KAPWA AS BOTH BRIDGE AND BARRIER: THE CHALLENGE OF RECONCILING FILIPINO VALUES AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

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Understanding 'kapwa' as a superordinate cultural Filipino value

Kapwa[1] identifies a unique horizon of personhood in the Philippine islands: a relational ontology in which the self is a being-with, a self who is formed in and through relation to others. *Kapwa* is not a mere social virtue—it operates as an organizing cognitive-affective structure (a form of seeing and feeling), an ethical grammar (a virtue set that mobilizes social life), and a social technology (practices and institutions that reproduce reciprocal life). Tracing *kapwa's* layered origin and understanding its durability requires an examination of the Filipino precolonial social structures, colonial impositions, and its critical retrieval as a key concept by the movement Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology) in the twentieth century.

This superordinate value[2] can be charted even at the precolonial Filipino social structure. Patterns of interconnectedness, mutual dependence and relational harmony are firmly established from the *balangay* to *barangay*.[3] In these settings, no person is in isolation—one's actions, thoughts, even moral impulses are reflections of one's *loob* (relational will) with respect to one's kin and environment. Hospitality, ritual inclusion, collective responsibility such as feeding neighbors, inviting strangers into domestic space, or organizing collective labor—practices that form a people into an ethic of shared life are prominent and consistently documented in anthropological and historical accounts.[4]

Virgilio Enriquez, the father of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, to whom scholars now owe the renaissance of reading the Filipino context with Filipino categories, traces how the Spanish and American periods of colonization reinterpreted and expanded *kapwa*.[5] Spanish missionaries, by translation and ritual accommodation, incorporated indigenous moral idioms into Christian categories—reworking *kapwa* in terms of Gospel imperatives such as neighborly love. This blending of traditions enlarged the moral circle but imposed upon it hierarchies and patronage systems that made reciprocity more complex.[6] Subsequent American colonization introduced public education, bureaucratic administration, and Western psychology, providing the means for

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[1] *Kapwa in this paper* follows the definition of Kathrin De Guia, a prominent figure in the *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* movement—kapwa is the "self in other" or a "shared identity." See *Kapwa: The Self in the Other: Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture-Bearers* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 2005).

[2] A superordinate value is an overarching principle that guides a culture's beliefs, behaviors, other values, norms, and practices.

[3] *Balangay* is the traditional wooden boat for travel, trade, and migration of precolonial Filipino communities. *Barangay* is similar to a village—from the word *balangay,* early Filipino communities were constituted by families who arrived in the Philippine islands together by boat.

[4] de Guia, *Kapwa*, 5–16, 28–31.

[5] Virgilio G. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1992), 48–80.

[6] Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 48-54.

critique and structuring as well as market logics and individualism that accelerated. These forces started corroding the relational texture that supported kapwa, substituting collective identity with individual accomplishment.[7]

Despite such iterations from over 400 years of colonization, *kapwa* remains resilient. It lies at the roots of the Filipino culture and the endures at the canopy of Filipino consciousness. *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology) brought this to light in the 1970s. Challenging foreign and transplanted frameworks, Enriquez redefined Filipino personhood as *pagkatao* and positioned *kapwa*—the interconnectedness of self and other—at the nexus of Filipino moral awareness. Out of this inner flow *pakiramdam* (shared inner sense), *loob* (relational will)—not as abstract virtues but as embodied capacities to inform everyday discernment: when to speak, what to offer, how to mend. These values resonate with precolonial social form which promoted mutual dependence and finely calibrated contextual sensitivity.

On this basis, kapwa is not just cultural—it is the cognitive-moral architecture of Filipino existence, providing a durable template for development, theology, and social change based on shared humanity. *Kapwa* persists not as an antiquated way of being from the distant and precolonial past, but as a durable, reliable relational category for rethinking theology and dreaming for a new people. It calls for a reimagination of home, a community and mission that is grounded in shared identity, communal life, and mutual care and trust.

Kapwa as Bridge: Blurring "Ako" and "Iba"

The core missiological and ethical promise of kapwa is its ability to deconstruct the sharp Western modern binary between self (*ako*) and other (*iba*). Where other foreign liberal ethics tends to start with the autonomous subject and then query how that subject ought to stand in relation to others, kapwa starts relationally: the subject is formed as subject only to the extent that it is a part of networks of mutuality. This constitutive relationality has deep implications for cognition, affect, and moral practice.

Psychologically, *pakikiramdam* illustrates *kapwa's* cognitive-affective register. Frequently translated into empathy or relational sensitivity, *pakikiramdam* is cultivated attentiveness to another's inner world by way of subtle cues—tone, posture, gaze, silence, and atmosphere. It is not just emotional contagion or just cognitive perspective-taking; it is a skill acquired in families, ritual settings, and communal living that teaches when to speak, how to provide assistance without shaming, and when restraint is the more compassionate action.[8] The pragmatic consequence is a social intelligence sensitively attuned to dignity: the individual exercises a moral prudence that attends to the other's interiority prior to action. Theologically, *pakikiramdam* can be interpreted as an incarnational prudence: it educates ministerial discernment to read where grace may be taken in or rejected, and habituates timing and attendance in pastoral practice.

Ethically, kapwa inspires cycles of spontaneous self-giving (*kagandahang-loob*) and mutual obligation (*utang-na-loob*). *Kagandahang-loob* is the inclination to provide without a

[7] Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 62–64, 75–80.

[8] Jeremiah Reyes, "Loob and Kapwa: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics," *Asian Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2015):158-64.

prompt anticipation of payback: a generosity that develops from the self-giving or *kagandang loob. Utang-na-loob* is the experienced, self-imposed duty to return kindness in a manner that maintains relationship instead of converting it into an account.[9] The tension between the two creates relational resilience: gifts and care are not isolated events but components of long-lasting webs of reciprocal assistance whereby dignity is acknowledged and duties are internalized and not enforced legally.

For Christian witness, such characteristics make kapwa a valuable bridge. The biblical call to love one's neighbor makes sense in local language when evangelized not as a universal principle but as a development of *kagandahang-loob* and *utang-na-loob*. Formative pastoral ministry that equips *pakikiramdam* equips incarnational ministry: ministers who can learn to be present, who schedule speech and gift well, and who attend to relational dignity can incarnate the gospel in manner that is culturally articulate and ethically sturdy. In addition, the embodied church can set an example of a countercultural counterpoint by performing *kapwa*-inflected patterns of mutual care—sharing meals, corporate lamentation, public solidarity—that bear out the gospel's claim on shared life.

Cultural superordinate values in other Homes: Ubuntu and (American) Pragmatism

> A Filipino value that is naturally good should be preserved, one that is indifferent or mixed should be elevated or transformed, and one that is bad should be suppressed or sublimated...there are two possible directions which natural Filipino values can take – either the way of integration or the way of disintegration.[10]

The 20th century Filipino Jesuit scholar, Father Vitaliano Gorospe, elaborates on the inherent potential within superordinate cultural values. From his theoretical framework which suggests that cultural superordinate values have potential to be a means of integration or disintegration, we build a scaffolding to identify this phenomenon in Filipino culture and in other cultures. In a short detour from *kapwa*, we will explore two other cultural superordinate values: *ubuntu* from the South African Bantu home culture and *pragmatism* from American home culture and how these cultural values have gone the way of integration and the way of disintegration. We have chosen the terms bridge and barrier to communicate Gorospe's language of way and direction towards *integration* or *disintegration*. Both sets of terms communicate that there are pathways which cultural superordinate values travel and the nexus which can determine which way a cultural value might be channeled within a locale or home, is the body of Christ in that place.

Ubuntu as Bridge

Ubuntu, expressed in the Zulu proverb from the Bantu language, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, 'a person is a person through other persons', provides a relational vision of humanity.[11]

[9] Reyes, "Loob and Kapwa," 158–63; Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology*, 75–80.

[10] Vitaliano R. Gorospe, "Christian Renewal of Filipino Values," *Philippine Studies* 14, no. 2 (1966): 191–227.

[11] Augustine Shutte, *Philosophy for Africa* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993), 46

Mogobe Ramose shares, "*Ubuntu* is the root of African philosophy."[12] How is this African philosophy and vision of being human, embodied and lived? Christian leaders such as Desmond Tutu wove *ubuntu* into the call for reconciliation after apartheid, declaring, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours'.[13] Tutu's *ubuntu* moves from head to heart and hands. *Ubuntu* is embodied and enacted in our personhood and being. It is both who I am and who we are.

An *Ubuntu* theological anthropology, or definition of what it means to be human from a theological framework, can be summed up as coexistent interdependence. The image conjured by such a definition sounds, Trinitarian. It is, therefore, no surprise that Archbishop Desmond Tutu would argue that this superordinate cultural value belongs to the entire world, even all of humanity.

> *Ubuntu* is a moral quality of a person in its primary sense but also a phenomenon 'according to which persons are interconnected.' *Ubuntu* is at the same time an ethic, a moral imperative, a moral virtue expected of all humans wherever they are found. *Ubuntu* is what makes us human...the word assumes that every human being, every *muntu* everywhere, should be true to their *Ubuntu* and should be guided by the moral imperatives and demands of *Ubuntu*.[14]

The voices of these African philosophers and theologians, Ramose, Mojola and Tutu, affirm the ways in which *ubuntu* has been an integrating force in African culture and in our . So, how is it then, that such a virtue ethic that has fostered coexistent interdependence reflecting the image of our Trinitarian God, also have lost its way? In what ways has *ubuntu* been a barrier?

Ubuntu as Barrier

There is a growing population of those affected by homelessness in the urban centers of South Africa. This has created a pathway of disintegration whereby there is "a deep and growing disconnect between the practice of *ubuntu* and the rhetoric, remote philosophical discourse, abstract notions and visions of an African way of life which has created a barrier for segments of South African population.[15] "When a culturally grounded philosophy or social consciousness becomes a façade, a cultural brand, rather than a transformative ethic grounded in embodiment

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[12] Mogobe B. Ramose, *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*. (Harare: Mond Books, 1999), 51. Ramose is an African philosopher and retired professor of philosophy, law, and ethics at the University of South Africa in Pretoria.

[13] Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 31.

[14] Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "*Ubuntu* in the Christian Theology and Praxis of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Its Implications for Global Justice and Human Rights," in *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*, ed. James Ogude (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 34. Mojola has been involved with Scripture translation in East Africa for almost forty years. He is Professor of Philosophy and Translation Studies at St Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya, and he is also Honorary Professor of the Faculty of Theology, Pretoria University, South Africa. He is a published author with Langham Publishing including his 2020 publication, *God Speaks My Language.*

[15] Stephan F. de Beer, "Ubuntu is Homeless: An Urban Theological Reflection," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no. 2 (2015), 2.

and mutual responsibility, it can go the way of disintegration and become a barrier to the very thing it was meant to be. "If we are to retain a vision of *ubuntu*, we need to first acknowledge that *ubuntu*, at least in urban South African contexts, indeed seems to be homeless, in other words, displaced from the daily practices that deny ordinary people their humanness."[16]

American Pragmatism as Bridge

Pragmatism is an American cultural value that emerged from philosophers who believed that truth and meaning were not fixed abstract ideas attached to objects or an ultimate reality or static revelation. In contrast American pragmatism aligns itself with dynamic revelation which asserts the biblical truth that faith is not belief alone, but lived and embodied and perhaps even measured in the work of our hands and feet. James 2:17 says, "Faith without works is dead." The rise of this American cultural value to prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a revolutionary era in American philosophy.

It has been described as a, "uniquely American phenomenon"[17] and "the most distinctive American contribution to philosophy"[18] As this philosophy rose in prominence, no longer were absolutes and fixed meanings accepted at face value. Abstract thought needed movement into action and lived experience as a scientific process which leads us to new truths. John Dewey, a significant influence in classic pragmatism wrote, "Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men."[19]

Pragmatism emphasizes activity as the fruit of thought and belief actualized through process. It can mirror the apostolic and evangelistic call to embody the gospel in tangible and compassionate ways. William James, another hallmark figure of American pragmatism wrote that, "truth happens to an idea."[20] When this superordinate cultural value is manifested in the Church, our faith is made sight through practice and participation in God's ongoing revelatory and redemptive work.[21] This is the pathway that American pragmatism treads as it bridges this superordinate American cultural value to God's mission in the world.

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[16] Ibid.,5.

[17] Welch, Shawn. *Justified: The Pragmaticization of American Evangelicalism from Jonathan Edwards to the Social Gospel*. PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2020, 5.

[18] Dickstein, Morris, ed. *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law, and Culture.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998, 1.

[19] John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 156.

[20] William James, Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 201. In Lecture VI of Pragmatism (1907), James is expressing the American pragmatist philosophy that truth is not a fixed property but a process that unfolds through experimentation and verification in lived experience.

[21] There has been so much written that this paper cannot adequately address either to defend the propositional/fixed view of revelation (see B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the* Bible (1948), Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (1976-1983) and J.I Packer, *God Has Spoken* (1965)) or to defend a dynamic/ongoing view of revelation (see Karl Barth *Church Dogmatics* (1932), Emil Brunner *Revelation and Reason* (1946), Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (1951-63), Newbigin *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989), and N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (2005)).

American Pragmatism as Barrier

> In discussions about the contemporary mission of the Church it is often said that the Church ought to address itself to the real questions which people are asking. That is to misunderstand the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church. The world's questions are not the questions which lead to life. What really needs to be said is that where the Church is faithful to the Lord, there the powers of the kingdom are present and people begin to ask the questions to which the gospel is the answer. And that, I suppose, is why the letters of St. Paul contain so many exhortations to faithfulness...[22]

What Newbigin is warning against is the potential that pragmatism carries to conform mission strategy to what works in culture in the name of contextualization. This pathway can tempt the Church to engage God's mission as a marketing strategy rather than mission as witness rooted in faithfulness.[23] At the heart of Newbigin's statement is doubt about the questions which this world is asking. Namely, American pragmatism asks, "What works?" Often, the answer to that question is given through what is measured in numbers and dollars.

In a practical application, Joshua Heavin, in his article "Pragmatism and the Practice of Theology," equates the pressures of academia to publish as a form of American pragmatist "works righteousness."

> The pressure for every academic to continually justify their existence under the mantra of 'publish or perish' prevents many from being able to devote serious time and energy to cross-disciplinary *reading and reflection* while juggling teaching, grading, and an abundance of meetings. Understandably, there are few grants willing to fund undirected *thought and reading*. Nonetheless, the most helpful, creative, and generative theological work often emerges from periods of *deep reflection* upon a sustained curiosity, whose *real value and contribution might not be fully perceptible* or *marketable* at its inception.[24] (italics added)

Both *Ubuntu* and American pragmatism transpire from deep cultural soil—*Ubuntu* from a communal vision of personhood shaped by mutuality, and American pragmatism from a conviction that *doing* supersedes *knowing* and *being*. Each expresses a superordinate cultural value that emerges from its motherland. Faithful participation in the mission of God therefore requires discerning how to reconcile our cultural values with our Christian faith in a manner that is faithful to both without diminishing the gospel. This is the foundation of a rightly-ordered theology of home.

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[22] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, ,1989), 119

[23] Heavin, Joshua. "Pragmatism and the Practice of Theology." *Mere Orthodoxy*, March 20, 2019. Accessed October 5, 2025.https://mereorthodoxy.com/pragmatism-practice-theology. Joshua Heavin is a Ph.D. Candidate at Trinity College Bristol, University of Aberdeen, where he is writing a dissertation on the Apostle Paul and Participation in Christ.

[24] Ibid.

Kapwa as Barrier: A Case Study

At the outset, we identified the ways in which kapwa serves as a bridge to the faithful contextualized gospel message in Filipino form. Research on this superordinate Filipino cultural value finds it also manifested in malformed ways. When kapwa is manifested in extreme forms, it travels the pathway of disintegration to the point of becoming a barrier to Filipino participation in the missio Dei.

Case Study

In October 2023, I interviewed a group of five Filipino Nazarene pastors to discover Filipino contextual theologies of mission and ecclesiology. In these conversations, a focus group was used as the primary research method followed by semi-structured individual ethnographic interviews. Data gathered from Focus Group 1 (FG1) revealed a Filipino ecclesiology that is rooted in embodiment.

> On Sundays, we go into homes around the *barangay*, 'tight-knit community'...our work is done weekly...it is persistent...we see them." (FG1 P2) "We must be aware of their problems...so they can text us...we pray and then visit...it's our burden. (FG1 P5).[25]

When asked why the burdens of the people in their barangay have become their burdens, they responded immediately and all at once, indicating that I had touched on a deeply held belief and value for all of them.

> It's imitating God...inside their home you can see they are broken. I know what it is like to be alone. If they hurt, we hurt." (FG1 P4) "A burden of a member is a burden of a pastor." (FG1 P3). "Visiting in their home expresses we care, and someone looks out for their welfare.(FG1 P1).[26]

Their answers communicate how *kapwa* is practiced and embodied in their lives. At the same time, I observed that these embodied missional practices were largely with their own homogenous communities. This led to the second phase of research through one-on-one ethnographic interviews directed towards discovering if *kapwa* was practiced across cultural boundaries. Some described their ministries with tribal people or with Catholics as boundary-crossing, a contextual manifestation of a Filipino missional ecclesiology. Another participant shared about work within the Philippines geographically but cross-culturally with Korean missionaries.

> The Korean...you will be inspired...they are so hard working, and I love to be with them." (EI P5). When I asked P5 if the Filipinos inspired the Koreans in any way,

[25] Lynne M. Bollinger, *Maglakbay Nang Magkaagapay: A Filipino Lived Theology of Accompaniment* (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2022), ProQuest (3178439894). Focus group and ethnographic interview participants were assigned an alphanumerical identification code to maintain anonymity.

[26] Ibid.

> P5 responded, "I think so...because sometimes I pray that Filipinos will be like them (Koreans)."

I wanted to know if there was a barrier to their embodied missional practices across culture. I asked, "Could Filipinos go to Korea and teach?"

> Me teaching them? HA!" (She paused then continued.) "Maybe by sharing what we have learned here, we can help in a way, like you in the U.S., we can help in a way by telling you what we are going through, how we succeed, and how we share to other people. (EI P5)

In her article, "In Asia, Power Gets in the Way,*"* Kate Sweetman identifies Asian hierarchical structures of power which, when left unconfronted, can lead to failure.[27] Sweetman is pointing to researcher Geert Hofstede and what he calls the cultural dimension of "power distance", defined as, "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country accept that power is distributed unequally.[28]

I wondered if the response from P5 revealed a barrier embedded in the superordinate cultural value of *kapwa*. Could extreme forms of *kapwa* prevent Filipino Nazarenes from embodying the *missio Dei* with *ibang tao*, 'outsiders'? If *kapwa*, 'deep loyal companionship' is a barrier to practicing mission with *ibang tao*, 'different others' or non−Filipinos, then how will Filipino Nazarenes contribute to global conversations on mission or effective discipleship and church growth that originates with homegrown theologies?

Extreme *kapwa* might also be defined as a manifestation of homophily or love of the same[29] which exists not only in homogeneous units but within people who identify themselves as family or *oikos,* 'household' in Greek. In the Filipino context, *kapwa,* 'deep loyal companionship', and *bayanihan spirit*[30] are expressed in embodied ways to *barangay,* 'tight-knit community' members, neighbors who may or may not be connected through familial or kinship lines.

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[27] Sweetman, Kate. "In Asia, Power Gets in the Way." *Harvard Business Review*, April 10, 2012.

[28] The Culture Factor, accessed October 11, 2025, 12:14 p.m. PHT, https://theculturefactor.com

[29] Farah, Warrick. 2023. "The Homophilous Unit Paradox: Church planting movements within and beyond the Oikos" IJFM 40 (1-2): 69-77.Farah utilizes the term homophily and homophilous networks as "people with 'like characteristics [who] tend to be connected' and that 'connected people tend to have an effect on one another...homophily [could] transcend ethnicity and includes interests, values, hobbies, etc.'" (Farah. 2023, 74.)

[30] Solis, Christian U. 2023 *"Pakikipagkapwa-tao and Bayanihan Spirit."* Religion and Social Communication: Journal of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication. 21 (1):165-89. "Bayanihan spirit is a manifestation of Filipinos' idea of helping one another. It is often depicted in arts where men would carry a bahay-kubo (nipa house) to transfer to another place. It becomes a real Filipino value of helpfulness to his fellowmen. All actions and forms of helping fellow Filipinos thereby signify a true bayanihan spirit."

I continued my research of *kapwa* with a comparative group. I used participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, and a second focus group (FG2) with a new group of Filipinos who co-led an event which required them to work with a multicultural leadership team including Koreans and Americans. In a previous meeting in early January, Burmese leaders questioned the suggestions of the Filipinos. A few weeks later we held a brainstorming session on a Wednesday afternoon in late January 2024. Koreans, Burmese, and Americans were present along with Filipinos. I observed a physical, verbal, and emotional withdrawal from the Filipino leaders. During the informal ethnographic interview with the Filipino co-leaders, I asked them to share their thoughts about the brainstorming session. At first, they were hesitant but eventually they opened up and began speaking.

> When I think about last Wednesday's meeting, I didn't think about it then but maybe the reason why I didn't say anything is that they are American. They can handle it. Maybe they are superior. (EI PAB). They have experience leading events like this, so we just say, 'ok, just tell me what to do.' I tell you this about Filipinos, we sometimes think we are less important (other participant nods head in agreement). You really have to encourage a Filipino to get them to talk. And still if they talk and you do not use their idea, they will not talk the next time. This is true Filipino culture. We are afraid to say something. Even if we are very intelligent, if you do not ask me, I will not say anything. (EI PMR)[31]

Extreme Kapwa

When manifested in this form, "extreme kapwa," a term I define as 'exclusive Filipino cultural loyalty or companionship as a manifestation of fear, insecurity, and self‒protection'[32] becomes a barrier to Filipino participation in the mission of God in the world. There are other complex power dynamics that contribute to this phenomenon, but in particular, Filipino history is a story of being a conquered and colonized people. When I (Lynne) shared the data collected from this case study with my colleague and friend, Dr. Joy Pring Faraz, she immediately recognized and named this as evidence of a colonized mind. How can Filipinos overcome this embedded "cultural prison" of their minds which robs the global church of their contribution toward Filipino ways of being the church in the world?[33] What is the way forward towards integration, that can decolonize minds to believe again in the value of their thinking, their voice and presence in the global church?

[31] Lynne M. Bollinger, *Maglakbay Nang Magkaagapay: A Filipino Lived Theology of Accompaniment* (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2022), ProQuest (3178439894). I conducted this ethnographic interview on 1/31/24. Quotes are taken from my personal field notes entry on 2/5/24, an excerpt from the cited dissertation.

[32] Ibid.

[33] In *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (2003), Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers explore the concept of a "cultural prison" to describe how people groups are often bound by their cultural assumptions which limits their ability to interact with people from other cultures.

Kapwa', shared identity: not either/or but both/and, with others and with Christ:

How do we reconcile Filipino cultural identity and Filipino Christian identity for the sake of witness and mission? As stated earlier, *kapwa* is not just cultural—it is the cognitive schema, a defining way of thinking, knowing, and being of Filipino existence. *Kapwa* is the resilient, interpersonal, contextualized Filipino *hesed,* or "kindness (towards God)...beauty – favor, good deed-liness, loving kindness, merciful kindness," necessary for rethinking theology and dreaming for a new people.[34] It calls for a reimagination of home, a community and mission that is grounded in shared identity, communal life, and mutual care and trust.

Change dynamics and adaptive challenges require that people, "give up some elements of their own cultural DNA...in order to create a...new arrangement to survive and thrive"[35] What we are pointing towards is not a "giving up" as in leaving behind, as much as a "giving unto." Giving unto other cultures what has held Filipinos together and, when necessary, "giving in," to holiness which can only be understood relationally. Giving in to the push and pull of prophetic voices within our home cultures which call us out when superordinate cultural values become barriers. Giving in to the global church, to missiological research which can help us see ourselves more clearly and provide the necessary balance when superordinate cultural values go the way of disintegration or mission drift.

Herein, the one body of Christ, is the means of grace for reconciling our cultural identities with our Christian identities. Wherever we find "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" lived out in our home cultures, we invoke the practice of *hesed*, of "love and kindness especially of men (sic) amongst themselves" to become our way of life with our kin and among our global brother and sisterhood, as witness to the gospel for the sake of the world.[36]

A Filipino theology of home finds its *tahanan (home/base)* in *kapwa*—a shared self that reflects Christ's incarnational love. It is in this mutual, relational *hesed* that we discover both the courage to give to others and the humility to yield to God's sanctifying work. In the embrace of *kapwa* as both cultural and Christian, we become witnesses who are most communal, most hospitable, and most prophetically responsive to the Spirit's call—most at *home* in surrender to God's good purpose and plan for all *ethne.*

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