flood caused by Typhoon *Ondoy*. One youth responded, “Happy. We are happy to get

¹⁶² “Michael”, 334.

¹⁶³ “Michael”, 335.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, 338.

support.”¹⁶⁵ Another commented, “We are happy because mother church, as the main church, was able to build a church there: Looban Outreach Church. They built one there not only to give people a worship place but also to help people.”¹⁶⁶

Aside from helping the people, the relief work in Looban expanded the church attendance to nearly 5 or 6 times what it was previously. Leadership indicate that the ministry is greatly improving because they are able to do more for a greater number of people. While this may be true the youth from the church seem to indicate another concern that while attendance as a whole is growing, there is an even bigger divide growing between the people of the two groups. The youth identify two different groups that have formed in Looban Outreach Church itself: those who were there because of their faith, and those who were there for relief. The youth distinctly discuss this as a frustrating phenomenon that took place within their fellowship, however they do not blame the people for coming to the church for the wrong reasons. “They need to help themselves” one male responds; “Although, I know that’s wrong because we are supposed to be there to praise God.”¹⁶⁷ The youth recall that during *Ondoy* their church became something like a bustling depot or trading post with people standing around everywhere, but when the relief was gone, so were the people. The only ones remaining now are the ones who are under sponsorship. He

¹⁶⁵ Original: “*Masaya, Masaya makakuha ng suporta.*”

¹⁶⁶ Original: “*Masaya kasi yun nga ang mother church yung pinaka main nung simbahan naming, nagtayo sila ng simbahan doon ng Looban Outreach Church, naglagay sila doon para, di lamang para mag worship yung mga tao pero para maraming taong matulungan.*”

¹⁶⁷ Focus group of 10 Looban youth, 120.

guesses that if those sponsorships are gone, they might lose as much as half of the congregation.¹⁶⁸

This bears some striking resemblance to the experiences American Missionary, Michael Duncan recorded in his book, *Costly Mission*. Duncan narrates the story of their community development mission among the urban poor of Metro Manila in 1988. The Duncans, through their mission organization provided loans and micro-enterprise financing to people living in the slums. They wanted their ministry to be “holistic” and to meet the physical and developmental needs of the community alongside of their spiritual needs. Therefore, they began simple church gatherings which met separately, and in a separate location from their livelihood ministry. Duncan notes that they did their best to keep these two ministries separate. The church gatherings were kept solely for the purpose of church alone, not livelihood or community development work.

Duncan notes that their livelihood ministries quickly gained popularity in the community. Duncan recalls that his church plants seemed to keep growing, quickly expanding beyond what their small meeting places could hold¹⁶⁹.

However, Duncan cites a problem, he writes,

We were worried. We would sing the praise songs but it seemed there was little worship. I felt I had been preaching to myself. There was no sense of involvement in the service. We were going through the motions, doing

¹⁶⁸ “Michael”, 123.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Duncan, *Costly Mission: Following Christ into the Slums*, (City: MARC, 1996), 39.

what was expected, adhering to form, but despite the encouraging numbers, I felt that all was not well.¹⁷⁰

Surveying the mature believers in his church fellowships, he found similar responses as what has been recorded from the youth in Looban. "There are only a few genuine christians," Duncan records. The members of his congregation informed him that it was *utang na loob* (a debt of gratitude). The people attended because they felt that they were indebted to attend. They asked those that they had been helping what they should do. The response: "*Stop the loans and mercy ministries!*"¹⁷¹ This came as a shock to the missionaries. Puzzled, they inquired to the people that they had been helping and found that not only were their ministries creating a mass of "rice Christians," but it was also bringing about communal break-down. Duncan writes,

"The very fact that we had to choose one person over another when giving loans was leading to misunderstanding, jealousy, and strained relationships in the community. In other words, the social cost of all our giving was too high. Even though they were poor, these people preferred relational harmony over material gain."¹⁷²

Michael notes many of the cultural implications that come along with such giving. Many of the people who have received relief from the church feel pressured to continue attending. Michael notes frustration with members of Missionary leadership who monitor the attendance of those who have received support, indicating that it creates a kind of angst based on *utang na loob*.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Duncan, 40.

¹⁷¹ Duncan, 41.

¹⁷² *ibid*, 40.

¹⁷³ "Michael", 285-287.

Michael indicates that many of the families in Looban Outreach Church have felt pressure to attend church. Following the typhoon, around the same time that relief was being given, Leadership began a new scholarship program to help families in Looban to send their children back to school. This is a help to many families that otherwise might not be able to send their children to school. The scholarship support is only for members of Looban Outreach Church, so attendance is monitored weekly. Michael say, “If the parents miss one Sunday. They will confront them, ‘*Hoy! Bakit hindi ka nakakapag-church on Sunday?*’” (‘Hey, why weren’t you at church last Sunday?’) Michael is disappointed in the Leadership because church has become an obligation.

The youth indicate that something genuine is forming among them, yet they are discouraged to see that a large portion of their church is largely disingenuous in their attendance. Michael calls it “*hinog sa pilit*,” that is, the people are “forced to be ripe.” He believes that Leadership is forcing the people of Looban into church and faith before they are ready. The people are attending not because they want to but out of social and cultural obligation.¹⁷⁴

It is important, at this point, to consider the interactions between the Missionary leadership and the people of Looban Outreach Church. Even before *Ondoy*, Leadership interacted with the people of Looban as outreach facilitators. Leadership refers to themselves as pastors and church planters, but they concern themselves with providing help, support, and leadership to the Looban

¹⁷⁴ “Michael”, 269-287.

community, in a way that an outreach would. But is Looban an outreach or a church?

It is important to consider the separate the identities of a “Church” and an “outreach.” The 2009-2013 manual of mother church’s denomination describes the General Church as a community of confessors.

The Manual affirms:

“We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.”¹⁷⁵

Beyond this definition, the constitution of the denomination states that the church “. . . organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms; exists both as local congregations and as a universal body; [and] sets apart persons called of God for specific ministries.”¹⁷⁶ In either of these definitions, the church’s identity is namely held in its fellowship, and ways of living and relating with one another and with God. A church is composed of people, and carries its own sense of “being.” It has its own unique identity.

An outreach is different, and features a different set of goals and ambitions. “Outreach” is mentioned three times in the denominational Manual. Each time, it is mentioned as an action that is done *by* one entity *for the benefit of* another entity. In this case, Looban Outreach Church is the entity which is being reached; they do not carry the identity of the outreach. The outreach in Looban is a part of mother church’s identity. It extends from mother church’s

¹⁷⁵ Blevins, Dean G., Charles D. Crow, David E. Downs, Paul W. Thornhill, David P. Wilson, *Manual: Church of the Nazarene, 2009-2013*. (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2009), 339.

¹⁷⁶ Blevins, 37.

identity as an outreach. As long as the church in Looban is a an outreach church they will always, definitionally, be an extension of the mother church's identity. Outreach can be done *by* a church, but being *reached out to* does not constitute that a group of people is therefore a church. Until now, Looban Outreach Church remains ambiguously identified as an outreach church.

Another important consideration here is that Looban is not reaching out for themselves. They are still being reached out to, by mother church. The outreach is an outgrowth of the identity of mother church, Looban is merely the object of that endeavor.

Looban Youth Leader Offers a Solution

The question now becomes, "in what ways *should* the mother church interact with the people of Looban?" The interactions of the Leadership are largely addressing the physical, structural, and administrative needs of the community. Mother church Leader's interactions are largely focused on educating and training the people of Looban to rise above their present life situation by modeling mother church's Leadership and encouraging the people that they can all do likewise. In both of these scenario's, low self-esteem seems to be a common characteristic among the general youth of Looban throughout their interactions with mother church. Michael feels that mother church's difficulty in connecting with Looban is one central need that is not being addressed. He believes that real relationships and communication is key in the relationship between the two groups. Michael indicates that the social leveling that took place

with his own *barkada* at mother church was a significant part in the process of lifting his own self-esteem.¹⁷⁷ Michael adds that, “if the people of Looban will become *barkada* with the people of mother church, that boulder [of division] will be gone.”¹⁷⁸

It is important, at this point, to consider the implications of this word. *Barkada* is a *Filipino* word used to describe a close, intimate group of friends. The word refers to a kind of close-knit group with whom one shares a common or equal identity. Relationships in the *barkada* are relaxed, tolerant, and guided by the principle of *pakikisama*.¹⁷⁹ That is, people in the group meet on equal terms and are motivated to minimize the importance of that which holds them apart--in this case, economic status and social influence.

Returning to Social Identity theory, a *barkada* is a kind of powerful in-group which is held together based upon perceived similarities in the characteristics of the people which compose it. Groups such as this serve to increase the self-esteem of the people in the group by giving them a particular place and social identity. This would imply that, if mother church were to truly become the *barkada* of Looban, the shared characteristics that held the groups together would have to be greater than the characteristics that held them apart. Factors in the relationship such as education, social status, and personal finances

¹⁷⁷ “Michael”, 332.

¹⁷⁸ “Michael”, 334.

¹⁷⁹ Neil Mulder, *Inside Philippine Society*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1997), 41.

would have to be minimized and the groups would have to find a shared social plane upon which they can meet.

Michael envisions strong and socially-leveled interactions between the mother-church and its daughter.¹⁸⁰ However, many of the interactions between mother church and Looban seem to have accentuated the social and economic gap that separates the two groups. Michael suggests that Leadership might invite some of the *katatayan* (adult men) from mother church to fellowship and share testimonies with the *katatayan* of Looban. He believes that something like this would be a great encouragement to the men of Looban. He says, “If the people can be inspired, our imagination works. Then, the positive thinking and the optimism will come.”¹⁸¹ Michael indicates that, if the people of Looban will be given their self-esteem through such positive and encouraging interactions with people who see themselves as the *barkada* (or equals) of Looban, then change will come. What is interesting about the change that Michael describes is that it is not change that is prescribed from the outside. This is change that rises up from within the people of Looban, and he believes that change begins with Looban’s self-esteem.

¹⁸⁰ “Michael”, 332-345.

¹⁸¹ “Michael”, 344.

Can Looban Lead?

The youth have demonstrated the beginnings of an identity all their own. They connect deeply with one another. They have their own networks of support and trust that have developed among them. They lead themselves in prayer and devotions and keep one another accountable to God. However, foremost in their evaluations of themselves is the fact that they do not match up with the mother church. They still cleave to an identity that is not their own.

Michael, however, has developed a strong sense of independence apart from the mother-church. He says that his leadership style is completely his own. He takes full responsibility for the leadership and development of the youth, and does it outside of the auspices of the Missionary leadership. However, Michael still indicates a cleaving to the mother-church as well. He indicates disappointment that the youth of mother church “don’t do their part” in evangelizing the people of Looban and still hopes for mother church to be the *barkada* of Looban to aid in the development of Looban Outreach Church.¹⁸² He is independent to an extent, but still relies on an external system of support.

The construction of this relationship raises a few questions. Michael wants a *barkada* with mother church, but is this a realistic endeavor? Is it possible for mother church to genuinely be the *barkada* of Looban? Or does the social situation dictate that mother church be the gracious patron-landlord who gives and supports a markedly poorer group in exchange for the loyalty of its

¹⁸² *ibid*, 324.

people? If mother church would become the *barkada* of Looban, this would require a major renegotiation of their own identity in relation to Looban.

Barkada is defined in terms of mutual trust and support, it is guided by a principal of *pakikisama*. This means that there must be some sort of social leveling to take place in order for the *barkada* to function. According to Social Identity theory, if they are going to share the same in-group, they must be able to negotiate a common identity in which they share a sufficient amount of similarities. However, the stark differences in social class between the groups make this almost impossible. Mother church and Looban would have to meet on terms that do not accentuate the great chasm of socio-economic differences that separate them, such as education, organizational abilities, and economic status. At present, almost all of the interactions between the two groups continue to accentuate all of these differences.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Identifying Looban

In view of their relationship with mother church, Looban's self-identity is this: Looban is poor and poorly educated. They are a progeny that is unable to live in the image of their progenitor in terms of both economics and ability. This self-identification has been largely molded by the group's interaction with mother church. The basis of their interactions has been that the mother church *has*, and Looban *has not*. Mother church *knows*, and Looban *knows not*. This implies that mother church must give and Looban must receive. Mother church must teach and Looban must learn. These are the foundational interactions of the relationship, thus these interactions quickly and readily become the very identities and realities in which the two groups interact.

In Chapter 4, I have explored the self-identity of Looban Outreach Church by describing its relationship with two entities, *Leadership Team* and mother church Leader, which more-or-less embodied mother church within the Looban community.

The Leadership Team

The Leadership Team (not including Michael) is maternalistic towards the people of Looban. They are parental-type managers and administrators. They are in-charge of all operations at Looban Outreach Church. They provide for Looban's nurture and care. They facilitate feeding and livelihood programs, as well as donations and scholarship support for the children of the community. They organize and maintain the services, provide the preaching, and coordinate people to lead the worship on Sunday mornings. They create the calendar of events for Looban Outreach Church, as well as maintain their own set of ministries within the church such as home Bible studies and feeding program.

Members from the team do not see a strong ability for self-leadership in the indigenous people. Reasons for this are many and varied. Among the most strongly indicated are: Leadership believes that the people of Looban lack the financial resources to support the ministry in Looban. They believe that the people lack the education to teach, preach and administer as mother church does, and they cite that the people have very little self-confidence in their own ability to lead. In addition, Leadership commonly cites numerous social problems in the community such as gambling, gossip, and violence which is believed to be a part of the "mindset" of Looban. Leadership believes that it must prescribe and maintain the administration and structure of the church in Looban until such a time that Looban Outreach Church is able to lead itself.

Leadership's identification of Looban is largely on the basis of its poverty, its inabilities, and its social problems. The interactions of mother church with

Looban are on the basis that mother church is the teacher and the people from Looban are the learners. Mother church is the supporter and Looban is the supported. Mother church is the capable and Looban is incapable. They are the masters and Looban is the apprentice.

Symbolic interactionists¹⁸³ understand perceived identities (or “meanings” held for people) to be a social product that is formed through interactions or “defining activities.”¹⁸⁴ As people and groups interaction with other people and groups they naturally assign meaning to those people and groups with which they interact; this affects identity. Very quickly these interactions can affect the realities in which we live, providing modifications to who we understand ourselves to be and what we believe we are able to do. Through their interactions alone, the Leadership has assisted in negotiating an identity for Looban that is based on Looban’s deficits, inabilities, and ignorance.

The roles and expectations of both mother church and Looban are clearly defined and static, providing little social mobility. The social and cultural milieu of the relationship between mother church and Looban has caused the two entities to fall into a relationship which is classist in nature. Such a fixed social and cultural posture toward one another is demonstrated in the patron-client relationships in the *kasama* system of class relationships in Philippine culture. Mother church carries a highly affluent class identity, especially in regards to

¹⁸³ Herbert Blumer and Roger Mead (Blumer’s Professor) were founding proponents of Symbolic Interactionism. It was this theory that later laid the groundwork for Turner and Tajfel’s work on Social Identity theory, from which this study draws its Theoretical Framework.

¹⁸⁴ Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, Renewed Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 5.

their interactions with the Looban community. Mother church has provided the land, the building, and the staff for the church in Looban. It provides a weekly meal and program for the children of Looban, as well as periodic donations, and a scholarship program for their youth. Culturally, this situation dictates a significant amount of *utang na loob* from the people of Looban. The social postures between the two entities have become fixed in that their leaders are also the doers, givers, and providers.

It is important here to note that these postures were implicit in the Metro-Manila District's "outreach driven" model of church planting. In this model, pioneering ministers conduct an outreach program, such as a film showing, a feeding program, or a evangelical mission, with the purpose of connecting with a particular community. This outreach, after some time and development, is supposed to develop its own weekly services and fellowships that meet regularly. Eventually, once the ministers have appointed appropriate indigenous leadership, the outreach is supposed to go through a kind of identity shift and transform into an independent church, once the appropriate leadership and finances are secured. This never happened in Looban. Rather than shifting their identity from "outreach" to "church", the outreach identity only grew and became more powerful.

Looban has never developed its own identity as a community of faith. Looban has essentially developed backwards. It began as an outreach, specifically, it was the target of outreach. The mother church "owned" and initiated the outreach, then decided that its outreach needed to be organized into

a church. The mother church outreach was then labeled as an “organized church” on the basis of holding weekly services and maintaining regular attendance of people. Looban Outreach Church became a church on the basis of regular attenders and the services facilitated by the mother church, rather than on the basis of its own common identity as a community of faith, or as a product of something substantial that had risen up within the people themselves. Looban Outreach Church was formed through “outreach.” Someone from the outside built the building, developed the program, set the events, drew the crowds, and filled the services. If Looban’s identity as a church is, in fact, based upon the presence of people and services alone, without a genuine connection to each other and to God, there may be question as to whether Looban is a “church” at all, by the definition provided by the Manual of the church’s denomination.

Mother Church Leader

Mother church Leader has taken a different approach. His interactions with the Looban community have been those of a teacher and mentor. He believes that the people of Looban should be empowered to lead for themselves. He believes that this empowerment must come through encouraging the local people and modeling ministry and leadership so that they realize that they can do it too. He believes that the Leadership should have a stronger involvement in the lives of the people in Looban, in order to train them to do things for themselves.

Aside from leadership of the church, he believes that the people should be trained and educated to rise above their present life situation, helping them to get

jobs or attend school. He believes that the present leadership has failed to do this. Instead, they have groomed the indigenous to be dependent on mother church because of their constant nurture and support.

Mother church Leader has noticed that the people of Looban exhibit low self-esteem. This makes the delegation of leadership difficult in that the youth often doubt their abilities to lead. Mother church Leader believes that mother church should build a strong, mentorship-based relationship with the people of Looban Outreach Church in order to lift the self-esteem of the people in Looban. His approach is largely relational and comes out of a compassionate heart that genuinely seeks to help a markedly less fortunate group of people. The problem is that the identities and roles have already been prescribed for the relationship. There is no strong sense of mutuality or “joining together” in the relationship. The implicit message in this relationship, whether it is intended or not, is “let us help you be like us”

It is significant to note that Looban’s *perceived* ability to lead has been based based upon their social and economic development. Mother church Leader indicates that Looban is qualified to lead given that they have a job or are enrolled in school. This indicates a few things, which are important to point out. The founding concept of these interactions is that “we need to pull up the people of Looban to something better.” It assumes that the present abilities of the people in Looban are insufficient. The implication (whether intended or not) is that cooperation with and eventual imitation of the mother church is what Looban Outreach Church must do in order to be acceptable.

Secondly, mother church Leader has questionably tied together two separate kinds of development: Looban Outreach Church's social and economic development and their development as a church. If we define church as an organization or institution, then this tie is understandable. They need money to open a denominational "branch" or franchise in their community. However, if we understand church as a community of faith, as it is explained in the denomination's Manual, this connection between socioeconomic development and church development is irrelevant.

Roles in the relationship are also clearly defined and static, just as with the Leadership. The people from mother church are the mentors and teachers, while Looban is merely a learner or apprentice. Because of the social positioning of the two groups, Looban has assigned respect to mother church and lodged itself into a learner or apprentice mentality, which keeps it from making decisions on its own.

The youth of Looban are brought to the mother church as a means of strengthening the relationship between the two groups and modeling leadership and ministry for the youth. The thought here is that connecting them with strong and successful examples in the mother church will inspire them to be strong and successful too. It is true that the youth *do* consider *Youth Corps* to be their inspiration. However, such close interaction only reminds the youth of the great social and economic distance that stands between the two groups. Youth indicate feelings of envy toward the talents and abilities of the youth at mother

church. In addition to this they indicate frustration with their own lack of organization and resources.

Both mother church Leader and Leadership have an overly powerful image of what the mother church should be for the Looban community. Whether it is intended or not, the mother church is presented as the goal, the model, and the destination for the development of Looban. It seems that the daughter church is valid only inasmuch as it is able to imitate the mother church.

Michael: The Semi-Indigenous Leader

Michael may very well be a breakthrough in leadership. He has connected in a way that no one else from mother church has been able to connect. But he wasn't able to do this without some ideological disconnect from the mother church.

It is notable that Michael does not encourage the youth to "look up to" Leadership or the mother church, rather Michael feels that he needs to point the youth directly to God. Michael does not strongly concern himself with the socio-economic matters of the youth, but indicates a stronger concern to work within the the youth's own context to bring spiritual development and stronger relationships among themselves.

Leadership believes that Michael is successful because he is indigenously from Looban, however this is not so. Michael is not from Looban. At the time of our interview, he regularly spent only several hours a week in the community (often less time than Leadership). He moved to Looban from Laguna along with

his mother. He initially attended church at mother church and adopted some extent of their identity. He took membership in the programs of the mother church and became versed in its language. Leadership and mother church Leader had been searching for someone who could be trained to lead in Looban. Michael was chosen for a utilitarian purpose: he had a connection to Looban.

Mother church Leader demonstrated a similar desire to join with the people of Looban and empower them for leadership. Freire notes that it is inevitable that such a person will come with “the marks of their origin.”¹⁸⁵ They will bring with them a lack of confidence in the indigenous people’s ability “to think, to want, and to know.” Freire notes that someone who comes from the oppressor group to work for the liberation of the oppressed must be willing to “convert themselves” to the indigenous people. Such a person must be willing to enter into full *communion* with the indigenous people, this requires mutuality, vulnerability, and a willingness to renegotiate ones own identity in relation to the indigenous.¹⁸⁶ Rather than renegotiating his own identity, mother church youth leader had relied on his identification with the mother church (the oppressor group) to bring transformation and empowerment to the local people. Freire indicates that this simply breeds more oppression.

This is what has made Michael’s approach unique. There is indication of strong mutuality and social leveling in Michael’s relationship with the youth. He

¹⁸⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970), 60.

¹⁸⁶ Freire, 61.

connects with the youth in authentic relationships in which the youth are able to share their deep struggles and ambitions. Michael demonstrates trust, acceptance, and a high-regard for the youth and their abilities as leaders. It is in this kind of relationship that real self-identity is formed and encouraged to grow.

It is notable that Michael does not see *potential* indigenous leaders in Looban, he sees that they are gifted and capable leaders now. When he describes qualities of a leader for Looban, he describes them in terms of their prayer life and commitment to God. He mentions nothing of education or vocation.

Michael was mentored and trained by the mother church, however, he has broken away from only *some* of their ideologies. Michael indicates a desire for Looban to have its own identity, he still cleaves for connection with the mother church. He critiques the mother church for not helping with the evangelical “harvest” in Looban. Freire believes that an ideological break is necessary, but it is only the beginning of real liberation. He states that, until the indigenous people begin to concretely “discover” their oppressor, and become aware of themselves apart from him, they will almost always express fatalistic attitudes toward their situation.

Michael has the desire that mother church would be the *barkada* of Looban. In this desire, Michael is providing a solution to the self-esteem issues that result from mother church present interactions with the Looban community. He wants to see a greater social leveling and mutuality in the relationship between the two groups. His solution, although visionary, may not effectively solve the problem of Looban Outreach Church’s low self-esteem, nor help to

create or uplift the identity of Looban Outreach Church. Social Identity theory states that social groups will do whatever it takes to negotiate a “positive and distinct” identity for their own group, even if it means adopting someone else’s identity. Looban’s very system of thinking about church and themselves has been conditioned by mother church and mother church’s interactions towards them. As Freire suggests, the oppressed have developed a certain level of adhesion to the oppressor. In this condition, Looban will continue to cleave to the identity of mother church and thus stifle their own growth.

Reflecting on the Sub-questions

My analysis of the interactions of these two entities with Looban Outreach Church has brought about some very direct answers to the sub-questions posed by this study:

1. What are the implications of the perceived identity(ies) of Looban Outreach Church?
 - 1.1. In order for Looban Outreach Church to be acceptable, they must be able to cooperate with mother church, follow its prescriptions, and follow in its image.
 - 1.2. Looban Outreach Church development as a church is implicitly tied with their social and economic development.

- 1.3. The people from mother church are inevitably the mentors and teachers, while Looban are inevitably the learners or apprentices. The relationship is not mutual.
2. What important values and expectations are expressed by mother church in this relationship?
 - 2.1. Submission to mother church, participation in her programs, and growth into her likeness. Although, these values may not be generally expressed or even recognized as such by leaders from mother church, these sentiments may still be true by implication.
3. What elements of this relationship perpetuate dependency?
 - 3.1. The whole of the interactions between the two groups seems to accentuate the abilities of mother church and the inabilities of its daughter and thus it perpetuates dependency. Looban Outreach Church understands themselves in terms of Mother Church. Mother church is their model, however, following their model demands an influx of outside resources because their model is on an entirely different social and economic plane.

While the community's poverty and lack of education may be true to some extent, these factors cannot be the basis upon which mother church understands the community of Looban. There has to be a foundation of mutual respect and

trust in the ability of the indigenous to figure things out for themselves and negotiate their *own* positive and distinct identity. If mother church solely interacts with Looban on the basis of its poverty, lack of education, and inabilities, Social Identity theory affirms that this is the reality in which both groups will live.

Carl Rogers understands that human beings are multi-faceted and infinitely complex. He pioneered the person-centered approach to psychotherapy which is founded on maintaining *unconditional positive regard* for the self and the other person in relationships with people. He believes that an environment such as this creates a threat-free and fertile context for growth and development. Rogers believes that creating this kind of environment is key to creating healthy and productive relationships that are based upon a sense of mutual trust, honesty, and acceptance.¹⁸⁷ People in such environments are given the opportunities and encouragement for creativity and expression of their own self-identity. People brought up in an environment such as this are given the opportunity to fully actualize themselves.

The self-actualization of indigenous leadership at Looban Outreach Church *can* happen, however it must happen independent of the mother church. Filipino self-actualization is deeply rooted in the *interdependency* of a collective group. In other words, self-actualization must begin with the “*tayo*” (Filipino

¹⁸⁷ Rogers, Carl. *On Becoming a Person*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1961), 283-284.

collective pronoun: “we, us”).¹⁸⁸ *Self-identity* in a Philippine context is understood in terms of a similar interdependency of persons. “We are in this together” is the driving force behind the self and its actualization. Thus, if Looban will lead, it must happen with the church community as a collective whole. Such a notion is seen in the Philippine cultural value of *bayanihan*, which carries a distinct pride in the interdependence of the collective whole. It is important to realize that self-actualization may not likely happen with the naming of a single rogue leader (such as Michael), or by appointing a talented leader from the outside who is able to “appear” indigenous. Culturally speaking, Looban’s self-actualization must rise up from within itself as it negotiates its own identity.

Social Identity theory holds that identity is created and maintained through social interaction. People naturally organize themselves into groups with the implicit goal of achieving a “positive and distinct position for the in-group.”¹⁸⁹ Looban’s identity is presently spread across a broad social and economic divide, including both mother church and Looban. Until Looban can understand themselves as Looban alone, it will never develop its own positive and distinct self identity. Looban must come to a self-realization and negotiate its own identity as Looban *Church* (as opposed to Looban Outreach Church). If this does not happen, its split identity will continue to be an obstacle for its development.

¹⁸⁸ Jamie Bulatao, *Phenomena and Their Interpretation*, (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 276.

¹⁸⁹ Turner, J.C. Social influence. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991). 171.

Recommendations

The identities of mother church and Looban Outreach Church need to be separate, distinct, and respected for what they are in their own right. However, because of the dependency dictated by the present structure of the relationship, I do not believe that this kind of separation is immediately possible. Looban is not only dependent on mother church for its finances, and leadership, but also for its very identity. They understand themselves as a branch, a fragment of a greater whole. This calls for a serious (and difficult) process of renegotiating identities.

Renegotiating the identity of Looban Outreach Church may require several steps backward, and a renegotiation of the foreign church structure that is imposed upon them. There is presently a fear that, if mother church will leave Looban Outreach Church, it will fail. This might be true, to some extent. The present structure of Looban Outreach Church (its programs, administration, and facilities) is not that of the indigenous people. The structure was designed for a church that is able to meet certain social and economic requirements. It requires staff, resources, and consistent revenue in order to maintain the building, pay the electric bill, meet the living expenses of a pastor, and continue the expensive outreach programs. If Looban negotiates its own indigenous identity as a church, it will also need to renegotiate its own external structures. Looban was planted as the outreach ministry of a more affluent group of people. It was planted with foreigner leaders in mind. They can manage it, but the people of Looban cannot.

Both mother church and Looban must realize that neither identity nor liberation can be given to Looban by the mother church. These realities must *rise up* from within the people of Looban themselves to provide true autonomy and responsibility.¹⁹⁰ This must happen in a *deep* sense. The church must be *theirs*. Not only in its funding and its leadership, but its very identity and the actualization of indigenous leadership must be its own.

Both mother church and Looban Outreach Church must focus on what Looban does have, and what they can do, rather than what it does not have, and what it cannot do. As affirmed by Social Identity theory, Looban must establish a “positive and distinct” position for itself as a church community, which distinguishes it from other church communities. Mother church has the opportunity to greatly help Looban, by encouraging and reaffirming Looban in *who they are*, rather than trying to “pull them up” to something higher or better. They must understand each other, and themselves, as full and complex human beings, rather than interacting with the community on the basis of their social and/or economic statuses.

Economics and education are greatly useful to those in ministry, however they should not be prerequisite for leaders in the church. I recommend that mother church seriously affirm a shared belief in the “priesthood of all believers.” If someone’s life has been changed by Christ, and they have the desire and ability to assemble a community of the regenerate who meet for holy fellowship and

¹⁹⁰ Freire, 48.

ministry¹⁹¹ then we should encourage them in that endeavor. We must seriously believe that all people in Christ are capable, because Christ makes them capable. Looban Outreach Church cannot be measured by a foreign standard.

Looban church must know deeply who they are as a people, but even more so, they must know who Christ is. Mother church Leaders must be descriptive of *who God is*, rather than *prescriptive* of how Looban church should live and act. Mother church Leaders must strongly encourage the indigenous to figure out who they are and what it means to live in the way of Christ in their own particular indigenous identity. Looban cannot be themselves and someone else at the same time.

Based on the findings of the study, I recommend that mother church be cautious to ensure that they are connecting the people of Looban to God, and not to the mother church. The daughter-church model of church planting tends to place a strong emphasis on the mother church as the source for everything that the aspiring daughter church might need. The daughter looks to the mother church for teaching, preaching, and theological insights. Rather than living like Christ, the daughter church lives like the mother church, trusting that it is a reliable source for Christian living. The danger here is that the mother church can become a kind of intermediary between the daughter church and God. Such a phenomenon is especially true in inter-socioeconomic contexts such as with mother church and Looban. It is not so much that the mother church intends to be an intermediary, but that the social positioning between the groups requires it.

¹⁹¹*Manual: Church of the Nazarene, 2009-2013, 37.*

This being the case, I recommend that the district add one more requirement to their list of essential characteristics for their “recognized churches.” Churches on the district should not only be capable of self-support, self-governance, and self-propagation, but that they should also be capable of “self-theologization.”¹⁹² They must be allowed to interpret for themselves what it means to live in the way of Jesus as Looban church, in Looban’s context. Beyond this, it is important that the local indigenous context defines what it means to fulfill these four requirements, rather than allowing the requirements to function as a set of prescribed socio-economic mandates and expectations.

Lastly, It is important that mother church make a healthy separation between social and economic assistance, and church development. It is important to note that these two identities must be separate. A church is a community of faith, a body of confessors, a fellowship of believers that have been unified by their faith in God. A church is a living entity, and carries a sense of “being.” “Outreach” is based on transitive verb. There is a doer of the action, and there is a receiver of the action. There are those who are reaching out and those to whom the reaching is done. This is not a church. It is possible, however, that a church (as a community of faith) does outreach. But an outreach cannot, also, be a church. By definition, an outreach is one-way, it lacks mutuality, and cannot be a church. Outreach can be done *by* a church, but being *reached out to* does not constitute a group of people as a church.

¹⁹² Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Baker: Grand Rapids, MI, 1985), 196.

To aspiring church planters and out-reachers, I recommend: if you want to plant a church, then plant a church; if you want to reach out, then reach out, but it is important that the two are not confused or mixed. I strongly believe that a church is capable of doing outreach, but an outreach is not capable of becoming a church. If an outreach is to ever become a “community of confessors” (a church) then it must rise up from within the people of the outreach and be authentically theirs. An outreach can touch lives, who then go on to become a church, but it is important that its identity is its own, belong to the community of confessors, those sharing in faith who identify themselves with Christ. It is from here that this indigenous faith community can reach out and touch the surrounding indigenous culture and community. In this regard, it would be helpful for mother church to withdraw from the outreach activity in Looban, so that Looban can develop this kind of identity as a fully responsible and functioning church.

I believe that it is important that we define the church as a living organism. The church is not an organizational franchise, it is people. If we define the church in terms of an organization rather than an organism, then we are apt to be more concerned with its function than its life. If the church is seen as a business, there is a strong tendency to focus more on the success of the business than the relationships of the people within it. When planting a church, we must start with people and allow them to figure out what it means to be the people of Christ in their own particular context.

Beyond this, Trueblood brings attention to what seems to be a present obsession with “marketing” the church. He describes a paradigm in which the

Church is presented with banners, billboards, and advertisements, making the church appear more as a “thriving business, of which the pastor is the CEO.”¹⁹³ The question then becomes, if the church participates in an identity such as this what might this communicate to people living in an area such as Looban? What does an image such as this have to communicate sociologically? He notes that such a business model is an impediment to the central message of Christ.

This is why it is important that Looban break away. It must negotiate its *own* identity apart from the mother church. Until it is able to do this, it will not be able to live authentically. It will continue to suffer from a split-identity that will continue to make it dependent on the mother church.

¹⁹³ Trueblood, 28.

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