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# Individual and Collective Diaspora Remittances in the Philippines and Korea: An Interpretation of Narrative Identity, Communicative Action, and Recognition

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The University of San Francisco

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE DIASPORA REMITTANCES IN THE  
PHILIPPINES AND KOREA: AN INTERPRETATION OF NARRATIVE IDENTITY,  
COMMUNICATIVE ACTION, AND RECOGNITION

A Dissertation Presented  
To  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
Department of Leadership Studies  
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Janice Gow Pettey  
San Francisco  
May 2013

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Individual and Collective Diaspora Remittances in the Philippines and Korea: An Interpretation of Narrative Identity, Communicative Action, and Recognition

**Research Topic**

This study examines the practices of sending remittances from the United States to receivers in the Philippines, and collective and individual remittances supporting reunification of Korea with the intention of providing financial support for sustainable living and community projects. The research analyzes the narratives with reference to identity and culture of diaspora Filipinos and Koreans in the United States who are remitters and donors in the United States supporting humanitarian causes in North Korea.

**Research Theory and Protocol**

Through critical hermeneutic theory formulated by Paul Ricoeur (2005,1992,1991,1983) and Jürgen Habermas (1981,1987,1984) and the interpretive inquiry protocol developed by Ellen Herda (1999, 2000), the theoretical categories of narrative identity, communicative action, and recognition were applied to this study.

**Research Categories**

Research conversations from Filipino overseas migrant workers who remit and individual recipients of remittances in the Philippines provide the narrative for participants from the Philippines. Korean Americans now living in the United States, and members of nonprofit nongovernmental organizations supporting efforts to assist North Koreans, provide the narratives on financial support and peacemaking endeavors between the North Korea and selected institutions in the United States.

## **Findings**

The study revealed two findings: remittance receivers in the Philippines are often young. They are given the responsibility to discern the best use of remittances for the family, and are often socially isolated and ill-prepared to make wise adult decisions. The second finding involves financial contributions supporting North Korea. South Koreans remit to kin in North Korea through private channels. Korean Americans choose largely to support humanitarian projects in North Korea through support through Korean American institutions. This research also identified non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supporting humanitarian projects in North Korea financed by private contributions.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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## CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

### Introduction

This research examined the practices of sending remittances from the United States to receivers in the Philippines and the Koreas with the intention of providing financial support for sustainable living and community projects. The purpose of sending funds is to help people rise out of poverty. There exists a lack of understanding about the connection established through a remittance between the giver and the receiver, and a disconnect in the general understanding of the meaning of a remittance to a country, community.

In the Philippines, relatives in the United States send funds to relatives in their homeland for basic necessities such as food and schooling. This research included Koreans and non-Koreans in the United States who provide financial support for peacemaking projects in North Korea,.

Additionally, this research analyzed the narratives of Filipinos, living in the United States who have sent remittances to their homeland for a minimum of five years, receivers of the remittances living in the Philippines. The theoretical framework used for this inquiry is critical hermeneutics using the following categories:

- Narrative Identity: What stories can be unveiled from narratives of 16 selected members of the Philippine and Korean diaspora in order to provide the context for understanding the reasons and purposes people send money to their homeland?
- Recognition: How does the sending and receiving of remittances change or shape the identity of both the giver and receiver in terms of the other?

- Communicative Action: How may mutual understanding and public discourse lead to new interpretations and a shared reality of the meaning and usefulness of the remittance?

The following section provides a background for this study on migrant remittances.

### **Background**

Groups of individuals seeking to maintain identity with their native culture are often described as diasporas. In the contemporary context of cultural diversity, immigrant populations and decolonization diasporas “constitute constellations of political action that tend to modify the internal and external hierarchies of countries as well as their historicities” (Mudimbe 1999:3). Diasporas act within national contexts of the home country from a position of de-territorialized minorities (Mudimbe 1999:4). Diasporas reflect identity, giving a sense of self, while physically separated from one’s homeland. At the same time, the identity of diaspora groups changes the longer one is living in a new place, a new culture.

A practice common for many migrants or diaspora groups is to send remittances, the sending of money to family and others to alleviate the dire financial situation in the home country. Remittances have grown rapidly as the numbers of people leaving their native homeland in search of greater financial security or education has increased. With the rapidly growing numbers of transnational families living in and contributing to two cultures, two countries, and two economies at the same time, remittances have become critical to the survival of millions of families and to the health of many national economies (Terry 2005:8). A remittance is a transfer of funds to provide support or remove an obligation. Billions of dollars are remitted annually, and the Philippines ranks

high in terms of dollars remitted back to the Philippines (Terry 2005:345). The United States is a popular destination for Filipino migrant workers, resulting in a growing amount of US dollars being sent to the Philippines as remittances (Goldberg and Levi 2008).

According to a report issued by Mastercard in 2008 on “The Impact of Remittances on Economic Growth” (Goldberg and Levi 2008:2), remittance benefits to receiving families is “hugely important to the countries who receive them...Remittances have become even more important than foreign direct investment (FDI) as a source of capital inflow to needy nations.”

Beyond remittances, diaspora groups, such as Korean Americans, join together to provide support for nationalistic and humanitarian reasons. An unknown number of the 20,000 North Koreans living in South Korea remit to families still living in the North. North Koreans living in China and throughout Southeast Asia also remit, but a veil of secrecy surrounds the practice, for fear of identifying recipients in North Korea. In South Korea, reunification of the North and South is a deeply held desire on a familial level, and South Koreans, depending on their age, hope for reunification. There are South Koreans who believe that the cost of reunification will negatively affect their comfortable financial lifestyle, and there are North Koreans who fear reunification based on limited access to open information about South Korea.

Korean Americans and South Koreans, through churches and socio-political associations, endeavor to provide financial resources to fund the eventual reunification. Additionally, North Korean refugees now living in South Korea send money to family left behind in the north.

Remittances involve senders and receivers. Implications exist for the sending country as well as the receiving country. Forty-one billion dollars leaves the United States annually through remittances (Goldberg and Levi 2008). According to earlier estimates in 2002 (Shah 2012) reported that Americans sent \$34 billion overseas in private donations, more than twice the official US foreign aid of \$15 billion at that time. The circulation of money driven by remittances is enormous, and grows as the numbers of people leaving countries like the Philippines increases.

Beyond remittances, as described above, diaspora populations like Korean Americans find that they have the financial resources to affect the long-held desire to see a unified Korea. Funds moving from one country to another usually arise from pre-existing links between the sending and receiving countries (Castles and Miller 2009). These are family members who send monies to help relatives living in a developing economy, or members of a cultural group who send money to help others of the same group living under adverse political conditions. In each case, the senders want to help the receivers live a better life.

### **Significance of the Issue**

The study of remittances within the development arena particularly serving the poor has received scant attention (Levitt 1998). This research may be beneficial to individuals and organizations interested in program development in Asia, specifically the Koreas and the Philippines, by providing new insights into the popular practice of remitting not only to one's family, but also to those not known to the sender.

The role of remittances in reducing poverty in the receiving country is addressed in this research through the significance of the role of private funds used to address the

challenges of poverty in the Philippines. Additional significance is associated with the effects on the economy of the receiving country. Migrants and diaspora populations living in and remitting from the United States experience both economic and social/cultural implications, including: a flexible workforce, larger labor pool, benefit to consumers, entrepreneurial talent, and a positive return on immigration for society over generations (World Savvy Monitor Issue 7, January 2009).

The research also addresses implications for the American economy. Over US\$40 billion in remittances leaves the United States annually (Goldberg and Levi 2008). Businesses who offer remittance services compete for migrant customers. Nonprofit organizations create paths to connect with new donors from migrant communities. Giving USA annually reports giving by Americans to domestic and international causes; in 2010 it reported \$289 billion in charitable donations in 2010 (Giving USA 2011).

### **Summary**

This research examines the practices of sending remittances to receivers in the Philippines and the Koreas from senders in the United States. The diaspora groups from these two countries living in the United States remit money back to their homelands with the intention of providing opportunity for economic and community support.

My research aim seeks greater understanding of the intent and uses of remitted funds. The research also addresses possible implications for philanthropic giving. In the next section, I present a preliminary background of the sites where I conducted my research conversations.



## CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH SITES

### Introduction

The research on family and collective remittances took place in South Korea and the Philippines, Cambodia, and various locations in the United States. The primary sites for this research were South Korea and the Philippines.

### Korea

#### **Introduction: Korea – A Country Divided**



Figure 1 Korea: Land of Morning Calm  
Credit: iken2010.blogspot.com

“There is no country of comparable significance which so many people are ignorant,” American anthropologist Cornelius Osgood (1951:v) said of Korea. In 1934 A.D., an emperor of the Ming dynasty of China gave Korea the title of 'Chaohsien' meaning morning freshness. The title was most suited to Korea because of its spellbinding natural beauty of picturesque high mountains and clear waters and its

splendid tranquility, particularly in the morning, which describes the title given Korea as the 'Land of Morning Calm.'

## Geography

The Korean Peninsula connects to a section of the northeastern provinces of China, and for about 11 miles touches Russia about 75 miles south of Vladivostok. Separated from Korea by the Yellow Sea is Japan, 120 miles southeast.



FIGURE 2 KOREAN PENINSULA  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia\\_/Korean\\_peninsula.gif](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia_/Korean_peninsula.gif)

For centuries Korea's strategic location drew the attention of expansionist ambitions of various countries, most significantly, Japan and China. Korea was under Japanese rule twice – briefly in the 16th century and for 35 years from 1910-1945. The

end of the Japanese occupation in the mid-20th century created a new geographic boundary, the 38th parallel, which separates South Korea from North Korea (Oberdorfer 2001:6).

The entire Korean peninsula is a compact, large mountainous area. Its latitude is approximately the same as the eastern United States, extending from Maine to North Carolina. Rugged mountain ranges along the eastern side of Korea caused a majority of people to settle in the less mountainous western areas. This is where Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is located.

In 2010, Seoul, the largest city in South Korea, reported a population of 9.8 million (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html>). In the north, Panmunjom is the largest city and capital of North Korea. Koreans speak one language, Korean. The geography of the Korean peninsula has contributed to Korea's difficulties with its neighbors. Korea has suffered nine hundred invasions in its 2000 years of recorded history (Cumings 2005, Oberdorfer 2001). A brief overview of Korea's tumultuous history follows.

### **History**

The imagined beginning of the Korean nation is the third millennium B.C. The Korean peninsula is sometimes described as the "hermit kingdom" referring to a turbulent time in Korea's history with China and Korea's decision to close its borders to all foreigners (Cumings 2005).

Korea's history is generally divided into six periods: The Three Kingdoms (Koryo, Paekche, and Silla), the opening of Korea and Japanese rule, Postwar Occupation, two Koreas, the Korean War, and contemporary Korea (Cumings 2005).

Traditionally, Koreans have been followers of Confucianism, but Buddhism gained in popularity during the Koryo Dynasty. The Yi dynasty adopted Confucianism as the official doctrine of the government. During the later Yi dynasty leadership became divided and weakened by internal disunity, and Korea was essentially defenseless when the Japanese invaded the country in 1900. Japan occupied Korea until 1945 (Oberdorfer 2001:6) when World War II came to a close and Japan surrendered its claim to Korea. Bruce Cumings (2005:148) writes that “Japan held Korea tightly, watched it closely, and pursued an organized architectonic colonialism in which the planner and administrator was the model...intervening in the economy, creating markets, spawning new industries, suppressing dissent.” To this day, Koreans chafe at the notion that the Japanese occupation “brought anything but repression and suffering” (Cumings 2005:183).

A new government was established when Japan vacated Korea. The United States and Russia both maintained a military presence during this time. Cumings (2005:186) maintains, “it is Americans who bear the lion’s share of the responsibility for the thirty-eighth parallel. It is possible that the US government did not fully realize the magnitude of its decision to carve a boundary in order to maintain US interests in the new republic of Korea.” In the days just preceding Japan’s surrender and Korea’s liberation, United States military officials secretly and swiftly moved to find a place to divide Korea. Cumings (2005:186-87) describes the decision process delegated to junior officers equipped with a map of Korea and instructions for drawing the separation:

It was around midnight on August 10-11 [1948], the atomic bombs had been dropped, the Soviet Red Army had entered the Pacific War, and American planners were rushing to arrange the Japanese surrender throughout the region. Given thirty minutes to do so...looked at a map and chose the thirty-eighth

parallel because it would place the capital city in the American zone.

The line was drawn at the 38th parallel, creating a divided Korea as a result of a war a country was torn apart. After the fighting reached a stalemate, the armies of North Korea, China, and the US-led UN Command (UNC), signed an armistice agreement that ended the fighting in 1953. South Korea, however, did not sign the armistice. Since no peace treaty has replaced the 1953 agreement, the North and South are still technically at war (Tanaka 2008:2). Russia and the United States were unable to agree on the implementation of joint trusteeship over Korea. This led in 1946 to the establishment of two governments, each claiming to be the legitimate government of all Korea. Following the Korean War the two separate governments stabilized into the existing political entities of North and South Korea (Cumings 2005).

From 1950-1953, Korea was engaged in a deadly civil war. South Korea, fortified with many US troops and significant amounts of United States financial aid, battled North Korea, led by Kim Il-Sung who effectively manipulated China and Russia for North Korea's benefit. Syngman Rhee, president of South Korea, was provocative and as self-confident as Kim Il-Sung. This was a war of Koreans invading Koreans, families at war against each other. American troops bombed major dams in North Korea, causing flash flooding to wipe out rice fields, the food staple of the country. Meanwhile North Korean troops outnumbered South Koreans and hundreds of thousands of lives were lost in this war (Oberdorfer 2001; Cumings 2005).

Military leadership ruled South Korea until 1986 when the constitution was changed to allow direct election of the president (Gills 1996:146). The return to democracy in the 1980s brought economic growth to Korea, especially in the high-tech

and computer industry. When Kim Dae-jung became president in 1998, he offered unconditional economic and humanitarian aid to North Korea (BBC News 2011). In 2000, President Kim Dae-jung was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2002, Roh Moo-hyun was elected president and he initiated the construction of a train that would travel from one side of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) to the other, opening communication and trade between the North and the South. October 2003 brought the largest mass crossing at the DMZ since the Korean War — hundreds of South Koreans traveled to Pyongyang for the opening of a gymnasium funded by Hyundai, the South Korean corporation (BBC News 2011). In 2007, passenger trains crossed the North-South border for the first time in 56 years (New York Times, May 17, 2007). Those trains now sit abandoned as a tourist attraction at the DMZ. Lee Myung-bak, a conservative, won the presidency in 2007. Recent thaws between the North and South were stalled.

Korean anthropologist Choong Soon-Kim (1988:3) states “ that the wounded remnants of the war persist— the estimated five million Koreans who were sundered from their families...family members divided by the thirty-eighth parallel who have faced not only physical separation but the virtual impossibility of communicating with one another”.

Twenty years later Han Shin Park (1984:123), a Korean scholar notes, “the approximately 50 million Koreans have maintained their lives in two drastically different political systems, with little interaction.” Attempts at reunification continue, and at the same time, political tensions between North and South Korea flare up, making reunification appear to be one-step-forward, one-step-back.

On December 19, 2012, South Koreans elected Park Geun-hye as the first female president of the country. She is the daughter of Park Chung-hee who was president of South Korea from 1961-1979. A former Republic of Korea (ROK) army general, Park became president through a military coup. He was assassinated in 1979.

### **Evolution of North Korean Ideology: *Juche***

*Juche*, Kim Il-sung's political philosophy, was adopted as the official state ideology of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1972 (Obendorfer 1997:401). Park (1998:32), writes, "without a proper and comprehensive knowledge of the premises and constraints of the ideology of *juche*, one may not be able to understand North Korea in terms of its behavioral orientations and value preferences."

It is believed that Kim Il-sung was trained in the Soviet Union in the 1940s (Park 1984:132) and was likely introduced to the Soviet use of *juche* ideology. Early North Korean politics were focused on the consolidation of power and the rehabilitation of agricultural productivity. Kim emulated many of China's political moves in the 1960s that encouraged the integration of socialist ideology. According to Park (1984:133), "In the movement for political integration...the notion of *Juche* (self reliance) which had been missing in the ideological system...became an integral ideological model."

*Juche* is more than self-reliance. Kim Il Sung (*in* Lee: 2003) explains:

Establishing *juche* means, in a nutshell, being the master of revolution and reconstruction in one's own country. This means holding fast to an independent position, rejecting dependence on others, using one's own brains, believing in one's own strength, displaying the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, and thus solving one's own problems for oneself on one's own responsibility under all circumstances.

The principles of *juche* are threefold: *Chaju* or domestic and foreign independence, *Charip* or economic independence; and, *Chawi* or military independence. *Juche* affirms that man has ultimate control over his destiny. There is nothing particularly novel in the tenets of the *juche* philosophy (Lee 2003:109). Lee, (2003:109) further writes, “Kim’s genius lay in his ability to fuse these elements together to capitalize on the North Korean drive for independence.”

*Juche* ideology has Korean and Confucian roots. Kim il-Sung (*in* Lee 2003:110) acknowledged that he drew inspiration from early Korean Confucian scholars. Independence is one of the virtues of Confucianism. This sense of independence is often characterized as nationalism for Koreans. *Juche* is an ideology built on nationalistic pride, a virtue shared by Koreans from both the north and the south.

### **People of Korea**

Koreans speak one language, Korean. Any distinction between North and South Koreans is political. Koreans share the same nationality. North Koreans speak a regional dialect of Korean, but it is understandable to South Koreans. The written Korean language uses Chinese characters and many Koreans can read Chinese. Korea, however, has its own phonetic alphabet composed of vowels and consonants. Once one learns this alphabet, it is remarkably easy to read Korean; comprehension is more difficult (Oberdorfer 2001; Cumings 2005).

Koreans place a high value on education (Cumings 2005:513), and many young Koreans attend universities in Seoul. Learning English is also important and English-speaking teachers from the United States, Canada, Ireland, and other English speaking countries, teach English students throughout Korea (Cumings 2005; Kim 1988). Korean



culture emphasizes the place of family as important as education. The nuclear family in Korean society is traditionally two parents, children, and perhaps paternal grandparents. Korean culture is traditionally male-dominated, but the ascent of the Korean economy has created professional opportunities for many Korean women (Kim 1988) as the election of Park Geun-hye as South Korea’s first female president in 2013.

### **Korean Diaspora**

The Korean diaspora consists of an estimated seven million people, both descendants of early emigrants from the Korean peninsula, as well as more recent émigrés from Korea. [Note: An emigrant leaves to live in another country; an immigrant

Chinese	3.3 million
Asian Indian	2.8 million
Filipino	2.5 million
Vietnamese	1.5 million
Korean	1.4 million

is someone who settles in a new country.] Nearly four-fifths of expatriate Koreans live in just three countries: China, the United States, and Japan. More than five million North Koreans migrated to South Korea before and during the Korean War (Mo 1994:62) The Korean-American diaspora is the fifth largest Asian group in the United States, see Table 1 (US Census 2010).

Table 1: 2010 US Asian Diaspora Population  
Source: US Census 2010

The Korean-American diaspora is a fairly new immigrant group; only 11,000 Korean immigrants lived in the United States in 1960 (Terrazas and Batog 2010). The Korean population grew to 1.4 million as reported by the 2010 US Census (US Census Bureau 2010, Terraza and Batog, 2010). Current immigration rates for Koreans are

declining mainly due to South Korea’s reduced dependency on exporting labor for economic benefit.

Korean Americans constitute some of the most highly educated people in the United States. According to the US Census 2000, 86 percent of Korean Americans have at least a high school education, and 44 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

As the economy of the Republic of Korea is healthy and unemployment is not high, the dependence or need for remittances from members of the Korean-American diaspora to family members in South Korea is low, see Table 2.

Global Per Capita Remittance Flows to Asia	
Filipinos	\$4,199
Chinese	\$3,294
Indians	\$2,545
Koreans	\$ 570

Practices of informal giving among Korean Americans according to Jessica Chao (1999) “[are rooted in cultural values of loyalty and obligation to family

Table 2 Global Remittance Flows  
Source: The World Bank, 2006

members, community and the larger society.” A distinguishing characteristic of Korean-American diaspora informal giving is that giving is frequently channeled through the church. The church typically provides a new Korean immigrant with immediate support through social services; job searches, navigating the American immigration system (Ecklund, 2008).

Seventy to 80 percent of Koreans identify themselves as Christians (Kim and Shin 2001). There are accordingly numerous (and large) Korean-American churches. Give2Asia’s (2011) working paper on Korean-American philanthropy reports,

“Anecdotal evidence offered by Korean-American donors and advisors suggests that Korean Americans are quite generous to their churches, to which many direct most or all of their giving.” Philanthropic giving from larger Korean-American churches’ includes support for local community outreach and international needs. The Give2Asia paper (2011) states, “Programs related to North Korea are especially prevalent. Christian organizations based in South Korea and the United States are at the forefront of humanitarian aid efforts in North Korea, and they receive a good deal of financial support from Korean-American churchgoers.” The aim of peacemaking is key to contributions from Korean-American churches to North Korean projects.

### **Economy**

South Korea’s economy currently ranks 15th in the world by GDP (Heritage Foundation 2010). South Korea is a member of the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD). With limited natural resources and constant overpopulation in its small territory, South Korea adapted an export-oriented economic strategy to grow its economy, and in 2010, South Korea was the seventh largest exporter and tenth largest importer in the world (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html>). In a few decades, Korea moved from a recipient of international aid to a donor. Between 2008 and 2009, South Korea donated economic aid of \$1.7 billion to countries other than North Korea. South Korea’s separate annual economic aid to North Korea has historically been more than twice its official development assistance, monies directed as foreign aid from South Korea to other countries (ODA Korea).

In contrast to the economic success in South Korea, North Korea is one of the least open economies, facing chronic economic problems. Industrial and power output has stagnated for years. Frequent weather-related crop failures aggravated chronic food shortages caused by poor soil quality, insufficient fertilization, and persistent shortages of farm vehicles and fuel. Since 2002 the government has allowed private farmers' markets, and some private farming. In an effort to boost agricultural output the North Korean government in 2005 reversed some of these policies. By the end of 2005 the government terminated most international humanitarian assistance operations, opting only for development assistance. In 2009, the government issued new currency, limiting the amount of North Korean *won* that could be exchanged for the new currency. Attracting foreign investment, particularly from China, is a condition needed for improving the standard of living for North Koreans (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>). The dramatic differences in the economies of the two related countries characterize the strain of political separation.

The cost of reunification is a concern for the economies of North and South Korea. Koreans are aware of the cost of reunification of Germany in 1990. Koreans in the south note the costs of German reunification and as Mo 1994:48) writes, " South Korea favors a multi-stage reunification process in which economic and political union will be gradually achieved through negotiations between North and South Korea." The ambivalence of the South Korean government toward reunification is partly derived from South Korea's domestic concerns. In particular, the South Korean government is well aware that it would not be capable of supporting and absorbing high volumes of people at once (Tanaka 2008: 4).

Another cost of reunification involves the United States. Once Korea was divided, the US maintained some responsibility for the newly formed Republic of Korea. Over time American interests have revolved around stability in Asia (Gills 1996:266). Uncertainty over sustained U.S involvement for a unified Korea is but one of many issues clouding the horizon of unification.

### **Summary**

Korea is a country of contrasts and conflict. Conflict has wracked the region for centuries, most notably, the Japanese occupation for 40 years, followed by a deadly civil war and additional foreign involvement from the United States and Russia, leading to the separation of the country, dividing Korea in two, for foreign political purposes.

Called the “Hermit Kingdom” for its geography, the Korean peninsula shares a relatively short border with China and Russia. Koreans are a homogenous society. Perhaps resulting from the long Japanese occupation, Koreans maintain a strong nationalistic pride. The imagined future of a reunified Korea remains a dream for Koreans, many of whom are now too young to know of family living in the North.

Another country south of Korea sharing space in the same ocean on the same continent – the Philippines, is my second research site.

## The Philippines



Figure 3: Philippines  
Source: [www.destination360.com](http://www.destination360.com)

### **Introduction: The Philippines**

The Philippine Islands became a Spanish colony during the 16th century; they were ceded to the United States in 1898 following the Spanish-American War. The country attained independence in 1946 following the Japanese occupation in World War II. In 1992, the US closed its last military bases on the islands.

Years of foreign occupation have molded a people resilient to change, a people who have assimilated foreign and cultural influences and blended them into their own. From the Spaniards, the Filipinos maintain strong ties to the church, combined with primeval religious rituals. Most schooled Filipinos speak English, resulting from the US presence in the country.

The Philippines is divided into three major island groupings – Luzon in the north, Mindanao in the south, and the Visayas in between.

## Geography

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago on the northeastern edge of Southeast Asia, a necklace of 7,107 islands spread over 1,152 miles, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean on the east and the South China Sea on the west.



The

FIGURE 4: PHILIPPINES

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html>

landmass of the islands is 115,831 square miles, about the size of Italy

This semi-tropical island chain has two seasons: dry and wet. The northern and eastern

regions experience frequent typhoons, averaging twenty a year (Francia 2010). In

contrast, the Pacific side is buffered by mountains and experiences a drier climate,

causing more people and businesses to locate along the western part of the country,

resulting in more industrialization (<http://www.mongabay.com>). Manila is the largest city

and capital of the Philippines, with a population in 2010 of 1,652,100 (www.population.mongabay.com/population/Philippines/...manila).

Geography plays a role in the history of the Philippines beginning when Magellan's ship landed in 1521. From typhoons devastating parts of the country on a regular basis, to its many islands, separating its citizens by water, the Philippines has struggled to keep its unity.

### **History**

Historians and scientists believe the first inhabitants of the Philippine Islands emerged during the Pleistocene period (<http://www.philippine-history.org/early-filipinos.htm>). There are differing theories as to the evolution and migration of early Filipinos'. Otley Beyer's (*in* Zaide 1999) "Dawn Men" theory traced early Java man to about 250,000 years ago, when hunters and fishers were led to the Philippines by their search. A second group of migrants, "*Aetas*" or "*Negritos*," migrated from Australia, Borneo, and Malaysia 30,000 years ago. Another theory is attributed to Filipino anthropologist, Felipe Jocano (2001) whose studies suggest a theory resulting from a long process of evolution and migration among people with shared culture. Over time these people went their separate ways, with some migrating to the Philippines.

Modern history of the Philippines can be traced to Spanish expeditions to the Philippines in the 16th century (Francia 2010:29). Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese sailor in the service of the Spanish crown, was looking for a westward route from Spain to the Spice Islands of Indonesia. Magellan's expedition landed on Homohon Island in the Philippines in March 1521. This event is considered to be historic because it marked the first circumnavigation of the globe. For the Philippines, it was the beginning of a 333-



year relationship with Spain from 1565-1898 (Francia 2010). Spain governed the Philippines through Mexico until the Spanish-American War. Along came the Suez Canal in 1869, and trading in the Philippines became increasingly profitable, bringing more foreign merchants to the colony (Francia 2010).

In the late 1800s a reformist group “The Propagandists” emerged, consisting of “an intelligentsia, among them the *ilustrados*, the sons of upwardly mobile mestizo and indo families who had grown critical of colonial rule” (Francia 2010: 104). The aim of the Propagandists was to put pressure on the Spanish government for injustices directed at the colony. The Propagandists focused on eliminating Spanish parish priests and replacing them with Filipino secular priests. As historian Reynaldo Ileto (1998:81) states, “The Spanish priest was the equivalent of the god-king elsewhere in Southeast Asia.”

In 1898, the Spanish-American War brought US warships to the Philippines. Following a US victory, American forces took control of Manila leading to the Philippine American War that proved to be deadlier than the Spanish American War (Lacsamana 2006). Francia (2010:141) explains that “the actions of the US military confirmed the worst fears of the Philippine government: that the United States was out to claim the colony for itself.” The ensuing Philippine American War was marked by racism and brutality. President McKinley sent William H. Taft to serve as the first governor general of the islands. The American colonial period heightened interest among Filipinos for independence while at the same time education was widely promoted. In 1903, the US government set up a program for qualified Filipinos to attend college in the United States to earn university degrees.

The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1932 provided for a ten-year transition to independence for the Philippines (Francia 2010). The Philippine Commonwealth was established in 1935, allowing 300,000 US troops to remain in the new republic. In a formal declaration, independence was granted to the Philippines on July 4, 1946 (<http://www.philippine-history.org/independence-from-americans.htm>). “July 4, however, holds less inspiration for the Filipinos...than the June 12, 1896 declaration of the Philippine independence by General Emilio Aguinaldo” ([www.philippine-history.org](http://www.philippine-history.org)) and Filipinos continue to celebrate Independence Day on June 12 each year.

Ferdinand Marcos ruled the Philippines from 1965 to 1986. In the fall of 1972 he placed the Philippines under martial law allegedly to defend the republic against a communist resurgence. Social unrest escalated after a popular Senator, Benigno Aquino, was murdered. Marcos was removed from office in 1986 in an election that seated Corazon Aquino, Benigno’s widow, as President of the Philippines ([www.philippine-history.org](http://www.philippine-history.org)).

In the next section, I present an important aspect of Philippine culture, *kapwa* and the Filipino struggle for justice, freedom and dignity, critical to understanding the people of the Philippines.

### **Philippine Culture: *Kapwa***

#### The Shared Inner Self: *Kapwa*

The term *kapwa* is broadly translated (Calderon 1957) as “both” and “fellow being”. Virgilio Enriquez (2007:45) notes that *kapwa* when translated into English, is equated with “others”. *Kapwa* says Enriquez (2007:45) “is the unity of the ‘self’ and ‘others’”. In English, “others” can be used in reference to the opposition of “self”

implying that oneself is a separate identity. *Kapwa* is recognition of shared identity, an inner self-shared with others (Enriquez 2007: 45).

Paul Ricoeur (1992) in *Oneself as Another* focuses on the concepts of sameness (idem) and selfhood (ipse). Ricoeur (1992) proposes that the question “Who am I?” suggests promise between one’s self and an other. Narrative identity mediates the sameness and selfhood of one’s personal identity, or in Ricoeur’s (1994:147-48) words, “The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character.” *Kapwa*, expresses the Filipino shared identity where emphasis is on sharing one’s self with the other.

A person has *kapwa* “not so much because of a recognition of status given him by others but more because of his awareness of shared identity” (Enriquez 2007:45). One’s self and the other are one and the same in *kapwa*. Katrin DeGuia (2005:8) contends that *kapwa* looks for what people have in common, shared characteristics.

### Dignity, Justice and Freedom

Three specific societal values underlie the basis of *kapwa*: dignity, justice and freedom (Enriquez 2007; DeGuia 2005). Dignity or *karangalan* is one’s sense of self-worth, a cornerstone of Filipino personhood. (DeGuia 2005) cites Enriquez, [*karangalan* refers to] “the intrinsic quality of a person...that allows them to shine despite the grime of their appearance, environment or status in life.”

*Katarungan* is the most commonly used Filipino word for justice. Jose Diokno, a human rights lawyer in the Philippines (DeGuia 2005:38) describes the Filipino concept of justice:

Our language establishes that here is a Filipino concept of justice; that it is a highly moral concept, intimately related to the concept of right; that it is similar to, but broader than, Western concepts of justice, for it embraces the concept of equity; that it is a discriminating concept, distinguishing between justice and right, on the one hand, and law and argument, on the other; that its fundamental element is fairness; and that it eschews privilege and naked power.

Enriquez (2007) says that *katarungan* as a value represents human rights, in which justice is based on fairness. Justice is not what the law claims, but what the people say it should be. The values *katarungan* and *kapwa* were instrumental in two successful people's movements in the Philippines in the late 1990s, resulting in the Philippines becoming the first country to ever be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2000 for its *kapwa* orientation.

*Kalayaan* is often interpreted as the freedom or license to do as one pleases (Enriquez 2007:48). *Kalayaan* for many Filipinos, means life itself. Enriquez says, "The freedom to commit a particular act, or lack of it, determines whether a person or a community survives or perishes." Enriquez (2007:48) offers this example, "[t]he Aetas of Zambales simply have no choice but to move the *kaingin* (farming systems used by upland farmers in Philippines) fields every so often despite forestry laws to the contrary."

Poverty is widespread in the Philippines. Eighty percent of the Philippine population earns less than two dollars a day, and many Filipinos live in sub-standard housing, colloquially referred to as "squats" which lack indoor plumbing and electricity. Residents of squats will tap into the local power grid for electricity — another example of *kalayaan*.

*Kapwa* looks for what people have in common -- one's shared identity. One's self and others are the same regardless of economic status, age, or gender. To understand *kapwa* is to understand the people of the Philippines.

### **People of The Philippines**

Filipinos are an Asian ethnic group, a Mongoloid people part of the Austronesian group, and a group of Malay/Malayo-Polynesian speaking people. Filipinos are divided geographically and culturally into regions, and each regional group is recognizable by distinct traits and dialects — Ilocanos of the north, Tagalogs of the central plains, Visayans from the central islands, and the Muslims of Mindanao. Tribal communities are scattered across the archipelago. There are over 100 dialects spoken by Filipinos. Tagalog is the most frequently spoken dialogue. Resulting from the American presence in the Philippines, English is widely spoken and taught in schools (Francia 2010).

Eighty percent of Filipinos are Roman Catholic, which can be traced to the long colonization of the Philippines by Spain. There is a sizeable population of Muslims mainly living on Mindanao. The estimated 2011 population of the Philippines is 94,852,000 (World Bank 2011). Thirty-seven percent of the population is under age 15. High birth rate and rapid population growth represent major stumbling blocks in efforts to reduce poverty and improve living standards in the Philippines. Compared with other countries in the region, the Philippines is experiencing rapid population growth. The rate of natural increase is 2.2 percent, higher than Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. In 2000, roughly one-third of the population lived at or below the level required to satisfy food and non-food basic needs (<http://www.nscb.gov.ph/>).

An overseas Filipino is a person of Philippine origin who lives outside the Philippines. The estimated worldwide population of overseas Filipinos is between 8.6 million and 11 million (Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 2010). An average of 2,500 Filipinos leave the country every day for work abroad, and the Philippines is second only to Mexico as an exporter of labor. An estimated ten percent of the country's population, or nearly 8 million people, are overseas Filipino workers distributed in 182 countries, according to the Commission on Population Republic of the Philippines (POPCOM). That is in addition to the estimated three million migrants who work illegally abroad (Challenges in the Philippines 2003). The economy of the Philippines is affected by the remittances of migrant workers (Migration information 2006). The 2010 US Census reported 2.5 million Filipinos living in the United States.

### **Philippine Diaspora**

The story behind overseas Filipino migration is one of poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment in the Philippines. Generations of Filipinos have migrated to other countries in pursuit of better lives for themselves and their families. Filipino migration began in the early 1900s when Filipino workers migrated to Hawaii to work in the sugar plantations, followed by migration to the United States as agricultural and fish cannery work opened. Filipino immigration to the United States began in the 1920s as barriers were “enacted to limit other sources of Asian immigration (Hirschman and Wong 1981:497-98). The 1924 Immigration Act that favored European immigrants over Asians did not restrict Filipinos. This omission was rectified with the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act, otherwise known as the Filipino Exclusion Act (Hirschman and Wong 1981). In the 1960s Filipino migrants were more highly skilled and educated. Responding to labor

shortages in the Philippines, highly trained health care workers, including nurses, doctors, and medical technicians, sought employment outside the Philippines.

In 1974, the Philippine government, under President Ferdinand Marcos, institutionalized an overseas employment program intended as “a temporary measure to generate foreign exchange and ease the country’s unemployment and underemployment issues” (CMA 2006). Many of the Filipinos migrating during the 1970s were less skilled than their predecessors. Migrants during this period were domestic workers (women) and construction workers (men) (Hirschman and Wong 1981). Of the 2.2 million OFWs in 2011, female OFWs were estimated at 1.03 million (47.8 percent), an increase of 5.8 percent over the 975,000 reported female OFWs in 2010 ([www.pcw.gov.ph/statistics/201210statistics/filipino-women-and-mens-overseas-employment](http://www.pcw.gov.ph/statistics/201210statistics/filipino-women-and-mens-overseas-employment)).

Migrants abroad are remitting funds to family back home in growing numbers. According to the Philippine Commission on Women in 2008 (PMC), “the increasing volume of migrant remittances and the widespread unemployment in the country motivate the Philippine government to continue its labor export policy.” Most of my Philippine research participants are female.

The Philippine Government’s Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO 2010) estimates there are about 8.2 million Filipinos living outside the Philippines, about ten percent of the total population of the Philippines. Overseas Filipinos are a diverse population including permanent residents who are legal residents of other countries. An estimated 3.6 million Filipinos permanently reside abroad (CFO, 2007). Temporary Filipino workers, often referred to as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) are estimated at

4.0 million. OFWs are persons who work abroad with their stay tied to their jobs, with the expectation that they will return to the Philippines at the end of their labor contracts (CFO 2011). CFO further estimates there are 875,000 undocumented overseas Filipinos, a number believed to be a very conservative estimate.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) reported OFW remittances totaled US\$103 million in 1975. The World Bank (2011) expects 2011 remittances to the Philippines to exceed \$23 billion, placing the Philippines at fourth in the world for remittances received (after India, China, and Mexico).

### **Economy**

In 2010, the Philippine economy grew 7.3 percent, fueled by consumer demand, growth in exports and investments, and election year spending. Remittances continue to be an important component for the Philippine economy. According to official statistics of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA 2012), Filipino workers in the United States sent home US\$10 billion dollars in 2011. A large proportion of these remittances come from women who are the majority of overseas Filipino workers (Uy-Tioco 2007: 253-265). According to an International Business Machines (IBM) Global Location Trends Annual Report (2010), the Philippines has overtaken India as the world leader in business support functions, such as business process outsourcing. Major export partners for the Philippines are China, United States, and Singapore respectively.

Only twenty percent of the Philippine population earns more than two dollars a day (Graceffo 2008). As a result, overseas jobs as caregivers paying one hundred to one hundred fifty US dollars a week look attractive to families living in poverty. Most of the police and army live in squats, as their average salary is approximately 5000 pesos



(US\$121) a month (Graceffo 2008). Many people in the Philippines do not have enough money to cover basic expenses for a month, so they shop daily. Instead of buying a bottle of aspirin, drug stores sell them individually, along with laundry detergent and cigarettes. All are sold individually. In the journal I maintained throughout my research, I note that during a 2012 trip to the Philippines we were staying with our daughter-in-law's family and my husband offered to go to the local bodega to buy beer. He asked for a six-pack, and came back with six individual bottles of beer. The proprietor of the store explained to him that she only sold singles.

### **Summary**

The long Spanish rule of the Philippines left a legacy of Catholicism. Filipinos are generally bi-lingual, speaking English as well as a Philippine dialect. Their ability to speak English has benefited many who seek to work outside the Philippines.

Another reason causing migration from the Philippines is economic. Years of ceaseless corruption at the national level, rapid population growth, high unemployment, and a high rate of poverty make staying in the Philippines undesirable. Chapter Three introduces the review of literature including additional background on the Philippines and Korea.

## CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Introduction

In this Chapter I present the topics of diaspora, migration, and remittances through the lens of ethnography and anthropology, economic theory, history, and socio-political perspectives as found through a review of literature across those disciplines. I first define the origin of diaspora and then review the literature on diaspora, spanning the 19th century to the present. I specifically present current literature on the Korean diaspora as created by the separation of Korea, and the Philippine diaspora consisting of permanent and temporary migrants worldwide. The literature review next covers the forms of migrant remittances and the mechanisms for transmitting remittances. I begin with the origin and various interpretations of diaspora.

### Diaspora

The origin of the word diaspora (Oxford Dictionary 2012) comes “from the Greek *diaspeirein* ‘disperse’ from *dia* ‘across’ + *speirein* ‘scatter.’” Historical examples of diaspora describe people displaced by force, against their will, for example the Jews and African slaves in the New World. Diaspora also includes trading groups, such as Arab traders who brought Islam to Southeast Asia, and labor migrants, including the Indians of the British empire (Cohen 1997). Castles and Miller (2009:31) connect the current notion of a transnational community with diaspora explaining, “the term diaspora often has strong emotional connotations; while the notion of transnational community is more neutral.” The retelling of history of some diaspora groups evokes emotional responses important to the people affected. Memory is important to diaspora populations.

V.Y. Mudimbe (1999:3) questions the tendency to normalize diaspora, where immigration and diaspora are treated as objects. Mudimbe (1999:3) rejects the idea that all of us may be members of a diaspora and posits, “It is to rethink, on the basis of lived differences, the roots of an intellectual configuration, while keeping in mind that the politics of remembering are synonymous with the politics of forgetting.” Expanding on the tendency to view diaspora from a romanticized perspective, Mudimbe (1999:3) describes an “ipseity” of diasporas when he writes that, “while diasporas generally have abstained from a naturalist conception of their historical ipseity, they have often reworked the Western paradigm of identity, reconceived from a position that claimed to be objectively or subjectively marginal” (1999:5). This is not to say that diaspora is another way of describing identity. Identity suggests a substantive self where groupness is derived from concrete actions and relations, not just identity. Mudimbe (1999:5-6) summarizes this distinction of praxis over identity when he writes:

Praxis indicates a project and thus refers to the future, to the production of something that does not yet exist; identity, on the other hand, suggesting a totality that is always already present, refers everything back to a past – not a past to be overcome, though, but rather one that represents a fullness of an ideal. As a result, the present is completely captured and immobilized by the past... Conceptualizing today’s diasporas as constellations of cultural and political actions, as projects rather than congealed totality, thus confers an epistemological dimension upon these praxes.

Utilizing praxis or project-driven efforts by diasporas is further addressed by the World Bank Institute in *Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills*. Yuvgeny Kuznetsov and Charles Sabel (2006:4) suggest that diaspora networks provide a less-volatile, power struggle for improving the home country economy in developing countries than the efforts of multinational firms when they write, “[P]owerful

autonomous and often footloose multinational firms are viewed as the agents, even the masters, of economic imperialism rather than as partners in development.”

Remitters have varied reasons to migrate. The emergence of global circulation labor, where migrants move away from poor economies to prosperous ones and back, is an example of how diaspora networks function as search networks. Kuznetsov and Sabel (2006:6) state that, “today...talented students still go abroad to continue their own studies and work in the developed economies, but then use their own global networks, and especially those of their diasporas, to help build new establishments in their home countries.”

Mudimbe (1999) and Kuznetsov and Sabel (2006:6) address the value of project-driven diaspora efforts benefiting the diaspora home country when they write, “Migrant groups can be part of effective networks working to effect positive change in their home countries, connecting “developing economy insiders, with their risk-mitigating knowledge and connections, to outsiders in command of technical know-how and investment capital.”

The actors in diaspora networks are native sons and daughters (Kuznetsov and Sabel 2006). They connect foreign knowledge to domestic needs for the purpose of disciplining the behavior of ethnic communities and multinationals (Kuznetsov and Sabel 2006). Transnational migrant research is experiencing rapid growth, yet according to Castles and Miller (2009: 32) the degree to which migrants do actually engage in transnational behavior has not been adequately established.

One country that has shifted from having its citizens migrate to other countries for education and economic reasons to importing migrants to work in the country is Korea.

The number of transnational migrants is growing within Asian countries. The number of South-South migrants is now larger than migration from developing (South) countries to high-income OECD countries (North) (Ratha 2012).

### **Separation of Korea**

The separation of Koreans from their homeland cannot be explained only in terms of diaspora or migrants. The region named Korea, and a line cutting the land into two parts, defines the separation of Koreans (Park 1984:123). Oberdorfer (2001:7) writes,

Summing up, Gregory Henderson, a former US Foreign Service officer and noted Korean scholar, wrote in 1974, No division of a nation in the present world is so astonishing in its origin as the division of Korea; none is so unrelated to conditions or sentiment within the nation itself at the time the division was effected; none is to this day so unexplained; in none does blunder and planning oversight appear to have played so large a role.

Created at the close of the fratricidal Korean War, the 38th parallel caused family dispersal affecting five million Koreans suddenly separated from their families because of an arbitrary boundary now defining North Korea from South Korea. Not only did family members face physical separation, but also they also lost the ability to communicate with one another. Spouses were separated; parents and children were separated. At least one generation has now lived through the separation. Korean anthropologist Choong Soon Kim (1988:119) notes that a nationwide survey in 1984 found that 76 percent did not have firsthand experience with the war, and 80 percent of respondents 18-24 years old knew little about the war. Efforts for reconciliation between North and South are tied to politics (Lee and Kim 2011:73). A sympathetic South Korean president is more inclined to support reunification than a hard line president who sees the North as a threat to the peace of the South (Lee and Kim 1998:73).

According to a 2008 report produced by the Migration Policy Institute, approximately 900,000 North Koreans or 10 percent of North Korea's population, migrated to the South between 1945 and 1953. By 1957, approximately 300,000 Chinese resided in North Korea.

### **North Korea Emigration and Immigration Policy**

South Koreans can travel to North Korea under supervision. In 2000, South Korea gave amnesty to more than 3,500 prisoners, and in 1989, 100 North Koreans met their southern relatives in a highly charged, emotional reunion in Seoul (BBC News 2011; BBC News August 13, 2012).

In recent years an increasing number of North Koreans have left North Korea. Approximately 30,000 to 50,000 North Koreans are estimated to have migrated to China. At the end of May 2010 there were 19,000 North Koreans living in South Korea (Lee and Kim 2011:59). A prominent reason for increased migration from North Korea is related to food shortages. Food security is an ongoing challenge for North Koreans, causing more to migrate to China or another third country. The Chinese government identifies North Koreans arriving in China as illegal immigrants and has a policy of compulsory repatriation while North Korea punishes defectors severely (Lee and Kim 2011). In 2002, a group of 25 North Koreans defected to South Korea through the Spanish embassy in Beijing, highlighting the situation of tens of thousands of North Koreans hiding in China after fleeing the north (BBC News 2011).

North Korean migrants who enter South Korea through other countries, such as Thailand, are placed under the jurisdiction of the South Korean government (Lee and Kim 2011:59). The South Korean government recognizes North Koreans as people of the

same lineage. Korea is considered one nation in South Korean law. Accepting North Korean migrants is, therefore, a natural process, as all North Koreans are considered citizens of South Korea (Lee and Kim 2011:82). There are several government-run institutions in Seoul and other locations in South Korea where North Korean returnees are housed and re-educated to South Korean culture over a period of months. These resettlement centers are called *Hanawon*, and the first one opened in 1999 as the government resettlement center for North Korean returnees (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2006411.stm>).

The first center was built to accommodate 200 people for a three-month resettlement program. In 2002, the government doubled the size of the center and cut the program from three months to two because of the increase in the number of North Korean returnees. As of 2011, there are 30 Hana Centers located throughout South Korea. Each is operated by a local NGO selected by the Ministry of Unification ([http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2011/07/117\\_90491.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2011/07/117_90491.html)).

The training curriculum for the *Hanawon* Centers has three main goals: easing the socioeconomic and psychological strains; overcoming the barriers caused by cultural differences; and practical training for life in South Korea (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2006411.stm>). Upon completion of the *Hanawon* program, defectors find their own homes with a government subsidy of 20 million Korean won, approximately US\$18,000, equivalent to US\$290 each, to resettle and 320,000 Korean won (US\$28) monthly resettlement allowance ([http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/North\\_Korean\\_defectors](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/North_Korean_defectors)). Government and NGO support for Koreans returning from the north demonstrates that reunification

remains a constant hope for Koreans, a people of one nationality, separated geographically and politically. Familial bonds remain essential to Korean culture, which, until recently, has remained a homogenous society.

In the last decade, in order to maintain its economic strength, Korean companies began hiring overseas workers to come to Korea as temporary workers. Of the 220,000 temporary workers reported in 2008 (Amnesty International 2009), 80,395 are from the Philippines (POEA 2011).

I met one of my research participants, Jay, in Seoul. Jay is Filipino, an OFW, working in a factory in Seoul. In our chance conversation, he shared the narrative of his life as an OFW in Korea.

### **Philippine Migrants**

Over half the world's population lives in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2000, 53 million of the world's 191 million migrants were in Asia (Castles and Miller 2009). In the early 21st century, 6.1 million Asians were employed outside their own country in another Asian country (Castles and Miller 2009). Hugo (2005) estimates there are 20 million Asian migrant workers worldwide. The Philippines, in 2006, was one of the top ten source countries for migrant workers (OECD 2007:316). Filipinos are the second-largest Asian-American group; Tagalog, one of several dialects spoken by Filipinos, is the fifth most spoken language in the US. Nearly half of the Filipino-born live in California. Other states with growing Filipino populations are Texas, New York, and Illinois. Nearly 60 percent of Filipino immigrants are women. Over 75 percent of Filipino foreign-born adults have some college education. Filipino immigrants in the US are far less likely to live in poverty than other immigrant groups



(<http://www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=777> ). In addition to education, gender is a significant component to understanding OFWs.

Worldwide, of the almost one million documented OFWs, 75 percent are women marking the feminization of migration (IOM 2005:109-110). Female migration has considerable effects on families as married women leave their children in the care of others. Regardless of gender or level of education, OFWs leave their home countries, but not the culture associated with their homeland. Of the two million OFWs in 2010, an estimated 975,000 were women, an increase of 8.2 percent over the previous year's estimate (Philippine Commission on Women 2012).

The values and cultures of migrants and members of the Korean and Philippine diaspora need to be described “thickly” or in Clifford Geertz's words (1973:14), “culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can causally be attributed; it is the context, something within which they can be intelligibly -- that is, thickly—described.” Geertz's views on culture are based on his anthropological studies covered in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). I will next present an overview of the anthropological perspective of my research.

### **Diaspora and Anthropology**

In this section, I introduce three anthropologists and present their respective anthropological theories relevant to the diaspora communities from the Philippines and Korea. The first anthropologist is Clifford Geertz, a contemporary interpretive anthropologist. The second anthropologist is Ward Goodenough, a cultural anthropologist who did extensive fieldwork with South Asian populations. The last view is from Marcel Mauss, who is noted for his research on gifts and giving.

## **Clifford Geertz**

Geertz (1973) addresses the changing nature of nationalism for many countries that attained political independence from colonial rule in the last half of the 20th century. The Philippines are an example of one such country. Geertz (1973:252) posits that, “to see one's country as the product of ‘the processes by which it developed to its given state,’ or, alternatively, to see it as the ground of ‘the future course of events,’ is...to see it rather differently.” Migrants and members of diaspora communities seeking to be informed about events in their home countries will seek ways of communicating to receive and participate in relevant dialogue, even though they are currently living and working in another country.

Geertz suggests that nationalism knows no geographic boundaries saying that, “the ‘patterns of meaning’ by which social changes formed grow from the processes of that change itself and, crystallized into proper ideologies or embedded in popular attitudes serve... to guide it” (1973:253). Cultures cannot be defined but rather explicated; culture is a text; and “culture is public because meaning is” (Geertz 1973:12). Geertz calls on us to interpret culture. The next anthropologist to be reviewed is Ward Goodenough, noted for his work in cultural anthropology.

## **Ward Goodenough**

Cultural anthropologist Ward Goodenough's research on culture and change in developing countries is relevant to research of overseas migrant workers, particularly from the Philippines. Goodenough (1963; 2003) poses the question — how do cultures as shared within communities change and evolve? In order to answer his question, Goodenough offers six criteria to explain his definition of culture: (1) criteria for

categorizing phenomena as meaningful stimuli; (2) criteria for deciding what can be; (3) criteria for deciding how one feels about things (preferences and values); (4) criteria for deciding what to do about things; (5) criteria for deciding how to go about doing things, and, (6) the skills needed to perform acceptably (1963:258–259). An individual's experiences, what is learned, must "be located in people's individual minds and hearts. It follows that no two people have exactly the same criteria or exactly the same understanding of what they perceive to be the expectations (the criteria and standards) of those with whom they have dealings" (Goodenough 2003:6).

Part of Goodenough's framework for understanding culture resides in his study and findings on imposing cultural assumptions onto others. Communities have language and cultures, but Goodenough (2003: 6-7) believes that these are collections of individual understandings of what the language and cultures consist of or to refer not to a community's culture, but its cultural makeup.

Goodenough (1963) pursues the roles of personal and social identity in the context of institutional change. He (1963:181) asserts that "we have observed that quite apart from the distinctions between cognitive and evaluative aspects of identity and between a person's self image and public image we must also distinguish between social identity and personal identity." When a person interacts with another, his or her actions are based on a construct of both identities. Goodenough includes prestige as a characteristic of personal identity saying that "to have personal prestige in accordance with the value attaching to the features of personal identity that others see in him" (1963:182). Overseas migrant workers' social identities may be linked to their circle of friends and family at home, and new social identities may be established in their new

community of work and home. Goodenough (1963:233) says that “if there are ample opportunities...to escape into a different social environment, they will seek to do this, individually migrating from the country to the city...If people perceive no opportunities of this sort that seem attractive, they tend to develop organized movements”. An example of these organized movements is seen in the tendency for diaspora populations to live in proximity to each other.

Goodenough is writing here about residents of developing countries seeking to escape from the standard social order, into a new identity system. Escaping high unemployment and low wages in the Philippines, migrant workers are adopting a new, albeit temporary, identity system. From Goodenough’s descriptive study of culture, I look at another aspect of anthropology – functionalism, using Marcel Mauss’ work on gifts and giving.

### **Marcel Mauss**

Mauss’ work *The Gift* is based on anthropological studies in Polynesia, Melanesia, and North West America on the notion of reciprocity in giving. Mauss (1967:2) writes that gifts, while generously offered, carry an “accompanying behavior [of] formal pretense and social deception...the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest.” Considered to be a sociologist who studied anthropologists, Mauss’ views on giving are based on economics that fit my study of remittances. There is a bond between the giver and the gift; the act of giving creates a social bond with an obligation to reciprocate on the part of the receiver. According to Mauss (1967), a free gift that is not reciprocated is a contradiction because it cannot create social ties. Mauss argues that solidarity is achieved through the social bonds created by the gift exchange.

## **Migration Theories**

To migrate is to move from one place to another. Permanent migration occurs when there is no intent to return to one's home country to live. The next sections include an overview of Economic Theories of Migration and the Geography of Migration.

Migration is a collective action, a form of social change affecting both the sending and receiving areas (Castles and Miller 2009:20). Economic concerns and geography are two important components of migration theory.

### **Economic Theories of Migration**

Contemporary theories of migration generally associate migration with economics (Castles and Miller 2009:21). The economic approach links migration to economics where the theory assumes migrants have an understanding of where they are going and make the decision to migrate based on economic factors like wage level, employment opportunities, and housing. Focusing on human capital involves a decision on the balance of greater return in higher wages compared to the cost of migrating. G.J. Borjas (1989:461) forwards a model of an 'immigration market' as "neo-classical theory [which] assumes that individuals maximize utility: individual 'search' for the country of residence that maximizes their well-being." As an example, Filipino migrant networks provide the recent migrant with job opportunities, job leads, and opportunities to socialize with other migrants.

The new economics of labor migration theory (NELM) suggests that people migrate to send money back home, to remit to family members at home with the intention of improving the standard of living for the receivers. NELM theory leads to specific hypotheses about migrant motivation to remit, and impact on the sending country (Taylor

1999). In their survey of migration theory, Douglas Massey et al (1998:50-59) believe that the,

[V]arious economic theories operated at different levels of analysis and focus on different aspects of migration...they all provide important insights into migration. However...migration cannot be understood simply through economic analysis...a much broader enquiry is needed.

A broader enquiry includes recent views on transnationalism and transnational communities and puts the emphasis on human agency. An older term for transnationalism is diaspora. Other contemporary theories on migration expand from the economic model to include anthropology and geography. Two newer approaches to migration theory are the migration systems theory rooted in geography, and migration networks theory originating in sociology and anthropology. The migration systems theory suggests that migration usually arises from pre-existing links between the sending and receiving countries (Castles and Miller 2009:27-30). A microstructure of this theory is social networks developed by migrants to help migrants cope with resettlement issues (Castles and Miller 2009). The country of origin for migrants is another tool analysis for understanding migrant social networks. In the next section, the importance of geography in migration is addressed.

### **Geography And Migration**

Another aspect of migration theory is based on geography. In North-to-North migration, both the sending country and receiving country or region are fairly well developed (Castles 2000). There is limited question about the economic gains and benefits for both regions. South-to-North migration occurs when migration moves from a relatively undeveloped country to a relatively developed one (Ellerman 2006:27). A subgroup of South-to-North migrants are guest workers or temporary migrants who seek to

learn new skills and increase their income with the intent of returning home. These temporary migrants anticipate returning to their homeland having observed life in a more advanced economic state, and having participated in new culture(s). Additionally, their remittances and savings would provide capital for a more prosperous life on their return (Ellerman 2006). As John Stuart Mill (1899) writes:

It is hardly possible to overrate the value, in the present low state of human improvement, of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar...Such communication has always been, and is peculiarly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress.

Mills' comments written over a century ago aptly depict the hopes of today's migrant workers.

David Ellerman (2006:38) writes that motivation of a diaspora or migrant population is more than an economic proposition. Ellerman notes (2006:38), while emigrants may have left for economic reasons, there is no reason to think that mobilization of the diaspora is solely an economic proposition. "Intrinsic motivation taps into the roots of identity, and an emigrant's home country is likely to be part of that emigrant's identity" (Deci and Ryan 1985; Lane 1991). The desire to achieve economic security and social standing are inter-related. Both the economic and social rewards need to be aligned, like "arrows pointing roughly in the same direction" (Ellerman 2006: 38). The two components are intertwined. A desire to have a better life for oneself and one's family is often determined economically. Migrants seek the opportunity to find better employment, so that in part, they can contribute to the prosperity of the family left behind often using a form of monetary transfer called remittances.

## Remittances

A widely shared form of providing financial support to family members and neighbors is the transaction of remittances – gifts of money and/or goods from migrated family members back to those in the home country (Petthey 2002:147). Receiving families use remittances as investment in human capital, such as tuition and education expenses, an investment in the future (Terry and Wilson 2005:9).

### **Remittances From Migrant To Family**

For decades, millions of migrant workers have remitted billions of dollars back to their home countries to support their families (Terry and Wilson 2005:3). Roberto Suro (2005:22) states that, “at the simplest level, remittances reflect the profound emotional bonds and constant interaction between relatives separated by geography and borders.” Remittance senders and receivers live in what sociologist Manuel Castells (1996:9) calls the “space of flows” a timeless place marked by transnational networks operating beyond traditional institutions and communities. In the case of a Filipina migrant working in the United States with a family left behind in the Philippines, the space of flows will continue to be important and significant and not become a non-place in her existence. On the other hand, the role of place will decrease because of the rise of globalization and information technology (Castells 1996). A sense of care for one’s family, self, community fills the space of flows (Castells 1996) for many migrants. That sense of care or responsibility is often formalized through migrant remittances.

Migrants remit home for reasons other than altruism: payment for child care (Lucas and Stark 1988); self-serving reasons such as improving economic conditions at home to increase the value of assets left behind (Pozo 2005); and joint investment



projects (Jaramillo 2005:140). Migrants incur social commitments in addition to financial obligations. Family members raise children left behind, care for elderly relatives – all part of why remittances are sent. Money is not all that can be remitted by migrants or members of a diaspora population. Migrant remittances are impressive on the macro-level for sending and receiving countries. An article in the November 19, 2011 *Economist*, “The Magic of Diasporas,” states, “Diasporas spread money...Migrants in rich countries not only send cash to their families; they also help companies in their host country operate in their home country.

Social remittances or the transfer of attitudes and behaviors accompanying remittances, are described next.

### **Social Remittances**

The term social remittances is fairly recent in the literature on migrants and transnationalism, but the belief in the significance of the transfer of attitudes and behaviors from developed country to developing country is not new (Castles and Miller 2009:62). Peggy Levitt (1998:927) defines social remittances as “the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities.”

Levitt (1998,2007) uses a wide lens to understand migration saying that, “a transnational gaze begins with a world that is borderless and boundary less, and then explores what kinds of boundaries exist, and why they arise in specific times and places” (Levitt 2007:22). Migration, Levitt contends, is as much about the people who stay behind as it is about people who move (2007:23). The ties between migrant and non-migrant can be strong enough for the experience of the migrant to transform those left at home. Levitt (2007:25) introduces her views on social remittances when she writes,

“People, money, and what I have called social remittances -- the ideas, practices, social capital, and identities that migrants send back into their communities of origin -- permeate their daily lives, changing how they act as well as challenging their ideas.” These transnational relationships develop over time, depending on the frequency and length of the migrant’s return trips home.

As the connection between sending and receiving countries strengthen and becomes more widespread, a transnational public sphere emerges (Soysal 1997). A public sphere is a space where citizens come together for discourse on common affairs, contest meanings, and negotiate claims (Habermas 1984). What happens in a public sphere is not a foregone conclusion. Some may develop while others disintegrate (Levitt 1998). Recent case studies on the effects of emigration confirm the ambivalent nature of social remittances (Castles and Delgado Wise 2008). As a positive, behaviors are transferred conducive to positive change. On the negative side, “the very success of emigration may proved an impediment to development...in which spending ...time working abroad becomes a normal ‘rite of passage’ for young people...The absence of young men and women in their most productive years can have negative effects on social change and economic growth” (Castles and Miller 2009: 62), which is a challenge in the Philippines and the growing numbers of younger adults choosing to seek work abroad. The ambivalent nature of social remittances is noted, and we turn our attention to the practice of social remittances.

Levitt (1998) presents three types of social remittances: normative structures, systems of practice, and social capital. Normative structures are ideas, values, and beliefs including interpersonal behavior, age and gender appropriateness, neighborliness and

community participation. Systems of practice are actions shaped by normative structure, for example, household labor, religious practices, and patterns of civil and political participation. Social capital is Levitt's third type of social remittance. Both the sender and the receiver gain status through the acknowledgement of the character of the sender. This social capital, says Levitt (1998:935), "can be used to the advantage of the receiver, or lost, if the perception were that the migrant did not contribute to community projects [so] the non-migrant family members would suffer the consequences." Social remittances are unfiltered; migrants do not absorb their new lives unselectively and communicate intact to those at home, who willingly accept them as is (Castles and Miller 2009).

In addition to migrant to family remittances and social remittances, a third form of remitting involves groups of migrants or members of a diaspora who join together to collectively support a project in the home country. This practice is referred to as collective remittances.

### **Collective Remittances**

Since the mid-1990s there has been renewed interest in the relationship between international migration and development, specifically in the possibility of leveraging remittances to promote development in labor exporting regions (Goldring 2003). A key reason for the renewed interest in the remittances-development relationship is the significant increase in the amount of money sent home to migrant-sending countries. In 1999, the top three receivers of remittances were India, the Philippines, and Mexico, with the totals accounting for 2.6, 8.9 and 1.7 percent, respectively of each country's GDP, respectively (Goldring 2003). Collective remittances describe the practice of migrant

groups initiating and financing projects to benefit their communities of origin (Goldring 2003; Smith 1998; Moctezuma 2000).

Luin Goldring (2003:8) presents a typology of remittances using three types of remittances: Family-Individual, Collective, and Investment. He contextualizes the typology into five elements: (1) remitters, receivers, and intermediary institutions; (2) the management of the remittances and the regulating norms; (3) the uses of the remittances; (4) the social and political meaning of the remittance; and (5) the implications of these meanings for public policy.

Senders in a collective remittance are an organized body of migrants: families, partners, hometown clubs or associations. Recipients are the receiving community, and beneficiaries are the community of productive project partners. Mediating actors (institutions) include communities, social networks, faith-based institutions, migrant organizations, government, and NGOs. Goldring (2003) emphasizes the importance of locality of origin in the geographic destination remittance, where there is a close relationship between identity, place of origin, and place where the remittances are sent. The possibility of conflict between senders and mediating actors and institutions exists particularly in the control or management of the funds. Uses of collective remittances include community public works infrastructure, sports fields, playgrounds, and social services. This research explores a broader role of collective remittances using the transmittal of money to support the reunification of North and South Korea.

Goldring (2003:18) notes that one of the key differences between family and collective remittances has to do with the institutions that mediate the transfer and use of the funds. Migrant organizations working collectively to raise money for projects also are

involved in planning, which requires political and social learning. Collective economic remittances develop political capital. Goldring suggests that the development of more effective, accessible and democratic participation is necessary for accountability and transparency among all participants. The South Korean government is encouraging democratic participation as well as a call for nationalistic pride in creating a fund for reunification. In November 2011, the government of South Korea announced it was establishing a fund to raise 55 trillion Korean won (US\$50 billion) to pay for eventual reunification with North Korea. Individual Koreans at home and abroad will be able to donate to the fund that may also receive earmarked budget surpluses. (<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-11-10/south-korea-fund-for-union-with-north.htm>). Foreigners will be allowed to donate, but the government will not accept money from other governments. Diaspora Koreans, some who may be remitting, will have the opportunity to support this massive collective fund for reunification. Remitting or giving is not new to Asian cultures. There are successful and legitimate informal systems of remitting which have practiced by many Asians for a long time. I next present an age-old legitimate, alternative vehicle for remitting which has become a lightning rod for anti-terrorism concerns in the post 2001 United States.

### **Hawala/Hundi**

There are many terms used to describe informal remittance systems including alternative remittance systems, underground banking, ethnic banking and informal value transfer system. *Hawala*, or *hundi*, is a legitimate alternative remittance system developed in India, widely used by migrants around the world (Jost and Sandhu 2003). Geographically, the terms used to describe informal alternative remittance systems

include: *Fai ch'ien* (China), *hundi* (Pakistan), *hawala* (India and Middle East, *padala* (Philippines), *hui kuan* (Hong Kong), and *pei kwan* (Thailand) (Maimbo 2004). These systems are often referred to as underground banking, which is incorrect, as they often operate openly with complete legitimacy, and are widely advertised (Jost and Sandhu 2003).

The word *hawala* comes from Islamic text dealing with matters of jurisprudence, namely change and transformation (Jost and Sandhu 2003). *Hawala* was developed in India before the introduction of western banking systems (Jost and Sandhu 2003). The characteristics that distinguish *hawala* from other remittance systems are trust and the extensive use of personal, family connections (Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan 2003). Transfers of money take place based on communications between members of a network of *Hawaladers*, or *Hawala* dealers (Jost and Sandhu 2003); Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan 2003; Maimbo 2004). Money transfers without money movement is a distinguishing component of *hawala* (Maimbo 2004). The system is based on trust – cash-in and cash-out, but no physical movement takes place (Jost and Sandhu 2003). The transaction takes one or two days, faster than many bank wire transfers, and the transaction is completed without a paper trail (Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan 2003). Because no money changes hands, there must be trust between the sender and the sender's mediator/broker (Jost and Sandhu 2003). Trust is equally important between the sender's broker and the broker for the receiver (Jost and Sandhu 2003). The sender's broker trusts the receiver's broker to make the payment to the receiver.

Connections are of equal importance (Maimbo 2004). The brokers must have a connection to facilitate the payment. Many *hawala* transactions (legitimate and illegitimate) are conducted in the context of import/export business, and the manipulation of invoices is a common means of settling accounts after the transactions have been made (Jost and Sandhu 2003).

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the US government suspected that some *hawala* brokers might have assisted terrorist organizations in transferring money to finance their activities. The 9/11 Commission Report has since confirmed that the bulk of funds used to finance the assaults were not sent through the *hawala* process, but rather by inter-bank wire transfer to a Sun Trust Bank in Florida (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, N.d.:140).

In the absence of formal banking systems and a person's understanding of the banking system, many migrant workers choose to use alternative methods for remittance. Samuel Maimbo (2004) writes that it is necessary that regulatory agencies and the development community find ways to design, develop, and implement alternative remittance practices that deal with both legitimate money-laundering and terrorist financing, in order to enhance the development impact of informal remittances. Cultural affinities pave the way for *hawala* as an informal system, easy to use and widely accessible.

### **Asian Experiences with Remittances**

Global movements of permanent and temporary migrants have increased greatly in scale and complexity. More than half of the world's 175 million international migrants originate in Asia. A defining characteristic of Asian migration is that it relies on strong

social networks that link origins with destinations which facilitates important flows of money, goods, and information (Hugo *in* Terry 2005). The study of remittances is frequently presented in a quantitative format (Terry 2005). Until the early 1990s, Asian migrant remittances were believed to be trivial (Hugo 2005) because of a lack of reliable data, illegal migration, isolation of receiving areas, and the long history of remitting through informal channels. The *hawala/hundi* system is widely used in South Asian countries and the absence of a paper trail makes the tracking of remittances sent via *hawala/hundi* very difficult

([www.interpol.int/Public/FinancialCrime/Money/Laundering](http://www.interpol.int/Public/FinancialCrime/Money/Laundering)).

Two groups of migrants of migrants send money to Asia. The first is a diaspora of permanent settlers from Asian countries, most of them living in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations. The second are contract migrants, of which Asia is the preeminent source in the world (Hugo *in* Terry 2005:343). Between 1999 and 2001, there were a reported 1,603,706 South Koreans, not including a substantial number of undocumented Koreans living in China, and 1,827,674 Filipinos living in OECD countries (OECD 2001). These reported figures greatly underestimate the size of Asian diasporas. The need to provide for one's family in the home country is the reason for many to seek temporary employment as a migrant. Hence the great majority of contract workers send remittances to their home countries (Hugo 2005: 345).

A major migrant-sending nation is the Philippines. It is estimated that over half of these remittances came from permanent settlements of Filipinos in the United States and Canada. In addition, the 200,000 Filipinos working at sea remit more than US\$1 billion



alone (*Asian Migration News*, September 30, 2002). By 2010, Philippine remittances topped \$US 18.8 billion (ABS-CBNNews.com 2/15/11).

Graeme Hugo (2005) cautions against a macro-level examination of remittances at a national level. Migrants tend to come from poorer areas in a country. In the case of the Philippines, one might ask to what extent wealth has been a result of remittances rather than a pre-migration characteristic (Hugo 2005). In contrast to the Philippines, South Korea in the last 35 years has undergone a transition from one of the world's major exporters of workers to a country now importing over 250,000 immigrant workers annually (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 9, 1993:23). North Korea receives a substantial amount of remittances from the Koreans living in Japan. "Indeed, the inflow of \$600-700 million in 1993 was equivalent to the entire North Korea government budget (*Far Eastern Economic Review* September 9,1993)."

Information on remittances sent from South Korea to North Korea is limited, in part due to remitters' reluctance to reveal their identity or the identity of the receivers in the north. A survey conducted by the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights in 2011 reported that approximately US\$10 million was remitted by North Koreans now living in the south. This amount is expected to grow as the current count in 2011 of 20,000 North Korean resettlers is growing. The remittances are transferred via a chain of middlemen in China and the North. Defectors wire money to bank accounts held by brokers along the China/North Korea border. Recipients usually receive about 70 percent of the remittances as brokers charge 30 percent of the remittance (*Chosunilbo*, February 27, 2011).

In spite of increased quantitative data on remittances, particularly Asia, we do not yet have an informed understanding of how Asian diaspora operate and generate remittances. Hugo (2005) summarizes challenges to policy makers to develop integrated policies and programs to maximize benefits resulting from remittances.

### **Summary**

This review of literature on the topic of diaspora remittances among overseas workers (OFWs) from the Philippines and Koreans from South Korea and the Korean diaspora in the US, seeking reunification of Korea, uses the lenses of culture and geography to frame the topic. Culture is inclusive of the people and their history, and includes migration, diaspora, and the practices of remitting from migrant back to the sending country. Geography and economy provide a framework of the physical and financial realities leading to temporary migration for OCWs from the Philippines. For Koreans, geography and economy are inter-related. A prosperous South is capable of supporting North Koreans desiring to return to the South. The values and cultures of migrants and members of the Korean and Philippine diaspora need to be described thickly (Geertz 1973:14). My research is framed by critical hermeneutic theory using interpretive research methods. In Chapter Four, I address the theory and methodology of my proposed research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL HERMENEUTIC THEORY**

### **Introduction**

I conducted my research using interpretive inquiry and critical hermeneutic theory as the framework. Ellen Herda (1999:82) writes that “the purpose of interpretive research is to create conditions whereby people can engage in discourse so that truth can be recognized and new realities can be brought into being.” As a researcher participating in discussion with my conversation partners, I used this research framework so that, together with my research partners, we might understand what influences remitters to send and the influence of remittances on receivers. Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action, along with Paul Ricoeur’s critical hermeneutic theories on recognition, and narrative identity, guided my data collection and analysis. The following section describes the protocol used for this research. From the research conversations, two additional theoretical concepts emerged —solicitude and imagination, and they are presented, resulting from my fusion of horizon from the subjects at hand.

### **Communicative Action**

Promises are inherent in Habermas’ (1981,1984) speech act theory. Agreement through communicative action needs promises as part of the discourse. Habermas’ theory of communicative action focuses on language in use – speech. The structure of the public sphere mediates civil society and the state, resulting, according to Habermas (1991:89) in the creation of public opinion through critical discourse. Habermas (1984:397) writes:

If we assume that the human species maintains itself through the socially coordinated activities of its members and that this coordination is established through communication – and in certain spheres of life, through communication aimed at reaching agreement – then the reproduction of the species

also requires satisfying the conditions of a rationality inherent in communicative action.

Herda (1999:67) further ascertains that communicative rationality is an aspect of learning, which in Habermas' approach associates with critique, recognizing one's mistakes, and choosing another way of thinking about something.

Habermas (1984) states that we understand a speech act when we know the kinds of reasons that a speaker could provide in order to convince a hearer that he is entitled in the given circumstances to claim validity. To understand what one is doing in making a speech act, one must have some sense of the appropriate response that would justify one's speech act, were one challenged to do so. A speech act succeeds in reaching understanding when the hearer takes up an affirmative position toward the claim made by the speaker (Habermas 1987). Further, a speech act must be transparent — it works only when the other person understands the intention of the speaker, in Habermas' (1984:288) words, "We must be able to communicate meaning to others." The intent of remitters and the understanding of the intention by the receivers of remittances often carry a promise, from the sender and the recipient.

An illocutionary utterance is of great interest to Habermas because he believes it contains the seeds for establishing a normative relationship between two or more speakers. Illocutionary utterances are what we do *in* saying, or put another way, a promise. Perlocutionary linguistic utterances are what we do through or by saying. The illocutionary must precede the perlocutionary. Habermas (1984) claims we cannot but orient ourselves towards mutual understanding when we communicate.

Habermas' (1984:72-73) validity claims are present in every speech act: claims to truth, normative rightness, and truthfulness of authenticity. Through the validity claims,

Habermas (1981:42) proposes a model including informal logic and cultural systems, but according to Habermas (1981:42), “the type of validity claim attached to cultural values does not transcend local boundaries in the same way as truth rightness claims.”

Understanding is coming to a common definition of a subject Habermas (1981:139) states, “The arriving at agreement is fundamental to the existence of culture, ...the concept of reaching an understanding suggests a rationally motivated agreement among participants that is measured against criticisable validity claims. The validity claims...characterize different categories of a knowledge embodied in symbolic expressions.” Communicative rationality is the process by which different validity claims are brought to a satisfactory resolution.

Ricoeur (1986:159) adds that interpretation is validated by viewing competing interpretations. Ricoeur (1986:160) concludes:

If it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal and may be assimilated to so-called rules of thumb. The text is a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and skepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them, and to seek for an agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach.

Ricoeur (*in* Dauenhauer 2002) maintains that what holds good for the interpretation of discourse holds, as well, for the interpretation of action. Habermas (1981:99) leads interpretation of discourse to communicative action, which “presupposes the use of language as a medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise validity claims that can be accepted or contested.” For Habermas, the principle of communicative action and

communicative rationality are not arbitrary ideals imposed by authority (Herda 1999:71). Through narrative, mutual understanding may be reached leading to new interpretations for remittances.

### **Narrative Identity**

According to Ricoeur (1992), narrative identity mediates one's sameness (idem) and self identities (ipse). Character reflects idem; it is associated with the habits and traits of the individual that always stays the same. Ipse is the identity of self continually refigured in relation to others. Self identity addresses Ricoeur's (1992:42) description of promise, "which [plays] a decisive role in the ethical determination of the self." In making a promise, individuals establish otherness and differentiate between same and self. Promise keeping, "keeping one's promise...is keeping one's word," reflects character (Ricoeur 1992:124). Ricoeur (1992:147-148) writes, "the narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity...it is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character." Narrative is ordinary life configured into plot and metaphor as a representation of life.

Ricoeur (1991:35) describes narrative as a connector when he writes, "we equate life to the story or stories we tell about it. The act of telling or narrating appears to be the key to the type of connectedness that we evoke when we speak..." What Ricoeur (1983:53) calls the "opaque depths of living, acting and suffering" can be configured narratively to make the world livable, but only when the text is authentic, that is, when the world of the text shares a horizon with our world (Ricoeur 1983:77). With the spoken word fixed in text, distanciation takes place.

Distanciation is “the dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest, and our effort to overcome cultural estrangement” (Ricoeur 1976:43). It is a ‘dialectical trait’ that bridges self-understanding and the “struggle between the otherness that transforms all spatial and temporal distance into cultural estrangement and the ownness by which all understanding aims at the extension of self-understanding.” Ricoeur places distanciation at the “heart of the historicity of human experience” (1981:132). Millions of Koreans have lived through a forced separation of families for over 60 years, causing more than an estrangement of kin. The inability to communicate freely has created a cultural gap, where many younger Koreans do not have the memory of a separation.

Language as discourse is central to Ricoeur’s views on distanciation. Discourse is given as an event: something happens when someone speaks. We gain understanding of the text before us through the process of distanciating oneself from the text. Ricoeur (1981:134) writes, “If language is a meaningful intention, it is precisely in virtue of the surpassing of the event by the meaning...Distanciation is thus...the distanciation of the saying in the said” (Ricoeur 1981:134).

Ricoeur (1983:96) reflects on otherness saying that “to the notion of the human past is added, as a constitutive obstacle, the idea of an otherness of an absolute difference affecting our capacity for communication.” The responsive self lives in hope that its responsiveness to others can and will bring about a better life for all of them, a life in which they all participate with and for others (Ricoeur 1992). Ricoeur’s (1995:206) use of “hope” is illuminated in his book *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, where Ricoeur refers to the “absurd logic of hope” a “superabundance of

meaning as opposed to the abundance of senselessness, of failure, and of destruction.”  
We hope in order to understand.

### **Recognition**

Ricoeur (2005:69) is referring to self-recognition when he writes, “the road to recognition is long, for the ‘acting and suffering’ human being, that leads to the recognition that he or she is in truth a person ‘capable’ of different accomplishments.” Separation of families across continents for extended periods of time can be a long road.

Ricoeur (2005:225-246) refers to the work of Mauss on mutual recognition, particularly the paradoxes of the gift and the gift in return and the logic of reciprocity. Mauss (1967) views gifts as exchanges. Ricoeur (2005:230) refers to selfless giving as that which is ‘without price,’ posed in our culture by the relation between truth – or at least the search for truth – and money. Ricoeur takes us further, by examining the gift receiver. Ricoeur (2005:243) writes about the gift exchange, whereby reciprocity is implied in the act of gift giving, “Receiving then becomes the pivotal category, in that the person who receives the gift will feel obliged to give something in return.” Mauss’ important work relies on the concept of reciprocity; Ricoeur maintains that selfless giving is integral to caring.

### **Solicitude**

Ricoeur (1992:180) defines ethical perspective as “*aiming at the good life with and for others in just institutions.*” The phrase ‘for others’ refers to solicitude, or care for others. Solicitude, or concern for the other, and self-esteem are linked. One cannot be experienced without the other. Ricoeur’s (Cohen and Marsh 2002:132) idea of solicitude is also referred to as “benevolent spontaneity,” linked to one’s self-esteem in quest of the



good life. Solicitude expressed through friendship where an individual as “another self” constitutes a balance where giving and receiving is evident.

Ricoeur (1994:190) cautions that there is more to solicitude than obedience to duty. Solicitude, or benevolent spontaneity, “[is] intimately related to self-esteem within the framework of the aim of the ‘good’ life. On the basis of this benevolent spontaneity, receiving is on an equal footing with the summons to responsibility, in the guise of the self’s recognition of the superiority of the authority enjoining it to act in accordance with justice. The remitter, through the act of remitting, is engaging in benevolent spontaneity.

The other, according to Ricoeur (1994:190) is “now a suffering being...men and women as acting and suffering. Actors, those capable of acting, are givers and receivers, not necessarily equal.” Ricoeur (1994:191) continues, “This is perhaps the supreme test of solicitude, when unequal power finds compensation in an authentic reciprocity in exchange, which, in the hour of agony, finds refuge in the shared whisper of voices or the feeble embrace of clasped hands.” Feelings affect solicitude. Our feelings are affected by and revealed in one’s self in relation to the other’s suffering. Such is the situation for many of my research participants, who as senders embrace the needs of the recipients with a sense of feeling for their plight. This sense of feeling is mediated by one’s imagination.

### **Imagination**

As early as 1975 Ricoeur lectured and wrote about his theory of imagination (Taylor: 2006). Ricoeur (*in* Taylor: 2006:94) presents his definitions or domains for productive imagination: utopia, the fiction that exemplifies productive imagination; epistemological imagination; poetic imagination; and religious symbols. For reproductive

imagination, Ricoeur searches for imagination as a copy, “an analogue of an original” (in Taylor 2006:96). Ricoeur (in Taylor 96) continues, “Presence and absence are distinctions relative to reality.” Absence is a copy — a form of reproductive imagination — of someone present. Imagination draws on history, but also lives in the present as one imagines a future.

Richard Kearney (2004) interviewed Paul Ricoeur in “On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva” and asked Ricoeur about his rapport with productive and reproductive imagination:

RK: What is the rapport between your earlier analysis of the ‘creative’ imagination as an ‘eschatological hope’ for the ‘not yet’ of history, and your more recent analysis of narrativity as the production of human time and history?

PR: ...[w]e must have a sense of the meaningfulness of the past if our projections into the future are to be more than empty utopias. Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that it is because we are turned towards the future that we can possess and repossess a past, both our personal past and our cultural heritage...To ‘repeat’ our story, to retell our history, is to recollect our horizon of possibilities in a resolute and responsible manner.

Productive imagination requires revision of our concept of reality along with our concept of truth (Ricoeur *in* Taylor 2006). Productive imagination alerts us to a “disclosure of reality that is both available and yet to come” (Taylor 2006:99). Ricoeur uses metaphor to bridge a gap between an absence of literal fit or common identity. This metaphoric creation of resemblance is an act of imagination (Taylor: 2006:99).

“Imagination,” Ricoeur writes (*in* Taylor 2006:99) “is this ability to produce new kinds of assimilation and to produce them not *above* the differences, as in the concept, but in spite of and through the differences.” Discourse enables productive imagination. Ricoeur cautions that productive imagination has a good side and a “pathological side” (*in* Taylor

2006: 99). Creative imagination is “nothing other than the demand put to conceptual thought...to think more” (Ricoeur 1975).

We learn from Ricoeur that imagination is not peripheral or an occasional thought, but “rather permeates all thought and conceptualization” (Taylor 2006:94). Migrant remitters and receivers of migrant remittances demonstrate the place of productive and reproductive imagination in their narratives.

In the next section, I introduce my research protocol that is guided by participants engaged in intentional, imaginative, and reflective conversation (language). The inquiry questions are presented according to the theories of narrative identity, communicative action, and recognition, and also according to the participant’s role as sender or receiver.

### **Research Protocol**

I followed interpretive research protocol for my interpretive conversations guided by critical hermeneutic inquiry. Through a collaborative effort where the researcher and participants come together in conversation, this research protocol allows for data to emerge through dialogue and understanding. Herda (1999:93) suggests that the “hermeneutic researcher understands that we live in a world already familiar to us and the participants.” Interpretive inquiry invites the researcher and the participants to challenge prejudgments during conversation and in the reflection that follows. I used the research categories of narrative identity, recognition, and communicative action to guide the research conversations in an attempt to understand the influence of remittances on the lives of migrant workers from the Philippines and members of the Korean diaspora in the US, non-Koreans, and South Koreans.

## Research Questions

Data in this research are revealed through interpretive conversations with senders and receivers of remittances among the Philippine and Korean diaspora. The following questions were used to guide the conversations.

The research categories and questions are as follows:

(For Senders)

Category: Narrative Identity

1. What motivates you to remit? To whom do you remit?
2. How do you decide how much and how often to remit?
3. Are your remitting preferences similar to others you know who also remit?
4. How do you transmit your remittances?

Category: Recognition

1. What are your expectations for recognition when you remit?
2. What are the effects of your remitting on the receivers?

Category: Communicative Action

1. Do you or would you remit to causes in addition to people known to you?
2. Have you or would you remit as a part of a group of remitters?  
(For Korea only) Do you support the efforts for a reunified Korea?  
(For Korea only) Do you or would you contribute money to offset the costs of reunification? Please explain.

(For Receivers)

Category: Narrative Identity

1. Who do you receive remittances from?
2. How do you use the remittances? Who decides how the remittances are used?
3. How do remittances affect you and your family?

Category: Recognition

1. Do remittances influence your sense of self? If so, how?
2. Do remittances influence your relationship with the sender? If so, how?
3. Do remittances influence your relationship with others in your community, family? If so, how?

Category: Communicative Action

1. Do you contribute money to local causes or other people? Please explain.
2. Would you consider contributing money to causes in your community/country? Please explain.

Questions were not asked in order presented. Rather, they were grouped by category. The exchange of ideas coming from dialogue determined the course of the conversation. Some conversations required the researcher to move away from the guiding questions and to ask different questions, so that there might be a better understanding of the information provided by the participant. The discursive nature of interpretive critical hermeneutic inquiry required that the researcher be an active participant in the conversations so as to promote better collaboration with the participant in an effort to collect data necessary for a better understanding of the research topic.

### **Data Collection**

The conversations with the participants are the data for my research. The researcher met with selected participants individually and these one-to-one conversations were audio-recorded, and in some instances, video-recorded, then transcribed, at which time they became data in the form of a text (Herda 1999). Each conversation participant received a letter of invitation (See Appendix A). I secured each participant's written permission to record, transcribe, and analyze the data as part of this study. A confirmation letter followed (See Appendix B). Following the transcription of each conversation, I sent each participant and a thank you letter (See Appendix C) and provided them with the opportunity to review the transcript and offer any changes or corrections to the data. In addition to the conversation data, I kept a research journal with recorded observations and personal notations regarding the data collected. Herda

(1999:98) describes this journal as “the life source of the data collection process for in it goes the hopes, fears, questions, ideas, humor, observations, and comments of the researcher.” This journal helped me in reflecting on the conversations and enriched the data analysis process.

### **Data Analysis**

Transcribing conversations into text creates distance between the data and the researcher. The text creation allows the researcher to reflect on the conversation and then return to the data to analyze it using critical hermeneutic theory. Ricoeur (1982:53) writes that the “text must be unfolded, no longer towards its author but towards its imminent sense and towards the world which it opens up and discloses.” Herda (1999:99) explains that data analysis happens in the following stages:

- The recording and transcribing of research conversation with participants;
- The identification of quotes to develop themes which are then placed within the identified research categories;
- The examination of the themes as related to the critical hermeneutic theoretical framework, including remaining open to the possibility of new themes as interpreted within the data;
- The opportunity, when appropriate and available, for further conversation with the research participants in analyzing the developing text;
- The discussion of the research issue as related to critical hermeneutic theory;
- The uncovering of implications.
- Through this process, the researcher analyzes and interprets the text in an attempt to come to a new understanding of the research issue. This new understanding

may challenge the researcher's pre-judgments and, through praxis, inform the creation of a new paradigm.

### **Entrée to Research Site**

I conducted my research in various locations in the United States, South Korea, and the Philippines. My entrée to conversation participants in the US came from personal and professional recommendations. As a frequent visitor to Korea, and having lived in Korea while in the Peace Corps, I have a range of people who provided introductions to possible conversation partners. For the Philippines, I have family connections that provided entrée to conversations with recipients of remittances in Santo Tomas, Pangasinan Province, Philippines. Conversations in the United States occurred in California and Georgia.

### **Research Conversation Participants**

Conversation partners included members of the Philippine or Korea diaspora in California, recipients of remittances in the Philippines, and Koreans living in South Korea who experience remittances as senders and/or receivers. Conversation partners had a minimum of five years' experience with remitting as sender or receiver, and were 18 years or older. My conversation partners all spoke some English. See Appendix D for a list of research conversation participants.

### **Timeline**

I conducted my research conversations in late May to mid-June 2012, traveled to Korea in May for fieldwork, and in June to the Philippines. Conversations in the United States were scheduled throughout the summer. I transcribed each conversation as soon as

possible and analyzed the data following the transcription of data. I completed the writing of this dissertation February 2013.

### **Background of the Conversation Participants**

Text enables communication. “The text does not belong to the researcher or the participants. However, it is the text that connects us and gives us a way to communicate” (Herda 1999:127). In this section, I introduce my conversation partners, describing how we are connected and framing the setting of our conversations.

My research participants for Korea included Koreans old enough to recall a unified Korea and participants born after the separation. I will first present each of my

Korean research partners.



FIGURE 5 BRIAN BARRY

**Brian Barry** has lived in Korea since 1967. He is a native of Boston, Mass., and a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Korea. Brian is a Dharma painter, disciple of the late Living National Treasure Master Manbong; works include Korean dancheong on temple doors at Royal Thai temple in Bangkok. He was awarded Jogye

Order’s first Honorary International Dharma Teacher. Brian is the Dharma translator of Dharma talks by Ven. Songchol, Ven. Bopjong, Ven. Ilta and more than 60 books on Korean and Buddhist culture

He received the prestigious National Order of Cultural Merit in 2009 and is the only American to receive this honor.





FIGURE 6 JOHN CHA

**John Cha** lives in Emeryville, California. He is the author of *Exit Emperor Kim*, a book about the late Kim il- Sung. John is Korean. He was born in Mongolia and fled to South Korea with his family when he was a child.



FIGURE 7 MAX

**Max** is a 28-year-old American studying Korean at a private university in Seoul. Max taught English to elementary and middle school students at a public school in Gangwon-do province, in eastern Korea for two years.



FIGURE 8 YOUNG SOOK-KANG

**Young Sook-kang** is Secretary for Mission Contexts and Relationships and Mission Education for the Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. She was born outside Seoul and came to the United States for college. She currently lives in Colorado. Her work through GBGM has had a long and important relationship of support and solidarity with the Korean Christian Federation of the DPRK. Dr. Kang has participated in many visits and missionary exchanges between the Methodist Church and the DPRK.



FIGURE 9 HEY AH OHM

**Hey Ah Ohm** was born in North Korea and came to the United States to attend college. She works as an executive assistant for a nonprofit organization in San Francisco. I met Hey Ah when we worked for the same organization. Hey Ah is a direct descendant of the last royal dynasty of Korea. She and her family moved from North Korea to Seoul when the Japanese left Korea.



FIGURE 10 DAVID SNELL

**David Snell** is the CEO of the Fuller Center for Housing headquartered in Americus, Georgia. The Fuller Center is building 50 homes in North Korea in a partnership with North Korea. I met David through Don Mosely, who was my in country representative when I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Korea and is on the board of directors of the Fuller Center.



FIGURE 11 MISS KIM

**Miss Kim** is from Pyongyang, and is currently working at the Pyongyang Restaurant in Siem Reap, Cambodia, for three months. I met Miss Kim when my advisor, Dr. Ellen Herda and I visited the restaurant in June 2012.

Filipino hospitality was evident as I met with research participants in Pangasinan province, Philippines, and conversed with remitters in California. These participants are:



FIGURE 12 ABIGAIL

**Abigail (Teresa) Pescador Gendolfos** is 24 years old, married with two young children. She regularly receives remittances from her mother who has been working in the Middle East since Abigail was very young. Abigail's husband is unemployed and Abigail would like to continue her education. Abigail is related to my daughter-in-law Rhoda, and lives near Rhoda's parents. Abigail visits Rhoda's mother regularly, and will ask for financial help occasionally.



FIGURE 13 GINA Q.

**Gina Q.** is Filipino. She lives in Mountain View CA and works at a local hospital in patient care. Gina was born in the Philippines but has lived in the United States for a while, with her husband and children. She remits money

to her mother who lives in the Philippines. I met Gina through my daughter-in-law. They work at the same hospital.



FIGURE 14 IVY

**Ivy (Maureen) Calderon Pescador** is 21 years old and lives in Santo Tomas, Philippines. She and Abigail are friends and cousins. Ivy is single and receives remittances

from her mother who works in the Middle East. Ivy receives remittances from her mother.



FIGURE 15 JAY

**Jay** is a Filipino male currently working as an OFW in Seoul. I met Jay in the informal marketplace outside Hyewhwa Church in Seoul, where hundreds of OFWs gather to socialize on Sundays after church East. Jay remits to his family in the Philippines.



FIGURE 16 JULIE S.

**Julie Santiago** was born in the Philippines and now lives in San Diego, California. Julie provides home care for disabled adults in a number of locations in San Diego. She remits to her mother and sister in the Philippines. I met Julie through a friend of my daughter-in-law.



FIGURE 17 NIEVES, LETICIA, PAULA

**Leticia Ventura** is 64 years old, a widow, living in Santo Tomas. Her adult children are OFWs in the Middle East. **Nieves Agustin** is also a widow. She is in her 60s and is a retired elementary school teacher. **Paula Ventura**, 15, is Lettie's granddaughter. Paula's parents are OFWs and Paula receives and

distributes remittances to her two younger brothers, in addition to herself. Letty and Nieves are neighbors in Santo Tomas.



FIGURE 18 RHODA

**Rhoda Arciaga** lives in Union City, California. She is my daughter-in-law. Rhoda's parents are Filipino Americans who moved back to the Philippines when Rhoda's father retired from the US Navy. Rhoda went to elementary and high school in the US and graduated from college in the Philippines. She does not remit.

## **Research Pilot Project**

### **Introduction**

I conducted a pilot study in fall 2011 that served as a field test where I was able to become more familiar with asking questions and engaging participants in a conversation (Herda 1999:97). In the pilot study, I described the project and my experience as the researcher, including information about my two conversation partners, synthesis of the data collected, and an analysis of data as related to the proposed research categories of communicative action, narrative identity, and recognition. See Appendix F for pilot conversation transcripts.

### **Background of the Pilot Conversation Participants**

Text enables communication. “The text does not belong to the researcher or the participants. However, it is the text that connects us and gives us a way to communicate” (Herda 1999:127). In this section, I introduced my conversation partners, describing how we are connected and framing the setting of our conversations.

#### **Pilot Conversation Partner: Rhoda**

Rhoda is quiet. She is not talkative most of the time, and her voice is soft. Her English is excellent and she is fluent in Tagalog, although she worries that she will forget how to speak Tagalog if she doesn't use the language. Rhoda works in patient care at a private hospital in Silicon Valley. Her family (mother, father, brother) live in the Philippines and Rhoda hasn't seen them for three years. They communicate regularly via Skype. Rhoda is a U.S. citizen – her parents retired to the Philippines when Rhoda was still in high school. She completed high school and graduated from college in the

Philippines. She has a large circle of extended family and friends near her and she is proud of her Philippine heritage.

She is very interested in my research and has offered to introduce me to a colleague of hers who is from the Philippines, who has been remitting for some time. Rhoda also offered an introduction a close friend in San Diego, also Filipina, who works with others who remit.

#### Pilot Conversation Partner: Hey Ah

Hey Ah and I worked at the same organization and she invited me to lunch soon after we met. I chose a local quiet Japanese restaurant on Post Street. It is worth pointing out that a Korean woman and a Chinese American went to a Japanese restaurant where we ate and talked about Korea and the Japanese occupation, and the recent role China has played with helping North Koreans escape through China to Thailand in hope of safe and legal entry into South Korea.

I did not intend to have a formal conversation with Hey Ah, but I had my recorder and a letter of invitation, just in case. After ordering our lunches I asked Hey Ah about her family and history in Korea and it became readily apparent that we were embarking on a rich conversation. I stopped her and asked if I could record our conversation (I had previously told her about my research studies and she wanted to be “interviewed,” but I thought we should have an informal lunch first). Hey Ah agreed to be recorded and she said she would tell me more at another time if we didn’t have enough time at lunch. Hey Ah’s stories were not what I thought I might hear. We did not talk about remittances much, nor did we talk about reunification of the north and south. I did, however, hear from Hey Ah about her sense of nationalistic pride, her loving mother who created a

nonprofit organization in Korea in the 1950s, and not once did Hey Ah distinguish between a “North” Korean and a “South” Korean.

Hey Ah is an animated speaker. She communicates with her voice, using tone to make points. Because Korean is her native language, Hey Ah brings the melodic flow of the Korean language to her English speaking side. Her eyes are expressive and she is subtly direct in her communication. Koreans tend to speak quickly and Hey Ah is no exception. I had some difficulty keeping up with her. As her narrative unfolded, I found that I had to consciously work at staying a part of the conversation. The story of her family’s history was so intriguing and I wanted to listen more than talk. At one point when Hey Ah was describing her mother, I thought of my father and his mother, my paternal grandmother. Both Hey Ah’s mother and my grandmother shared a determination not normally found in Asian women in the early 20th century. Hey Ah’s family lost their home, their possessions during the war with North Korea and the mother raised Hey Ah and her siblings while the father ran the business. My grandmother raised six children alone after her husband died during the depression. I share this observation because Hey Ah’s narrative brought to my understanding a sense of mutual respect for strong women in our respective families.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis of Pilot Conversations**

I began my analysis acknowledging that both my conversation partners and I created the boundaries of my pilot conversations. Both participants were invited and agreed to participate in my pilot study. Selected theoretical themes of identity, public sphere, communicative action, and narrative are highlighted in this analysis. New themes arose as I participated, transcribed, and reflected on the conversation narratives. The



concepts of imagination, care and mimesis became evident, and I included them in the analysis.

### Narrative Identity

When Rhoda learned to speak Tagalog as a teenager growing up in the Philippines, she entered a new shared view of Filipino culture, something new to her as she grew up in the States. When she said she didn't have the Filipino identity growing up, and "now that we've found it, we don't want to let it go." [The world] I might inhabit into which I might project my own most powers..." (Ricoeur 1983:81). Ricoeur says that self-identity bridges our idem and ipse, and Rhoda's idem, the culture to which she was born, and her ipse, her selfhood or identity are linked through the new self-identity she found through learning to speak Tagalog.

Rhoda talks about Filipino youth in the Bay Area who have never been to the Philippines and have misplaced anger which she says goes way back to the Spaniards' rule of the country for so long. In re-reading the transcript of our conversation, I see how imagination "the mediator between the poles of sameness and selfhood" (Ricoeur 1992:148) emerge in her narrative. The narrative constructs the identity of character, in this case Rhoda's, and what can be called her narrative identity is seen in her construction of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character (Ricoeur 1992).

"They were distant, they didn't want to learn about their culture, about their country." Rhoda is talking here about Filipino youth. In contrast to her own eagerness to embrace Filipino culture she is concerned about youth who express no interest. Ricoeur (2005:69) in writing about the capable human being says, "The road to recognition is

long for the acting and suffering human being, that leads to the recognitions that he or she is capable of different accomplishments.” Ricoeur (1992:165-66) explains that narrative identity stands between self-constancy and character: “Narrative identity makes the two ends of the chain link up with one another: the permanence of time of character and that of self-constancy.” Rhoda’s “I can” stance is demonstrated by her eagerness to attend a high school where she could barely speak the language. Rather than resisting the opportunity, she welcomed it. Her dismay about young Filipinos who don’t share that eagerness is likely a hope on her part that others will also experience the happiness she found in immersing herself in a new culture. Goodenough (2003:6) writes “culture was like a language, which is not what its speakers say but what they need to know to communicate acceptably with one another.”

### Imagination

Hey Ah and I talked about charitable giving in Korea. I ask her what she knows about South Koreans remitting funds to North Koreans. She replied, “ Have you heard about Hyundai? They are a big company in Korea and they have a hotel and conference center in the North, and many factories. Hyundai is like the large corporate donor to the north. That’s the way many Koreans in the south see it.” Her last sentence was a fusion of horizon for me. “That’s the way many Koreans in the south see it.” My perceptions of remittances with a particular starting point (the sender), an ending point (the receiver), and the mode (transmittal of individual or small group remittances to community based projects) are fraught with bias, prejudice, based on a type of giving in the west. I am lacking imagination. Or, to put it another way, South Koreans are exercising imagination in their belief that a corporate conglomerate is their charitable arm in the north. “One of

the major obstacles to successful development is the public image the client community itself has among other communities in the larger society, especially when that image is composed of features that the others refuse to regard as capable of alteration” (Goodenough 1963:186).

### Communicative Action

Rhoda told me, “I stumbled my way through Tagalog, so that they would talk to me. That’s how I met my friends. Once I opened my mouth and started talking, they would laugh and say you’re not from here. It worked, and that’s how I got to know my friends.” Habermas (1999:25) writes, “hermeneutics watches language at work, so to speak, language as it is used by participants to reach a common understanding or a shared view.” Habermas (1999:136) emphasizes the speech act as necessary to reaching an understanding between world and life world. “Speech acts...serve to produce interpersonal relationships – in which case the speaker makes reference to something in the social world of legitimately ordered interactions...They serve the process of self-representation.”

“She knew that education was important. We had a lot of maids, and she sent them all to night school. She didn’t spend a lot of time with us, but she spent a lot of time for her country. I was so proud of my mother. She died when I was 18. My birthday is March 17 and I could vote at 18. She got out of her sick bed and walked me to the place to vote. She died in April. She’s incredible.” Hey Ah said this and her voice caught and she paused. She didn’t speak of her mother as someone who died fifty years ago. Hey Ah’s mother recognized how important it was for Koreans to learn to speak Korean after four decades of Japanese control. Habermas’ theory of communicative action focuses on

language in use, speech. “His framework and foundation for a social theory is in the form of a theory of action established through communication. Inherent in communicative action is human rationality” (Herda 1999:66). Her mother’s actions are “Habermas posits that history made with will and consciousness happens when rational capacities of human beings are released and a self-knowledge is generated through self-reflection” (Herda 1999:69).

As researcher I came to the text with the present in front of me. My conversation with Hey Ah provided a fusion of horizons about the importance of self-reflection in our narrative. “Habermas is aware of the importance of self and writes...that in a rational reconstruction of our society, there is a place for self-knowledge to emerge” (Herda 1999:70). Reflective of Habermas’ life world, which is an ontological condition, a process of reaching understanding “through which and in which the object domain is antecedently constituted prior to a theoretical understanding of it” (Herda 1999:68).

Habermas places community as ontological and universal (Herda 1999:69).

Habermas’ validity claims underscore his principles of communicative action and communicative rationality: comprehension, shared knowledge, trust, and shared values (Herda 1999:71). Hey Ah’s mother’s interest in educating Korean women appears to be based on her use of these validity claims as she encouraged other women to be in that place where discursive citizens deliberate. Habermas (1974:49) writes, “By ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed.”

I asked Rhoda about a website for Filipina migrant workers, an online magazine where the women could post their stories. Rhoda replied that she ran across it a few years

ago. The women would post their stories, no feedback or anything like that. “It was just stories of contract workers, writing about their plight is what they call it.”

“Public realm is a realm of action of seeing and being seen by others which constitutes our reality. [We] always appear in a world that is a stage” (Arendt 2003:13). Habermas and Arendt wrote extensively on public sphere during a time in France when the bourgeois were flourishing. Habermas (1984) viewed public sphere as an arena for discursive deliberation. Arendt viewed public space as where citizens perform great actions in the company of others (Benhabib 1992). The stage for overseas contract workers is more virtual than it is physical. Habermas’ theory on public sphere has evolved over time. Reporter Stuart Jeffries (*Financial Times*, May 1,2010) shares Habermas’ thoughts about the Internet as public sphere:

The Internet generates a centrifugal force. It releases an anarchic wave of highly fragmented circuits of communication that infrequently overlap...The web itself does not produce any public spheres. Its structure is not suited to focusing the attention of a dispersed public of citizens who form opinions simultaneously on the same topics and contributions, which have been scrutinized and filtered by experts.

I posed the question about the website because I wondered if this online magazine could serve as a voice for overseas contract workers. Both Rhoda and Habermas helped me see that communication using migrant workers’ stories in the magazine is fragmented at best, and that such a resource serves to offer a space for the voice (plight) of the worker, rather than discourse.

### Recognition

“The one thing about Filipinos is they like to network.” Rhoda and I talked about how she relocated back to the States, leaving her family in the Philippines.

When Rhoda described the affinity Filipinos have for networking, she made it clear that helping one another out is not done from an expectation of reciprocity. Ricoeur (2005:243) encourages us to look at receiving part of gift giving. “Receiving then becomes the pivotal category in that the person who receives the gift will feel obliged to give something in passing: gratitude...Gratitude lightens the weight of obligation to give in return and reorients this toward a generosity equal to the one that led to the first gift.”

Ricoeur (2005:125) writes about the place of memory in recognition. “The distinction between past and present is given in the very recognition where events return with their outline, their color, and their place in time...the concrete process by which we grasp the past in the present is recognition.” Hey Ah spoke about her mother in a way where time didn’t matter. The stories of her mother go back fifty plus years, but they were told as if her mother was teaching the Korean language classes in Seoul today. Similarly, Hey Ah’s mother’s activities on behalf of the country she loved so much transcended place and time. There is a mimetic configuration in the narrative of her mother’s story. “It is the task of hermeneutics...to reconstruct the set of operations by which a work lifts itself above the opaque depths of living, acting, and suffering, to be given by an author to readers who receive it and thereby change their acting” (Ricoeur 1983:53).

### **Implications**

My pilot research participants, Rhoda and Hey Ah, provided me with thoughtful and rich texts. My conversation with Rhoda was the more difficult, as I know her well, and I found the familiarity prevented me from keeping the conversation in play. It was too easy to let her talk, and for me to follow along with her narrative. This is not to say

that the conversation wasn't fruitful. Through the process of distancing in transcribing the text and presenting the data, I had the opportunity to get closer to Rhoda's narrative, and in doing so, found new meaning in the narrative.

The conversation with Hey Ah, while abbreviated, was illuminating for me. Her story of her mother and her family was told with clarity and emotion, and I left our conversation with a new understanding of the deeply held desire for unification of the Koreas.

There were three fusions of horizons for me in these participatory pilot conversations. Hey Ah's memories of her mother awakened in me a sense of my own self-reflection. Habermas (1990:69) posits that "history made with will and consciousness happens when rational capacities of human beings are released and a self-knowledge is generated through self-reflection." I came to the text with the present in front of me. My conversation with Hey Ah provided a fusion of horizons about the importance of self-reflection in our narrative. Herda (1999:70) cites Habermas (1973)... "in a rational reconstruction of our society, there is a place for self-knowledge to emerge" part of Habermas' life world, an ontological condition, a process of reaching understanding "through which and in which the object domain is antecedently constituted prior to a theoretical understanding of it" (Herda 1999:68).

Another fusion of horizons came from my conversation with Hey Ah about Koreans in the south sending money to kin in the north when she said, "That's the way many Koreans in the south see it."

Through the pilot I came to see the limitations of my view of remittances which assumed a particular starting point (the sender), an ending point (the receiver), and the

transmittal of individual or small group remittances to community based projects, should follow the practices of charitable giving prevalent in the United States. “One of the major obstacles to successful development is the public image the client community itself has among other communities in the larger society, especially when that image is composed of features that the others refuse to regard as capable of alteration” (Goodenough 1963:186).

The final fusion of horizons was in the pilot conversation with Rhoda. I asked her if she knew of the online magazine for overseas contract workers that featured the women’s stories. The magazine *Tinig Filipina* was widely distributed throughout Europe and Canada. I posed the question about the website because I wondered if this online magazine could serve as a voice for overseas contract workers. Both Rhoda and Habermas helped me see that communication is fragmented at best, and that such a resource serves to offer a space for the voice (plight) of the worker, rather than discourse.

Gadamer (1988: 239-240) writes, “...prejudice does not mean a false judgment, but rather that we give positive and negative value to long-held opinions. It is important that we are aware of our bias, thus allowing the text to present itself to us in newness and “to assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings.”

### **Reflections on Pilot Project**

My understanding of the practice of remittances is based on my pre-understanding and prejudices as influenced by my assumptions about remittances. I came to the conversations with my pilot conversation partners anticipating some validation of my preconceptions. Herda (1999:77, 2010) challenges us by stating that in order to “overcome the pre-understandings that separate us from the new understandings that



carry us beyond the current order of our lives...[we] must reflect and distance ourselves from our prejudices.” However, our capacity to understand is influenced by our own experiences and our prejudices. Gadamer (2004:278) writes that it is “the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments” that shape the reality of an individual’s world. My conversations with Rhoda and Hey Ah helped me understand differently. I am learning to remain open to new understandings.

### **Background of the Researcher**

I have worked in the nonprofit sector for almost 35 years as a fundraiser and CEO in the nonprofit sector. I currently work for The Asia Foundation as vice president for private fundraising. In 2002 my book *Cultivating Diversity in Fundraising* was published. It was during that time that I became interested in the topic of remittances. A chapter in a book is not enough to explore the topic of remittances. As a former Peace Corps volunteer in Korea I have lived in Korea when the country was emerging from a devastating war. I am a fourth generation Chinese American, proud of my Asian heritage.

We live in a world where the distribution of wealth, not just monetary wealth, is out of alignment, where families are forced to live separate lives, where political gain too often overrides the needs of migrants. It is a personal interest of mine to learn about the lives of workers from the Philippines and their reasons to contribute to improving the lives of those in their home country. In the case of Korea, I came to love the people and the country as an outsider living in their land. I seek to learn about the reunification efforts and the leaders who work to bring people out of a personal and politically dire situation.

## Summary

Research protocols and critical hermeneutic theories are described in this chapter. Conversation participants are introduced, and the findings of the researcher's pilot study are summarized. I share the poignant narratives of remittance receivers in the Philippines and the views of Filipino remitters in the United States and their reasons for remitting. For Korea I share the narratives of representatives of two American institutions that have engaged in humanitarian projects in North Korea. Participants living in Seoul and the US provide narrative on the possibilities of reunification of North and South Korea. In the following chapter, data from the interpretive research conversations is presented.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION**

### **Introduction**

The exploration of individual narratives of remittance senders and receivers took place in four countries in 2011 and 2012. My original plan was to conduct interpretive conversations with Filipino remitters in the United States, followed by conversations with recipients of remittances in the Philippines. For Korea, I intended to meet collective remitters in both the United States and South Korea. Unanticipated research conversations occurred in Siem Reap, Cambodia in the summer 2012 and another unexpected conversation occurred in Seoul with the chance meeting of a Filipino contract worker working in Korea. The conversation data are presented in the next Chapter using the critical hermeneutic theories of narrative identity, communicative action, and recognition.

### **Filipino Participants**

Research participants' narratives from the Philippines are shared in the first section of this Chapter. These narratives are rich with the text of families separated from one another, held together by grandmothers, absent mothers, and children being raised by an absentee parent. I include quotes from participants in these stories to memorialize the text.

Next to be presented are the narratives told by participants originally from the Philippines who now live in the United States and are remitting back to the Philippines. I explain how I met them and offer their stories, as told by overseas migrant workers. The final story connects an overseas Filipino worker in Korea with the second site of my research.

## **A Missing Generation**

Before meeting my research participants in the Philippines, I sought a book on Philippine history. My daughter-in-law took me to the newest mall in a neighboring town that had a large bookstore. The journey to the mall was not unlike one in a mall in the United States. We encountered traffic — cars, buses, and motorized bicycles equipped to carry two to three people. There was a large parking lot adjacent to the mall is filled with cars. This was the first mall to be built in the area, and it is very popular. Residents can now buy bulk items like a bottle of aspirin instead of single tablets from the local store. Families in the states no longer ask if there are certain American goods, such as Dial soap, that the local family would like. They can now buy it at the mall. A security check was required before entering the mall. The mall was busy —many people are shopping on this weekend day. But there was someone missing in this setting. There were young children, school-age students, and older people. Missing were the other components of a nuclear family unit. Most of the small children were with one adult, but very few were with both parents. What I did not see at the mall was the missing generation, the parent who is working overseas. In the town where my daughter-in-law's parents live, there are more households with one parent gone than there are homes with both parents present.

## **Santo Tomas**

The conversations with receivers of remittances took place in Santo Tomas, a town in Pangasinan province, about three hours north of Manila. Santo Tomas is a small town, bounded by a river on one side, and farmland on the other. The concept of land ownership is vague in this area and “the farm,” as the locals call it, is a large area of cooperatively farmed land. Adjacent to the farm is a community of lean-tos where the

poor live. Referred to as “squats,” these homes have no plumbing or utilities. The better roofs are constructed from tin; many are thatched straw. Some residents illegally appropriate electricity by tapping into the nearby power lines. In my daily walk to the farm, I passed the squats and saw children being bathed outside using the same water that is used for cooking and cleaning. There are no indoor toilets. The water supply is accessed from the river and is used for all purposes. Abigail and her family live in one of these squats.

A two-lane paved road separates the farm and squats from the river and the permanent homes. This road separates extreme poverty and comfortable homes. My hosts live in one of the nicest homes in Santo Tomas. They built their home on land that has been in the family for many years and it is as modern as many homes in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Abigail is 24 years old, married with two young children. She lives across the street from Aurora and Rod, my hosts. Abigail’s mother left to work in Dubai when she was two. Her mother was promised a job as an office worker, but on arrival in Dubai, was placed as a caregiver for the elderly. Abigail’s husband is unemployed and they live in a “squat” with no running water or plumbing with their two young children. Abigail’s mother regularly sends money to her. Her father is deceased. It is believed that he died from causes related to alcoholism. Abigail has one older sister who died several years ago. Now her mother doesn’t want to return to the Philippines because it reminds her of her deceased daughter. Abigail’s maternal grandmother raised her. Abigail uses the remittances for disposable diapers and food for her family.

Aurora, my host, told me that Abigail visits often, and occasionally asks to borrow money, but she is generally unable to repay Aurora, so now she asks for money rather than request a loan. Aurora and Rod are retired Filipino Americans who returned to Santo Tomas when Rod retired, and they are probably among the wealthier residents of the town. Aurora is a kind and caring woman, and she gives Abigail money when she requests. There is no expectation for repayment.

Ivy is 21 years old. She is single and has no children. She and Abigail are cousins and they requested to meet me together for our conversation. Ivy has attended college; she took courses in hotel and restaurant management but stopped because she could no longer afford the tuition. Her mother works in Dubai, like Abigail's. Ivy's mother has been a domestic helper for the same family for the entire time she's been in Dubai. Ivy told me that her mother wasn't paid for eight years because her employer was unable to pay her. Her mother borrowed money for living expenses, and eventually paid off her debt, and remitted money back to Ivy's family. Ivy receives the remittance and it is her responsibility to pay the household bills. She gives some money to her father and her older brothers. Ivy's mother has been in Dubai since Ivy was one year old.

Both Abigail and Ivy say their mothers send money about every two months. They talk on the phone twice a week for about ten to fifteen minutes, longer if there's something important to discuss. When asked if they would follow the mothers and seek employment abroad, both said yes, for their families' sake. But, when I asked if they could choose between having their mother at home, or having the money, they both said that motherly love is important, and it's not the same when all they have is a mother's comforting voice on the phone. Abigail told me if she had a choice between her mother

or father working abroad, she would prefer the father go, “because, if you’re sick and you need her, your mother is here. For the father, if he’s drinking, if there’s the opportunity for him to get drunk, he won’t be able to take care of the kids.” She continued, saying, “If there was an opportunity for the father to find a job here, he should take it. He doesn’t have to go abroad, and the family could be complete. I have experienced this. That’s my advice for other families.”

I then asked Ivy if she had any advice. Both Ivy and Abigail are crying, and it’s difficult for them to talk more about their situation. I thank them and turn off the voice recorder and we continue to talk informally while drinking iced tea. Abigail’s story has a profound effect on me. When I imagined having research conversations with the children of remittance senders, I thought I would be talking to school-age children, with a separation spanning a few years. Abigail’s mother has been gone for over twenty years, as has Ivy’s. Aurora confirmed that lengthy separations are not unusual. As she explained to me, a mother goes abroad for contract work and finds a level of financial comfort unknown in the Philippines, and elects to stay.

In another conversation the following day, I met Nieves and Leticia, and Leticia’s granddaughter Paula. They also are neighbors of Rod and Aurora Arciaga, my hosts. Nieves and Letty (as she likes to be called) are grandmothers and friends. Similar to Abigail and Ivy, they asked to meet with me together, and Paula joins us, too. Nieves has a daughter who has been working in Malaysia for a number of years. She remits home monthly and when I asked when she planned to return to the Philippines, Nieves frowned and replied that Girlie (her daughter) has permanent resident status in Malaysia now. Nieves has raised her daughter’s children.

Letty is Paula's grandmother. She's raised Paula and it is obvious there is a close relationship between grandmother and granddaughter. Paula's parents (Letty's daughter and son-in-law) are working in Qatar along with Letty's other son. Letty cares for Paula, 16, and her two younger brothers, 11 and 13. Paula's mother sends money to Paula through deposits to a bankcard Paula controls for herself and her two younger brothers. She uses the money for school supplies and food. I asked Letty when Paula's parents would return. Her reply was, "I'm tired of taking care of the young boys. I have to chase the boys to come home every day. I told my daughter to come home and take care of her kids." This seems possible, as Paula's mother is unemployed. Paula's father is the one who is employed there. What complicates the situation is that Letty's son, who is also working in Qatar, wants his sister who is Paula's mother to care for his children who are in Qatar.

Paula told me that she has no desire to leave the Philippines. She aspires to be a teacher like Letty, a recently retired elementary school teacher. She hugged her grandmother, who is visibly touched by this compliment from her 16-year-old granddaughter. Observing this touching exchange brought tears to my eyes.

Letty and Nieves are both widows. After my conversation with Nieves, Letty, and Paula was over and they left, Aurora told me that she tried to get a few men who receive remittances to talk with me, but they refused. Aurora said they are ashamed.

### **Solicitude**

In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur (1992:190) writes that solicitude is more than obedience to duty. It is the benevolent spontaneity that springs from the quest for a good life or ethical aim where receiving is "on an equal footing with the summons to



responsibility.” At the other end of the spectrum from solicitude is suffering (Ricoeur 1994:190). The sufferer accepts the benevolent spontaneity, the act of giving as receiving. In Ricoeur’s (1994:191) words, “This is perhaps the supreme test of solicitude, when unequal power finds compensation in an authentic reciprocity in exchange.” In addition to research participants who are remittance recipients, I had conversations with remittance senders. Those conversations follow.

My research participants who are remitting to family in the Philippines are Julie and Gina. Julie is 60, single, living in San Diego. She sends money to her 92-year-old mother living in the Philippines. Gina lives in Mountain View, California with her husband and two children. She remits to her mother in the Philippines. In both conversations the participants share their reasons for leaving the Philippines, not returning to the Philippines, and their continued practice of remitting to family members. While both speak to a duty to provide financially for their respective parents, more than the familial responsibility moves them. Gina continues to provide financial assistance to her mother, even though her husband has been unemployed for eight years.

Gina works at the same hospital as Rhoda, my daughter-in-law. When Rhoda moved to California 12 years ago, she left her parents and brother in the Philippines. There were distant relatives who helped her when she first arrived. Finding a job was at the top of Rhoda’s priorities, and she found a position in a physician’s office where Gina also worked. Gina left the doctor’s practice for another job at the local hospital, but not until she suggested to the doctor that he hire Rhoda as her replacement. Two years later Gina heard of an opening at the hospital and suggested to Rhoda that she apply. She guided Rhoda through the process, and was as happy as Rhoda when she was hired.

Whether it's helping a colleague find a job or sending money to her elderly parents in the Philippines, Gina said, "I help my brothers and sisters who are out of work. I know it is hard – even my husband is not working. I help out however I can. Even if you do not have anything anymore, I would rather give it to a relative because if they needed it most you would definitely help. That is our custom or tradition."

Julie is a successful businesswoman. She runs three residential care facilities for developmentally disabled adults in San Diego and is trained and licensed as a registered nurse in the Philippines; however Julie does not use her nursing skills here. In her words, she just runs the business. She came to the United States when she was 28. At various times, her siblings and parents also lived in the US, but her parents eventually returned to the Philippines to stay.

Julie sends money to assist with her mother's medical expenses, but she does not consider this financial assistance to be a remittance. Julie has heard too many stories of remittances sent via acquaintances and the remittance gets "lost." She told me about her sister-in-law who remits to her children in the Philippines, "Every month she is sending money to her adult children who are in their 30s." Then there is one of Julie's caregivers who have three children and several grandchildren in the Philippines. Julie said, "I told her you need to take care of yourself before them. They are married; they should learn to stand on their own. They are not going to learn. Every time you send them money, everything is gone. You are having a hard time buying yourself underwear. Before I would say, look what happened to your children? Did they learn how to make money? Now she is learning."

Julie clearly does not believe sending money home to one's children necessarily demonstrates care. She acknowledged the value of familial duty but strongly believes that remitting can be problematic, promise makers promising too much. In Ricoeur's (2005:133) words, "...we should attempt not to presume on its power, not to promise too much. In his own life and narrative identity, the promise maker can find counsel that would put him under the protection of the old Greek adage: Nothing in excess." Julie's aversion to remitting does not mean she is not willing to provide financial support.

There is a nursing home in the city where Julie's mother lives called Golden Acres. Every Christmas, Julie sends money, anonymously, to Golden Acres, with the instructions to use the gift to buy food and clothing for the residents. She doesn't want her name attached to the gift. She doesn't know anyone at Golden Acres. She said, "I just like to do [that] because I love taking care of those people over there. They don't have to thank me. I just want to make these elderly people happy." She has plans to send money to Golden Acres later this year, and she described to me it pleases her to know how happy the seniors are when they receive her gifts. I next present the chance conversation I had with Jay, an overseas Filipino working in Seoul.

### **Fate, Not Faith**

I was in Seoul in May 2012 to conduct field research on the Korean component of my dissertation. In earlier research for my proposal, I read about a church that attracted the growing Filipino overseas workers in Seoul and decided to visit.

Hyehwa Catholic Church sits on a hill in the northern part of Seoul in a residential neighborhood. From my journal notes, I recollect taking a bus from Insadong to Hyehwa, and realized en route that I didn't write down the name of the bus stop. In

halting Korean, I asked the bus driver for directions. Much to my surprise, he pulled the bus over to the side of the street, and drew me a detailed map with street names in Korean. No one on the bus complained about this delay, and he watched as I crossed the street to make sure I turned left, as instructed. I include here an excerpt from my research journal:

Thoughts on riding the bus: The bus driver to Hyehwa is very courteous; he greets each passenger as they board and depart. When I ask him about the stop for Hyehwa, he takes my map and writes directions for me. A woman gives me her seat, and I am thankful for her kindness.

The church is easy to spot. It is a modern structure built on a hill with a dramatic set of stairs leading to the church. In 1992, a Filipino priest started to hold Filipino masses at Hyehwa, and since then Filipinos have gathered to worship and to visit the impromptu market on the street outside the church that features Filipino food and goods. There are an estimated 80,000 Filipinos living and working in South Korea, including undocumented workers, and there appear to be several hundred people at the marketplace on this day.

As I browsed the food stands on the sidewalks adjacent to the church, I noticed a man in his early 30s standing alone next to the curb, smoking a cigarette. I initiated some informal conversation with him and he was amenable to talking to a stranger. I explained that I was conducting field research for my dissertation and was interested in learning about the Filipino community in Seoul. He introduced himself as Jay, and consented to continue our conversation and gave me permission to turn on my voice recorder.

Jay is from an area south of Luzon in the Philippines, but his last residency was in Manila. He remits money to his parents and siblings in the Philippines as often as he can because, in his words, “it’s no secret that the Philippines is way beyond, way under the

poverty line.” I asked him what it’s like to live in Seoul and his response was mixed. He likes the systems in Seoul, — traffic, transportation, satellite cable — but he finds it ironic that employer-employee relationships are worse than he has experienced in the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the United States. According to Jay, “The employees here have less power and rights, often working twelve hour shifts in a regular work day.” He observed that employers knowingly take advantage of overseas workers; “What makes it most difficult is that, not only Filipinos but other nationalities, such as Chinese, Mongolians, and Vietnamese that I know are finding it very difficult because they need the money, they just endure it, the hardships. That is difficult.” Jay works as a factory worker six nights a week, in 12-hour shifts. On Sundays, his day off, he goes to Hyehwa to socialize with other Filipinos.

I asked Jay about any intent associated with the money he remits, and he replied that he only “wants to help them, help them get by. Our government screwed up big time.” He added that he has a law degree from the Philippines, but he became angry at the government system and could not work there. He came to Korea as a “shot in the dark without even studying the basics.” I inquired if it was faith that led him to Seoul, and he replied that it was fate. Because of the street noise, I thought he said “faith.” Jay corrected me, “Fate, not faith, brought me here.” Jay’s experience as a Filipino working in Korea leads me to my next participants, those who are involved in community partnerships with North Korea.

### **Shared Self: Kapwa**

*Kapwa*, the Filipino concept of self in relation to others, came to life in my conversations with all of my Filipino participants. I observed how deeply held *kapwa* is

to Filipino identity, even those who have been in the US for several decades. Another description of *kapwa* is the shared inner self, and each of my conversation participants was willing, even eager, to share their narrative with me and in return, to have me share my identity with them. The societal values of dignity, justice, and freedom underlie the basis of *kapwa*.

Abigail and Ivy displayed *karagnalan* or dignity or self-worth, or in Enriquez' (DeGuia 2005:12) more moving words, “[karangalan refers to] the intrinsic quality of person...that allows them to shine despite the grime of their appearance, environment or status in life.”

Justice or *kataurngan*, includes human rights in which justice is based on fairness. In my brief conversation with Jay, the OFW working in Korea, I came to understand how important *kataurngan* is in Jay's lifeworld. Educated to be a lawyer, his disappointment with his government's deficiencies in applying justice fairly led him to Korea, where he works as an hourly laborer under less than ideal conditions.

### **Korean-American Participants**

The conversations on remittances as related to the possible reunification of Korea connected Ricoeur's writings on individual identity and Habermas' theory of collaboration to new understanding which Habermas (1984) calls plural cohesion, where one and many are integrated over finding a universal common purpose. My research participants have varied experiences with Korea, both North and South. Some are Korean and others are not. They all have spent time in Korea and understand the history and current issues facing the Korean peninsula.

## It's Complicated

I received an invitation to a lecture presented by John Cha at the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley in March 2012. He is the author of *Exit Emperor Kim Jong-Il: Notes from his Former Mentor*. I saw an opportunity to further my research on North Korea and accepted the invitation to attend, thinking that Cha was the former mentor to the late leader of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK). I soon discovered that the book was *about* the former mentor to Kim Jong-Il, and that John wrote the book based on his conversations with the former mentor, Hwang Jang-yop, who defected to South Korea in 1997. As I followed John's presentation, I decided to ask him if he would be one of my research participants. He kindly agreed, and I am grateful for the conversation we had a month later.

John was born in Manchuria in 1946. There was a sizeable Korean community in Manchuria at the time. His family fled North Korea in 1950 and came to Seoul as the Korean War erupted. He and his family lived under North Korean rule for three months in 1950 during the Korean War. He was four years old at the time that North Korea occupied Seoul. John has always been fascinated with history. He attended college in the United States and became an engineer until the tragic and sudden death of his younger sister, Theresa Cha, author of *Dictee*. She was 31 when she was murdered by a stranger in New York City, just seven days after the publication of *Dictee*. John explained that he decided to retire from being an engineer to become a writer after his sister's death. John told me, "I follow my sister's outline. She is the real writer in the family."

*Exit Emperor Kim* is John's most recent work (Cha 2012). The connection between John's journey from North to South Korea to the United States leading him to

write a book about one of Kim Jong-Il's most trusted advisors is a narrative itself. Upon reading *Exit Emperor Kim* (Cha 2012), I came to understand what John meant when he said he follows his sister's writing outline. John's story about Hwang Jong-yup is a narrative within a narrative. John chooses to retell events in the defector's life through the lens of the author's personal experience of fleeing North Korea with his family.

Hwang Jong-yop (1923-2010) attended Pyongyang Commerce School. Upon graduation he went to Japan and studied law. In 1946 he joined the Workers' Party, eventually to become a part of the ruling class of North Korea. He studied philosophy at Moscow University. He became the president of Kim Il-sung University in 1965, and in 1972, became the chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly.

Of all his accomplishments in North Korea, he is most noted for being the architect of the *Juche* philosophy of self-reliance that defines the guiding principles for North Korean society as a whole. By design *juche*...was a map for building an ideal society...but his...work was bastardized into an instrument for what he feared the most, a totalitarian dictatorship (Cha 2012:x).

Hwang defected to South Korea in 1997 and John met him through a mutual acquaintance, a person John had written about in an earlier book. Hwang's defection was widely reported in the East Asian press. John was curious about the motivations causing a senior member of the elite ruling party of North Korea to defect, placing his family and colleagues in jeopardy. The book explores those questions through the conversations John was able to have with Hwang until his death in 2010.

In our conversation, John explained his approach to history this way, "I break it down and write it through individuals, and so that you can sort of get a feel for what people went through." As we discussed John's opinions on the possible reunification of Korea, we agree the interest depends on age. Older Koreans in the South desire



reunification because they've lived through the separation of families more than sixty years ago. Younger Koreans, the third generation after the Korean War, barely understand that there was a war. About 30 percent of Korean schoolchildren don't know that there was a Korean War. However, Korean Americans, according to John, are very passionate about reunification, young and old alike.

Economics is critical to views on reunification, according to John, "...some believe if we unify, it will cause nothing but problems. They see this as an economic thing only." At the same time, John believes that changes in Korea's strong nationalistic pride are occurring as a result of the increasing number of "mail order" brides in the outer provinces. There's a shortage of single Korean women in the countryside, and many farmers are marrying women from the Philippines and Vietnam. There are now growing numbers of students in schools throughout Korea who have mothers who aren't Korean. John believes Korea is attempting to nationalize these foreign brides, but acknowledges that it may actually be the other way around, that these wives and mothers are changing Korean culture.

John expressed concern about threats that North Korea poses to the region. Rather than focusing on international concern over North Korea's nuclear missile capability, he fears the effects on the environment from the testing, including toxic waste, water pollution, and air pollution. Korea is a small peninsula and pollution can easily spread to neighboring countries.

At the end of our conversation, John commented that it is fascinating that a person with my education and background is interested in researching the financial support for reunification of Korea. I replied that I believe Koreans are often misunderstood, agreeing

with a comment John made early in our conversation, that it's complicated. "Yes," said John. "It's complicated."

### **Coffee, Not Rice**

Brian Barry has lived in Korea for 45 years. He is a native of Boston, Massachusetts. We served in the Peace Corps in Korea together. Brian was the best man at our Peace Corps wedding in Taegu, and we have remained close friends. After completing his Peace Corps tour, Brian chose to stay in Korea, working first as a translator, followed by studying Dharma painting for 26 years as a disciple of the late Living Treasure Master Manbong. Brian is a master painter of Buddhist temple art, the only non-Korean master painter of Buddhist temple paintings in Korea. In 2009, Brian received the National Order of Cultural Merit Award from the Korean government, the only American to ever receive this honor.

Brian claims that he is more Korean than many young Koreans. Fluent in Korean, he is recognized for his artistic talent that has contributed to Korean culture. In 2012, over dinner in Seoul, we discuss reunification of Korea, a conversation we have every time we meet. In Brian's words, "they don't want it." South Koreans are afraid of the cost of reunification that has personal implications as South Korea's economy is strong. Brian told me that there are approximately 20,000 North Koreans now living in South Korea, and many are treated as second-class citizens even though they are Koreans. North Koreans are viewed differently from South Koreans. North Koreans will come to the south and they are placed into programs run by the government to acculturate them. At these Hanawon centers, North Koreans are taught how to speak the South Korean dialect, how to use technology, and other ways of blending into South Korean society.

North Koreans, says Brian, are expected to become more South Korean. We don't talk about South Korean interest in what it's like to be North Korean.

It is Buddha's birthday and after dinner we walk through downtown Seoul to admire the colored lanterns hanging from light posts and strung along a stream that runs from the Han river through the downtown area, giving the residents a beautiful outdoor area to enjoy. There are many people, including families with children, out on this festive evening. I observed that there were no homeless people on the streets. Brian said that there is one area in Seoul where there are some homeless people, but homelessness is not an issue in Korea like it is in San Francisco. The roots of homelessness, like alcoholism, drugs, domestic violence, and an alarming increase in youth suicides are not publicized. They are kept within the family. Brian believes that a problem within the family unit in Korea is that the older generation who have enjoyed economic success have given the younger generation everything they want, so children who are now young adults are spoiled and accustomed to getting whatever they desire without having to work for it. Brian said this has resulted in the younger generation not wanting to take care of their elderly parents, preferring instead to use the money they have on themselves. Problems like elder abuse and alcoholism are serious social issues not publicly addressed. The younger generation is a consumption-oriented society, noted by the growth and popularity of high-end fashion, cars, and entertainment, as seen in Seoul, particularly the wealthy Gangnam district.

We chatted about my upcoming trip to Myanmar and Cambodia, and Brian commented that what appears to be happening in Myanmar is similar to South Korea in the 1970s, when the country went from being a recipient of foreign aid, skipped the

industrial period of development, moving directly into the era of technology, resulting in the rapid erosion, even disappearance, of culture. Brian and I are both disturbed about the obvious decline of traditional Korean culture. It is seen in the architecture, dress, and behavior. According to Brian, expensive coffee served at trendy coffee shops is replacing rice as a staple. For North Koreans however, rice, not expensive coffee, is a staple.

### **Imagination + Collaboration = Homes in North Korea**

David Snell is the CEO of the Fuller Center for Housing located in Americus, Georgia. Prior to joining the Fuller Center, David was with Habitat for Humanity where he worked closely with founder Millard Fuller and his wife Linda. Don Mosley, who is on the board of the Fuller Center and formerly on the Habitat board, was a Peace Corps representative in Korea when I was a volunteer. Don told me about Fuller's work in North Korea, and I asked David if he would be willing to have a conversation with me. I traveled to Americus in July 2012 to meet and talk with David.

Millard and Linda Fuller founded Habitat for Humanity in 1976 as a Christian housing ministry, building modest homes on a no-profit, no-interest basis, making homes affordable to families with low incomes. Homeowner families invest their own labor into the building of the homes, reducing the cost of constructing a home. Money for building is placed in a revolving fund, enabling the building of additional homes.

In 2005, Millard ran into challenges with the board of Habitat that ended with the board firing him. David had known Millard for some time, thought "it was senseless thing to throw out their best asset" and became involved in finding something for Millard to do. A new organization was set up to allow Millard to preach on behalf of Habitat. He would continue to raise money and awareness for Habitat, and the new venture was

incorporated as Building Habitat. They were promptly sued by Habitat for Humanity for infringement on the Habitat trademark. “We looked at it real closely and thought about what to do. We went, as we often do, to the Bible and Jesus didn’t like lawsuits, so we said, “Fine, we’ll change our name. That’s when the Fuller Center for Housing was born.” Katrina hit shortly after Fuller Center was set up, and within seven years they were building homes with volunteer builders in Louisiana, then Nepal along with other places around the country.

The North Korea project emerged just before Millard died in 2009, when Don Mosley from Peace Corps Korea and Dr. Han Park from the University of Georgia talked about a collaborative house-building project in North Korea. The North Korean government had earlier conversations with Habitat about coming to Pyongyang and building high rises. Habitat said, “That’s not what we do.”

Millard brought the idea of Fuller Center for Housing working with North Korea to build houses in North Korea to the Fuller board. According to David, “We were deviating from our foundation of principles. Homeownership is very important to us. There is no homeownership in North Korea.” After lengthy discussion, the board said, “This is worth doing.” David noted that, “what drove us was not so much the house building alone, but the peacemaking opportunity was equal to the house building.” Millard Fuller died shortly after the board agreed to the project.

The Fuller project was conceived on the principle of the gospel of peace. If the North Korean government would allow American volunteers to travel to North Korea and work side by side with Koreans, there would be “something to talk about.” North Korea has no experience with working with volunteers, let alone foreign volunteers. David said,

“I don’t know what compelled them to agree. It’s been difficult. They really have to dig deep to do this. They have agreed, we have a memorandum of understanding based on the principle of partnership.” Further, according to David, “It’s easier for us than them. Decisions in North Korea are made from the top down. Our understanding is that Kim Jong-Il himself was at some point involved in the process.”

The project calls for the construction of 50 condominiums in Osan-ri. The houses will not be sold, as there is no land ownership in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) as housing is considered a right assigned by the state. The houses will go to workers at the nursery collective and they will have a lifetime right of occupancy and can “will” the houses to their heirs. The houses will be built as duplexes following a traditional Korean floor plan, and each unit will have approximately 750 square feet of living space.

Funding for the construction of the homes is secured by the Fuller Center through their fundraising efforts in the United States. I asked David if Fuller was funding the builds from their general fund, or were they raising restricted dollars for the North Korea project. David replied, “Since we were abandoning most of our foundation principles, the funding could only come from designated gifts. We are not using general funds at all.”

Negotiating with the North Korean government requires patience and some imagination. Budgets are not used or understood. The value of the dollar lacks meaning for North Koreans. “If they have a building project, the state says we’re going to build this, and the Paektusan Academy of Architecture will come up with the plans. They have a contracting arm that can simply start building. They’ll requisition what they need and

that's it. They don't have to buy anything because everything is the state. They might have some accounting transaction that takes place, but they can't come up with the prices."

David has made several trips to North Korea and I asked him about the quality of life. He said that, "One thing they have been very good at is equalizing, agreeing, equality to poverty. Everybody lives the same way, whether they're a party official or not." Another example of the equality of life is how communication occurs. There are three TV stations, all government run. There's no news and no Internet. Many homes in Pyongyang have two TVs; a black and white running on batteries, and color when the system is running. Televisions are the medium the government uses to communicate with the people of North Korea. The power grid is off and on. David said, "I've been reminded that if the United States had honored our commitment to build the nuclear reactors they would not have an energy problem."

I asked about reunification and David replied that it's a huge undertaking that will take a long time because "the cultures have evolved so differently. The North is a totally closed society, no information comes in from the outside that isn't authorized." South Korea, said David, "doesn't have to give anything. They're happy. They're successful. They have material means." It should be noted that until the early 1970s, North Korea had a higher GDP than South Korea.

David doubts that North Korea can remain a closed society for much longer. Cell phones, access to western TV will create change. "The time will come when it breaks down. There's an innocence there. There is no pornography, no rap music, and very little crime. There's this enforced innocence, but it's kind of sweet, but on the other hand, it's a

brutal regime.” The Global Mission unit of the United Methodist Church has also undertaken humanitarian ventures in North Korea.

### **Worms in Their Bed - Peace and Justice on the Korean Peninsula**

Reverend Young Sook Kang is an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. She was born in South Korea and currently lives in Colorado. I read about her mission trips to North Korea and contacted her to request an opportunity to meet. She has a son living in San Francisco and she was planning to visit with him, so we were able to meet at a coffee shop near his house.

Young Sook’s work with North Korea occurred while she was at the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), a mission agency of the United Methodist Church. GBGM focuses on mission, global mission, and peace and justice. The unit she oversaw was Mission Contexts and Relationships. Working in the Global Mission unit was a staff person who was “deeply involved in North Korea.” This person’s knowledge and experience with North Korea and the [North] Korea Christian Federation made it possible for GBGM to become involved in North Korea. Their visits were on behalf of the Methodist denomination for the purpose of humanitarian support. They sent medicine and supplies, and built two or three noodle factories in North Korea from 1999-2003.

When we discussed reunification, Young Sook observed that the older generations who support reunification as more conservative as opposed to younger liberals like her, who “just shut the door. The only way to deal with North Korea is to eliminate the communist government.” These older Koreans suffered through the Korean War. Younger Koreans, including Young Sook’s adult children, who were born in the United States don’t really know much about Korean history. She regrets this.



Young Sook has strong opinions on the conflict and differences between North Korea and the United States and South Korea. As she spent time with North Koreans, she realized the commonalities they share: language, food, and some customs. She also became aware of her biases about religion, “because we talked about Kim Il-sung insulting outsiders. It’s their religion. That’s what they believe.” She is saying who is she to judge them. She explained to me “When I saw people sobbing and crying, this is beyond what I thought. Kim Il-sung *is* their religion. He is their god. We need to look at their reality.”

We talked about Korean stubbornness. Young Sook said, “You know South Koreans can be stubborn, but once they give their hearts then they just melt, and give you the whole thing.” She wonders about the ideology of reunification. There are many Korean movies depicting relationships idealizing an imagined unified Korea. Young Sook remarked that these movies represent Korean hope.

Young Sook no longer works in the peace and justice unit of the Methodist Church. She hasn’t been in North Korea for several years. She said that she was taught in elementary school that North Koreans had worms in their beds. “So it’s a long, rigid way when you are taught to believe and when you grow up in such a climate and understanding that because it’s almost like a part of the socialization. You better be like everyone like you. When I was with the GBGM, we really wanted to push the Korean Methodist Church to work with North Korea. We could not move them because people in authority are so conservative that they would not budge.” She remains steadfast in her belief in peace and justice. Her faith is in a personal God who is a God of hope and peace and harmony and love. “God wants us to live in harmony and peace with one another.”

### **Informal Remittance Transactions**

My exploration of the concepts of *hawala*, the informal person-to-person remittance process favored by many migrant remitters, was presented as a reality in my conversations with Julie Santiago and John Cha. In my conversations with Max, I learned of the importance of secrecy in brokered remittances from North Korean refugees living in South Korea, to relatives still living in North Korea.

### **Korean Migrants**

From John and Hey Ah, the complexities and history of Korean migration were illuminated, and John's narrative further explained the nuances of a Korean diaspora. China, especially, emerges as a significant key to understanding migration of North Koreans over the last six decades.

I imagined that my interpretive conversations about North Korea and collective remittances would give me new insights into organized efforts to provide financial support for North Koreans, individually and collectively. I was unable to find South Koreans who are sending money to family in the north who were willing to talk to me. The risk of exposing North Koreans receiving financial support from the south is too great. I did discover that money sent from North Koreans living in South Korea to family remaining in North Korea is generally a personal transaction through a middle person located in China, near the North Korea border. These go-betweens charge upwards of 30 percent to deliver the funds to the intended party. Little is known about the actual amounts being remitted from Koreans in the south to North Koreans. Officially, the South Korean government provides aid money to North Korea. In fact, North Korea receives the greatest share of South Korean aid funding.

## Summary

The narratives of my research participants are theirs. As Ricoeur (1984:75) writes, “We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated.” The appropriation of the text allows me to make their narrative mine. We cannot tell stories with only an ethical stance of the past; we appropriate from the other and make it our own.

Through field research and secondary research including literature and media sources, I see the present and future importance of remittances to the developing world alongside foreign aid and private philanthropy. These theories are aligned with the narratives of my research participants. The narratives presented illustrate and illuminate the personal reasons for remitting and receiving remittances for Filipino migrant workers and their families. Too often, remittances are valued for monetary purposes alone. In the case of Korea, the narratives of my participants provide insight into personal encounters with North Koreans leading to new understandings.

In the next Chapter, I proceed to analyze my research, using the theoretical concepts of narrative identity, communicative action, and recognition.

## CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS

### Introduction

In the previous Chapter, I presented my research data, relaying the narratives of my research participants. In Chapter Six, the narratives are aligned with the critical hermeneutic theories of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas, namely narrative identity, communicative action, and recognition. I write this Chapter as a reflective researcher, a participant in the emplotment of the narratives, appropriating the text as mine, and viewing the research in Heidegger's term, "being-in-the world." To this end, I present my research with an aim to envision a community of informed possibilities fueled through ethical participatory discourse.

I begin with appropriation of the text, for as Ricoeur (2005:100) writes, "Emplotment confers an intelligible configuration on a heterogeneous collection composed of intentions, causes, and contingencies." As researcher, I take responsibility for "saying it right...rather than relying on a preconceived form" (Herda: 1999:82). In treating discourse as an event understood as meaning, I seek the coherence among the parts of the text "so that a thick description is an appropriation of the univocity...a voice out of the voices that surround it" (Herda: 1999:82). New understandings can be attained as Ellen Herda (1999:77) writes:

We reflect and distance ourselves from our prejudices and pre-understandings although we belong to history, we can distance ourselves from it when it is in narrative form. We can read and reflect. To make sense of the story requires an act of emplotment, which transforms and configures a manifold of events, the unity of a temporal whole.

I am grateful to my research partners for sharing their stories with me, and I am inspired by the theorists whose work I appropriate in my research.

### **Narrative Identity**

At the onset of my research, I anticipated that I would conduct interpretive conversations with remittance senders and receivers to study the motivations for sending and the effects of receiving. My research questions were designed around those central themes. As early as my pilot conversations, I came to see that I could not simply step into a conversation on remittances. Each participant's identity unfolded in the ensuing conversations, and the conversations around remittances followed the unveiling of each person's narrative identity that Ricouer (1995:6) describes thusly, "Narrative identity takes part in the story's movement, in the dialectic between order and disorder." The appropriation of these narratives enables the researcher to offer analysis of the research data obtained through participatory inquiry.

### **Idem and Ipse Among Receivers**

I envisioned that my conversations with remittance receivers in the Philippines would be one-on-one. However, each conversation included two to three participants, as they felt more comfortable talking with a friend present. I began the conversation with Nieves and Leticia, only to have Letty's granddaughter Paula, join us. I later learned that Letty invited Paula to come and join the conversation. Personal identity, constituted by idem-identity and ipse-identity, involves a narrative identity that incorporates time and characters. For Nieves, Letty, and Paula, the intersection of their identities are linked in a we-identity, or ipse. Habermas (2004) writes, "We only become aware of ourselves in the gaze of another person." The narratives from Abigail and Ivy, and Nieves, Letty, and Paula needed to be told together so that moments of their stories could reflect the order and disorder of their individual and shared lives.

## Language as Action

When Rhoda learned to speak Tagalog as a teenager growing up in the Philippines, she entered a new shared view of Filipino culture, something new to her as she grew up in the US. She said she didn't have the Filipino identity growing up, and "now that we've found it, we don't want to let it go." Ricoeur (1983:81) writes, "[The world] I might inhabit into which I might project my own most powers..." Self-identity bridges our *idem* and *ipse*, and Rhoda's *idem*, the culture to which she was born, and her *ipse*, her selfhood or identity, are linked through the new self-identity she found in learning to speak Tagalog.

Ricoeur (1992:165-66) explains that narrative identity stands between self-constancy and character, "Narrative identity makes the two ends of a chain link up with one another: the permanence of time of character and that of self-constancy." When Rhoda said, "They were distant, they didn't want to learn about their culture, about their country," she is referring to Filipino youth in the United States. In contrast to her own eagerness to embrace Filipino culture she is concerned about Filipino-American youth who express no interest. Ricoeur (2005:69) in writing about the capable human being says, "The road to recognition...leads to the recognition that he or she is capable of different accomplishments." She was excited to attend a high school where everyone spoke the language except for her brother and her. Rather than resisting the opportunity, she welcomed it. Her dismay about young Filipinos who don't share that eagerness is also a hope on her part that others will experience the happiness she found in immersing herself in a new language, literally as spoken, and as a form of action.

Ricoeur (1984) cautions that we cannot understand a capable person only through identity. Action or phronesis brings the capable human being into her identity through her “I can” stance. Habermas (1979) emphasizes the act of language over its representational role. Herda (1999:26) writes that we are shaped by historical roots, deriving prejudice and bias through the interpretation of those roots, but “we can also go beyond them to create new structure and language systems when we interact with others. Language is a form of action.” Goodenough (2003:6) observes, “culture is like a language, which is not what its speakers say but what they need to know to communicate acceptably with one another.”

The narratives of remittance senders to the Philippines, Gina and Julie, are linked although they do not know each other and live in opposite ends of the state. One question I asked of both related to their expectations for the use of remittances. Although their answers were different — one remits to her mother, and the other sends money to pay for her mother’s medical expenses, and does not consider the money to be a remittance,— their stories of their childhood in the Philippines are similar. Both grew up in extreme poverty; each is one of several children whose parents struggled to find and keep work. Both left the Philippines in their young adult years to come to the United States to find work, and both are now permanent residents of the United States. Both also consider the care of an elderly parent to be a child’s duty. The emplotment of Gina and Julie’s narratives has transformed their respective narratives into “a manifold of events, the unity of a temporal whole” (Herda 1999:77), an example of Habermas’ concept of plural cohesion where the whole consists of separate yet related components.

Abigail and Ivy, the two young women who receive remittances from their mothers, see duty in a different way. As Ricoeur (1986: 138) contends, “Man is this plural and collective unity in which the unity of destination and the differences of destinies are to be understood through each other.” Abigail told me that it is a mother’s duty to take care of you when you’re sick, and yet, when asked if they would seek work abroad if the family needed the money, both Abigail and Ivy said they would leave their children to find work.

### **Historical Present**

Ricoeur’s (2005, 1984) threefold description of narrative identity includes memory, time, and care. He distinguishes between the time we measure, cosmic time, and lived time. It is in the historical present that we find the time of actions. In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur (1984: 52) states that to give expression to the historical present one must use a kind of discourse that articulates both actions and events. He calls this discourse narrative. “Historical time,” he advises (1984:52), “becomes human time...and narrative attains its full significance when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.” The historical present for Young Sook-kang is noted when she talks about meeting North Koreans on a mission visit — “Kim Il-sung is their religion. He is their god. Because it’s not as if anybody forced you. I’m just talking about the past. We need to look at their reality.” She continued, “So we have been advocating a relationship between North Korea and the United States so that they can talk. So it’s really back and forth. As long as it doesn’t have to, and as long as people try, I don’t think it’s impossible.” Imagination draws on history, but also lives in the present as one imagines a future.



## Memory

John Cha is a self-described writer of Korean history. His recent book *Exit Emperor Kim Il-sung* is about his conversations with one of Kim Il-sung's trusted advisors who defected to South Korea. The narrative of the defector, Hwang Jang-yop, has significance for John, whose parents escaped North Korea with John and his sister when they were young children. John says, "I came to Seoul when I was five. I mean the Korean War came. I was very impressionable at that age. I was fascinated with wars, especially the Korean War. It was sort of a natural curiosity for me to find out what it was all about. It is very complex, obviously. It has a lot of history, culture, and all those things." He explains his writing process as, "I decided to break it [history] down and write it through individuals. You get a feel for what people went through."

In *The Course of Recognition*, Ricoeur (2005) explains conditions for remembering as: an ethical duty, forgetting leads to forgiveness; and forgiveness opens new possibilities.

The narratives of Young Sook, John, and Hey Ah constantly invoke remembering in their stories. John describes the plot of his next book about a man he met from his hometown in Manchuria. The man is a former school principal and now runs a museum in their hometown. John, while visiting the museum, sees his grandfather's picture on the wall. John said,

Oh my god. Turns out he [grandfather] was working with Canadian missionaries at a famous hospital in Manchuria. It is gone now. When the Canadian missionaries were chased out by the Japanese in 1942, the missionaries gave the keys to the hospital to my grandfather and told him 'We will be back. You hold onto these keys until we come back.'

The missionaries didn't return and John's grandfather was tortured. He was the keeper of the keys. John's narrative also demonstrates the need to understand one's identity.

### **Communicative Action**

In the Statement of Issue, I proposed using Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action to frame the question of how mutual understanding and public discourse lead to new interpretations and a shared reality of the meaning and usefulness of the remittance. Discourse needs language. Discourse involves interpreted language. Habermas focuses on language-in-use, or speech (Herda 1999:66). Habermas (1984:397) maintains that society is maintained through communication, "and in certain spheres of life, through communication aimed at reaching agreement— then the reproduction of the species *also* requires satisfying the conditions of a rationality inherent in communicative action." Both the Fuller Center for Housing and the Global Missions unit of the United Methodist Church have deeply rooted Christian values supporting peace and justice. The work done by both organizations in North Korea is oriented to humanitarianism.

Personally, Young Sook's faith is grounded in a personal God. She says, "And I believe that just my personal God is a God of hope and peace and harmony and love. God wants us to live in harmony and peace with one another. God's vision is that you live together peacefully so if I can contribute in any way to bring God's people together, opening God's vision, then I'm a participant of building peace and justice." She acknowledges that language is important: a group of Methodists in North Korea are part of a humanitarian mission, not on a mission from God. In another part of our conversation, Young Sook tells me that she is a member of Bongsu Church, one of two Christian churches in North Korea. A Korean American minister joins a North Korean

church to show that shared faith can bind differences. This is communicative action at work.

The Fuller Center is careful to steer away from any idea of proselytizing Christianity. The decision to seek a partnership with North Korea to build homes was a clear departure from the organization's advocacy of its Christian beliefs and, similar to the Methodists, the work of building homes is framed around humanitarianism, not religion. Habermas is keenly interested in how language is used in real life, how we do something in speaking; and the Fuller Center realizes the importance of linguistic utterances. Habermas is particularly interested in the illocutionary aspect of utterances, which is what we do *in* saying, or promise making.

David Snell describes the fragility of building trust with the North Koreans when he describes the discussion about where the volunteers who would build the houses in North Korea could originate. The North Korean government favored Chinese volunteers. Fuller Center explained that they have not had experience with recruiting volunteers from China, that they are more experienced with volunteers from America. Both eventually agree for the Fuller Center to use American volunteers, and agree not to include Korean-speaking volunteers. David said, "They had to dig deep to enter this partnership with us, it was harder for them in some ways than for us." Habermas (1984) favors illocutionary utterances over those linguistic uses that claim a state of affairs (I am), or those statements that suggest what will be done through saying, because he believes the illocutionary utterance "contains seeds for establishing a normative relationship between two or more speakers" (Habermas *in* Thomassen 2010:63). One of those seeds is trust.

## Walk the Talk

The phrase “to walk the talk” is a modern usage of Habermas’ phrase “language as action.” Habermas (1984:288f) says, “We must be able to communicate meaning to others.” Speech as an act works when the other understands the speaker’s intentions. In other words, there must be mutual understanding. Hey Ah’s mother, as a demonstration of her nationalistic pride during the Korean War, teaches her Korean neighbors to speak Korean, for after four decades of Japanese occupation, the use of the Korean language was stifled. She published a newsletter in Korean; she taught Korean women to sew uniforms for the military. Hey Ah says, “After the liberation from Japan, my mom would walk house to house checking on the housewives and asking if they could speak and write Korean. She started a classroom and she taught them the Korean language. She was the woman who pushed for Korean women to have the right to vote. She worked with the first woman member of Parliament. She started a nonprofit newspaper.” As a trusted and respected neighbor, her efforts were well received and appreciated. She was able to communicate meaning to others.

Habermas (1984) maintains that there are three validity claims in every speech act: claims to truth (cognitive); normative rightness (interactive) and truthfulness or authenticity (expressive). Concern for separated families and loss of nationalistic pride among Koreans become actionable through speech acts. “A speaker and hearer attempting to reach understanding rely on the use of reasons to attain intersubjective recognition for validity claims that can be criticized” (Herda 1999: 66). Through debate, argumentation, or discussion, a communicative rationality is created. David Snell’s discussions with North Koreans on the building of the fifty homes in Osan-ri reflect

communicative rationality as a form of learning. Critiques, recognizing our mistakes, choosing another way to do something are all aspects of learning (Herda 1999:67). David says, “ Our thinking is...North Korea will change. It’s inevitable. Who knows the timing or who knows how, but the leadership that comes out of this...who knows? If one of these houses that we build and one of these relationships that we establish helps smooth the way for someone to do something down the line, that is positive. You just don’t know. One thing you know, if you do nothing, nothing will change.” To support the reunification of Korea financially, or otherwise, calls for recognizing that rational communication is based on learning and mutual understanding. Understanding, however, is not a synonym for agreement.

### **Transcultural Lifeworld**

Under the functional aspect of *mutual understanding*, communicative action serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge; under the aspect of *coordinating action*, it serves social integration and the establishment of solidarity; finally, under the aspect of *socialization*, communicative action serves the formation of personal identities...corresponding to these processes of *cultural reproduction*, *social integration*, and *socialization* are the structural components of the lifeworld: culture, society, person (Habermas 1987: 137).

Lifeworld, for Habermas, means the shared common understandings, including values, which develop through face-to-face contacts over time in various social groups, from families and communities. The lifeworld is reproduced through communicative action and language. Habermas’ prodigious theory on communicative action covers free and open interpersonal communication, where the ‘better argument wins the day,’ the juridification of rationalizing communication, and the role of legitimation or the power and authority role in determining consensus, the colonization of the lifeworld. For

Habermas, even two people oriented to coming to understanding demonstrate communicative competence leading to communicative action.

Habermas' theory of communicative action (1984, 1987) evolved from his critique of *The Structure of Social Action* (Parsons 1937) in which Parsons suggests that the central problem of contemporary society lies in how order is maintained. Habermas (1984, 1987) theorizes that as advanced societies have developed, the core integrating function of communication has been disabled, "colonized" in Habermas' vernacular (Frank 1987:470).

Colonization of the lifeworld leads to what Habermas (1975) refers to as a legitimacy crisis. Habermas believes citizens need to have a sense that the institutions within which they live are just, benevolent. A lifeworld is tied to social order. One's lifeworld is constant and interpersonal. Systems are a source from within the lifeworld (Habermas 1984). Systems develop a distinctive structure, i.e., family, community, nationality, country. But, as systems develop, the system becomes removed from lifeworld, leading to what Habermas (1981) refers to as a "progressive rationalization." Colonization of the lifeworld limits the ability of actors to have free and open discussion, creating a system of separation from one's lifeworld that often leads to destruction of the lifeworld. The Fuller Center North Korean home building project is intended to express a collaborative lifeworld through a joint venture between a US nonprofit institution and the government of North Korea.

Lifeworld is a socio-cultural system from which we derive meaning. When Ivy or Abigail's mother saves part of her earnings made while working abroad and sends it home to provide for her children, she reaffirms to herself and her family who she is and

what she values. Value commitments are re-affirmed and influence is established. A lifeworld consists of communicative action — a mother's remittance and the Fuller Center for Housing working with the North Korean government to build homes in Osan-ri. "Communicative action...has the ability to regenerate influence and value commitments...money, votes, media can express influence ...but they cannot generate these qualities...only communicative action in the life can do that" (Frank 1987:470). In other words, the legitimacy of the system depends on the lifeworld.

Brian, John, and Max all comment in their conversations that South Koreans do not appear to want unification. John says, "They are just talking. They are not serious about intent. I think it's just political..." Brian said that he doesn't believe reunification will occur soon. "They don't want it." People in the south are afraid of the cost of reunification, which has personal meaning because of the current strength of the South Korean economy. Max described a 2011 news article about the government intention to create a reunification tax as a set-aside fund paid by taxing citizens. Their opinions are formed by the media systems that influence public opinion. The public message for South Koreans is that unification will cost a lot of money citing Germany as an example. Money and power can override the individual longing for unification of family or for Koreans to again be one country, demonstrating a colonization process where one's lifeworld is subsumed by systems. Opinion on reunification varies among Koreans.

Habermas believes that the colonization of the lifeworld is a crisis because the system including money and power has no legitimacy save that which the lifeworld provides. Systems act as parasites on the lifeworld, destroying it. "The more the systems media colonize the lifeworld, the more they lose legitimacy and crisis ensures material

reproduction (system level) is crucial for society, but when it destroys symbolic reproduction (lifeworld level), it undercuts itself” (Frank 1987:470). A clear example of this undercutting is the marketing of Filipino Overseas Workers (OFWs) as national heroes. In 2007, former president of the Philippines Cory Aquino publicly lauded the millions of overseas workers as national heroes in the Philippines. Rhoda comments in our conversation, “They [government] call these overseas workers heroes. I don’t know why they would be considered national heroes when their families are left behind. They are leaving their country to go look for something better. I mean, why can’t it be in their own country? For a country that is so family oriented...why isn’t the government doing anything to help, versus calling them heroes. Encourage them [overseas workers] to send money back to the country.” The lifeworld of these workers, agreements bounded by care and mutual consensus, are eroded as the message redirects the sacrifice from a personal and familial one, to the duty to aid a chronically poverty stricken country often mired in corruption.

Jay, the OFW from Manila now working in Seoul, provides another example of a colonized lifeworld. He finds irony and sadness in the second-hand status of migrant workers in Korea. He works long hours with few “rights.” He explains that, “I got pissed off with the system. I can’t work there [Philippines].” Habermas writes of justice becoming juridification. Communicative justice depends on a shared sense of what’s right, given who we are and what we believe. When justice becomes colonized by “the abstract principles of formal law” (Frank 1987:470), lifeworld suffers. For Jay, the situation he describes is about the absence of rights evident in the current circumstances of his life. In *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume I*, Habermas (1985:326) writes,



“With the formalization of the public sphere the private self becomes more vulnerable because we can no longer take for granted that the private sphere will be protected from public interference, or that we can take the critical perspectives we acquire in the public sphere back to the private one.”

### **Creating an Ontological Community**

If learning is carried on at a reflective critical level, forms of reasoning and argumentation may be learned by others and developed within a cultural and political tradition. They could be actualized in specific education plans, management programs, legal systems, and other conformations of social phenomena. In this way, communicative action could critically connect individuals and their lifeworld structures to traditions and present day social institutions (Herda 1999:67).

Habermas begins his process of critical inquiry with the recognition that a critical hermeneutic stance provides the “access possible for social inquiry (*in Herda 1999:67*).

In Habermas’ (2000:23) words, “Reaching and understanding is the process of bringing about an agreement on the presupposed basis of validity claims that are mutually recognized.” Components of validity claims include: truthfulness, normative legitimacy, and expressions of the intent of the speaker. Both Hey Ah’s and John’s narratives illustrate mutual recognition in a socio-cultural lifeworld. For John, that lifeworld is manifested through his book about the high-ranking confidante to Kim Jong-Il who defected to South Korea. Hey Ah recounts her memories of her mother’s dedication to her country during the Korean War. Habermas posits that history made with will and consciousness happens when rational capacities of human beings are released and a self-knowledge is generated through self-reflection (*in Herda 1999:69*).

David talks about the challenges of communicating with the North Koreans on the planning for the 50 homes the Fuller Center is building with the North Koreans. David describes their first meeting:

The first time we had a meeting, we had a groundbreaking there. It was fascinating because they allowed a number of the local farmers to come to the groundbreaking. They had officials. We got there to the groundbreaking site. They had this long table set up with the banner across the top and the podium. It was a big deal and then the farmers came to the meeting. They were all milling about. The top dog went to the podium and rapped and announced that it was time to begin. These farmers rode up just like it was a military brigade. They are very regimented people, and so they all lined up. Afterwards, everyone was milling around so we started going into the crowd. They would part. It was like we really should not be talking to you. Before we were done, we were all talking. They allowed it to happen. Our interpreter was there with us and we were telling jokes and talking about life. It was just a tremendously gratifying experience.

The ontological community is oriented to reaching understanding. Habermas (1979:97) writes, “These universal claims...are set in the general structures of possible communication. In these validity claims communication theory can locate a gentle but obstinate, a never silent, although seldom redeemed claim to reason, a claim that must be recognized *de facto* whenever and wherever there is to be consensual action.” Consensual action thus is the cornerstone for developing and evaluating the Fuller Center housing build in North Korea, and the Global Mission of the Methodist Church exchanges with North Koreans.

In 2012, while visiting Cambodia, my advisor Dr. Ellen Herda and I went to the Pyongyang Restaurant in Siem Reap, known as a popular destination for South Korean tourists visiting Cambodia. The restaurant is run by the North Korean government. In a halting conversation with the hostess due to language barriers, the hostess says, “People

come to socialize with each other. They have entertainment.” Reflecting on the conversation, I note that each of the validity claims at work for the South Koreans who desire to see North Korean entertainment, eat North Korean food, and talk with the North Korean hostesses. Both the hostess and the tour group operator explain to me that people come for personal, not political reasons. A North Korean restaurant in Cambodia provides a venue for the shared lifeworlds of South Korean tourists and North Korean entertainers.

### **Recognition**

The demand for recognition expresses an expectation that can be satisfied only by mutual recognition (Ricoeur 2005:19).

Ricoeur places identity in close proximity to recognition, making clear the distinction between recognizing and attestation. Through attestation one’s identity and recognition are linked. As Ricoeur (2005: 69) writes, “...this self-recognition requires, at each step, the help of others, in the absence of that mutual, fully reciprocal recognition that will make each of those involved a recognized being.” Self-recognition is a request for mutual recognition. ‘I can’ is a characterization of action. Ivy tells me that she does not wish to leave the Philippines to find work. Rather, she would prefer to stay and become a teacher like her grandmother, Letty.

Ricoeur (1992:18) writes, “The further away you get from self recognition the less assured you are in knowing oneself as another.” When Jay talks about the working conditions and the 2<sup>nd</sup> class treatment of migrant workers in Seoul, he is describing a state of inaction. He speaks of overseas workers from China, Viet Nam, and Mongolia, not just the Philippines, who find it very difficult to work in Korea. Because they need the money, they endure the hardships.

## Mutual Recognition

North Korea is portrayed in many ways. Evil, mysterious, poor, rigid, famine-ridden are among adjectives used to describe the DPRK. US media portrays the country as volatile because of the threat of nuclear weapons, fraught with human rights violations, mysterious, and extremely poor. In his 2002 State of the Union speech, former president George W. Bush named North Korea as one of three countries comprising an ‘axis of evil.’ North Korea is generally unknown to the western world, with three generations of leadership prone to secrecy. B.K. Gills in *Korea Versus Korea* (1996:266) writes, “...[B]oth Koreas can now advance only by acting collusively in international relations, whereas both may suffer heavier penalties if they persist in trying to undermine each other selfishly out of mutual distrust.”

There is another face to North Korea found in the narratives of my research partners David Snell and Reverend Young Sook-kang. Both David and Young Sook described the collaborative process between their institutions and North Korea. Collaboration is *ipse*; it is Gadamer’s “to and fro.” A collaboration is imaginative and requires action. Building homes for North Korean farmers is a collaboration. Young Sook speaks about the noodle factories the church helped build in North Korea. As David said in his conversation, the partnership required much more from the North Koreans. “They had to dig deep to do this.” David and Young Sook’s narrative present a face of North Korea that mirrors North Korean identity emerging through imaginative collaboration.

The timing of reunification is uncertain in the context of measured time. Ricoeur, in *The Course of Recognition* (2005:41) writes, “Time alone, not space, where everything on the plane of the transcendental aesthetic plays out, requires the assistance of a

discipline committed to laying bare the illusions of a reason constantly tempted to overstep its bounds.” Time is successive and simultaneous in Ricoeur’s reasoning. A conversation between an American volunteer homebuilder and a North Korean farmer in Osan-ri may be one conversation, but it is recognizing oneself in the other. As Ricoeur (2005:69) writes so eloquently, “The road to recognition is long, for the “acting and suffering” human being, that leads to the recognition that he or she is in truth a person ‘capable’ of different accomplishments.” He further explains that this self-recognition requires the help of others so that each involved is a ‘recognized being’ (2005:69).

In his preface to *The Course of Recognition* Ricoeur (2005:xi) explains his deliberate choice of the word ‘course’ instead of the ‘theory’ of recognition, acknowledging the persistence of the perplexity inherent in his inquiry into recognition. David’s narrative illustrates the course or progress of self-identity portrayed in the aim to be the capable human being: “I can,” seen in the exchange of words and experiences between the Fuller volunteers and their North Korean counterparts. The discourse between the actors is action creating an authentic exchange. In Ricoeur’s (2005:219) words, “The alternative to the idea of struggle in the process of mutual recognition is to be sought in peaceful experiences of mutual recognition, based on symbolic mediations as exempt from the juridical and from the commercial order of exchange.” Ricoeur is referring to generosity, which requires a sense of self where one sees oneself in the other.

### **Gift Giving**

In the review of literature remittances are defined as a widely shared form of providing financial support to family members from migrated family members (Petty 2002:147). Receiving families use remittances as investment in human capital, such as

tuition and education expenses, an investment in the future. Research participants who remit to family in the Philippines do so out of familial duty. Gina makes a distinction between remitting and paying for her mother's medical expenses in the Philippines. Gina believes that family members receiving remittances are inclined to view the money as a gift, meaning that there is no reciprocity or exchange intended in the remittance. Marcel Mauss' (1967) *The Gift* is an anthropological study of reciprocal gift giving in Polynesia. Mauss writes that gifts are a transaction based on obligation and economic self-interest. A free gift not returned is a contradiction, says Mauss (1967:2) because it cannot create social ties.

In *The Course of Recognition*, Ricoeur takes Mauss' view of gifts as exchanges further, by examining the gift receiver. For the gift giver, Ricoeur (2005:230) refers to selfless giving being that which is without price. The exchange between giver and receiver implies reciprocity, and invokes Ricoeur's (2005) theory of mutual recognition. Ricoeur (2005:243) says, "Receiving then becomes the pivotal category, in that the person who receives the gift will feel obliged to give something in return." Remittance recipients in the Philippines did not express any notion of reciprocity or exchange connected to the remittance.

Ricoeur (1984:180) describes ethical perspective as "aiming at the good life with and for others in just institutions." It is in the 'for others' phrase that we see solicitude, the care for others. This care for others is, in Ricoeur's (1984:180) words, 'benevolent spontaneity.' A remittance is symbolic of care. Ricoeur (1994:191) posits that the "supreme test of solicitude [is] when unequal power finds compensation in an authentic reciprocity in exchange, which, in the hour of agony, finds refuge in the shared whisper

of voices or the feeble embrace of clasped hands.” Many of my research participants who send remittances embrace the recipients with a sense of feeling for their circumstances.

The act of remitting is both a duty and an act of solicitude for them.

### **Summary**

In this Chapter, the narratives are aligned with the critical hermeneutic theories of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas; narrative identity, communicative action, and recognition. I present my data as a reflective researcher, a participant in the emplotment of the narratives, appropriating the text as mine, and viewing the research as being-in-the world. Ricoeur (2005:100) describes appropriation of the text, “...[as] Emplotment confers an intelligible configuration on a heterogeneous collection composed of intentions, causes, and contingencies.” In treating discourse as an event understood as meaning, I seek the coherence among the parts of the text “so that a thick description is an appropriation of the univocity...a voice out of the voices that surround it” (Herda: 1999:82), for to study anthropology is to study culture. I reflect on the Statement of the Issue and my original expectations for this inquiry into remittances with senders and receivers in the Philippines, and the collective efforts of US based institutions to support North Korea. In the last Chapter, I offer findings and implications based on my research.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, RESEARCH FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

### Summary of Research

This final Chapter includes a summary of the research protocol and data analysis and concludes with findings and implications for future research. The text is from multiple sources: research participants, theorists, and secondary sources. The findings are mine, my opinions are guided by the research process.

My initial research objectives focused on understanding the practice of remittances, particularly in the Philippines and Korea. I anticipated findings that would enrich my understanding of remitting as a possible precursor to philanthropic giving. I chose the Philippines for two reasons: the amount of money remitted back to the Philippines is the largest of all Asian countries; and, my personal interest in the Philippines through my daughter-in-law. I selected Korea because of my long standing interest in the Korean peninsula reaching back to the time I served as a Peace Corps volunteer there, and a professional interest in remitting and charitable giving in support of reunification. I currently work for The Asia Foundation as vice president of private fundraising for 18 Asian countries — South Korea is one of them.

### **The Shared Self: *Kapwa***

Ricoeur's work *Oneself as Another* is a significant theoretical component of my research, particularly for the Philippines. While I was conducting field research in Santo Tomas the summer of 2011, I found a book titled *Kapwa: The Self in the Other* by Katrin DeGuia (2005). The similarity of the titles was intriguing, and I bought and read the book



to see what similarities might exist between Ricoeur's book and De Guia's work. *Kapwa* is a Tagalog word for the shared self. DeGuia (2005:8) asserts:

*Kapwa*...reflects a viewpoint that beholds the essential humanity recognizable in everyone, therefore linking people rather than separating them from each other...*Kapwa*, beyond all outer trappings, looks for what people have in common: not whether someone is rich or poor, not whether somebody is young or old, man, woman, or child, but rather for the fundamental characteristics in people, that is, as human beings. According to this type of thinking, people always remain just people despite titles, prestigious positions or wealth. It's their behavior and their ethics that count.

My conversations with Ivy and Abigail, Nieves, Letty, and Paula took place at the Arciaga home in Santo Tomas. The Arciagas are either related to, or are neighbors to, all five participants. They are well-to-do Filipino Americans who returned to the Philippines when they retired. I point this out because the Filipinos I met make little distinction over economic class distinctions. I was surprised to learn that Abigail lived just across the street from the Arciaga home, in a shanty with her husband and two young children.

When I was introduced to Abigail, I had a flashback to my son and daughter-in-law's wedding four years earlier, in her parents' spacious backyard. The wedding reception was a seated dinner for two hundred people. Some people were dressed, as one would expect for a wedding — dresses for women and dress shirts for men. However, at least half of the guests were casually attired; wearing shorts, tank tops, flip-flops. I thought this was unusual and not until I met Abigail and Ivy four years later did I understand. The community was invited to the reception, and the community includes those who live across the road in the shanties. My daughter in law's parents make no distinction to class, and attire was not an issue for them. This flashback is an example of *kapwa*.

I asked Gina and Julie, my conversation participants in California, about *kapwa*. Both acknowledged that *kapwa* is a form of caring for each other. Care, as a component

of *kapwa* seemed similar to Ricoeur's concept of sollicitude. The relevance of *kapwa* to my research, lies not in relation to Ricoeur's work, rather the significance for me is an understanding of the underlying values in Filipino culture that embrace the shared self. I will return to *kapwa* in the later section on findings. Next, I offer observations on my research relating to remittances to North Korea.

### **Remitter Privacy in Korea**

It was challenging to find South Koreans willing to talk to me about financial support to the North. The term remittance is not common to the Korean American diaspora due mainly to the strong economy in South Korea. The Korean American diaspora sees little need to remit funds back to remaining family in South Korea, as the home family is likely as well-off as the diaspora family. South Koreans who send money to relatives in North Korea use remittance transactions through a broker, generally Chinese middlemen working in northeastern China, in towns adjacent to North Korea.

Max explained to me that South Koreans would not speak freely about supporting North Koreans, partly out of fear that receiving North Koreans might be exposed. To compensate for not being successful in finding a South Korean remitter to talk to, I researched Korean news for current information about remitting.

In 2000, there were 1,400 North Koreans residing in South Korea. A decade later, in 2011, their numbers exceed 21,000 (Korea Herald: April 21, 2011). Andrei Lankov (2011) writes extensively about North Korea. He explains that until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century defection from North Korea implied that the person's connections with his or her homeland would be broken for a long time. With the growing numbers of North Koreans now living in South Korea, the connections are increasingly being maintained

through brokers who transfer funds and information from the South to the North, and increasing access to cell phone technology in the North. According to Lankov, “Koreans do not forget about their family members left behind in North Korea. In some cases the refugees save money to pay a professional defection specialist to relocate their family members to South Korea.” Further, writes Lankov (2011), “remittances to the North are, strictly speaking, illegal, according to both South and North Korean law. Nonetheless, there is no way to stop this activity and, frankly, neither government is really willing to do so.”

Upon reading this article, I observed two reasons why it was so difficult to find South Korean remitters who would talk to me. The first reason was a faulty assumption on my part. I assumed that remitters would be older South Koreans with family in the North, separated 60 years ago by the formation of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel separating North and South Korea. The second reason is fear. North Koreans now living in South Korea do not want to expose their families remaining in North Korea.

In December 2011, the Database Centre for North Korean Human Rights conducted a survey of the economic situation of North Korean refugees in South Korea. According to the survey, 49 percent of refugees regularly send money to their families in the North. The average amount sent by one person is estimated to be about one million won (\$1000) per year (Korea Herald, April 2011).

Remittances sent from South Korea typically go through a broker in China who hand carries the remittance to the border, or the funds are wired through mobile phone technology. The majority of transactions take place at the border because Chinese cell phones work there. A migration blog “People Move” (2011) states, “the commission fee

is between 20-40 percent since there are five people involved in the transaction from the time the remitter sends the money until the recipient gets the funds. All the transactions pass through China. The recipient gets the money in local currency.” The transaction described here is an example of *hawala*, described in Chapter Three.

### **Trust and Imagination at Work in North Korea**

Part of my research design included collective remittances, a term coined by Peggy Levitt (2007). Groups, including but not limited to diaspora populations, who pool funds to send to a home country community are engaging in collective remittances. The conversations with David Snell of Fuller Housing, and Young Sook Kang of the Global Ministries Division of the United Methodist Church provided me with loose examples of collective remittances, but I doubt that those who gave to the respective projects realized they were participating in a remittance. Fuller Center donors to the North Korean housing project are described as donors to a restricted project. These donors have no direct connections to North Korea. Their support is a tax-deductible contribution to a US based nonprofit organization. The Fuller Center is using the contributions to fund the building of 50 condominiums in Osan-ri, North Korea. The North Korean projects supported by the United Methodist Church came from mission funds – contributions from individual members of the denomination in support of the church’s global mission work, including North Korea.

This research revealed the economic conditions prompting remittances among Filipino senders. My research provides new data linking communicative action or shared identity in the decision to remit among Filipino senders and receivers. Through my research I found examples of collective remittances benefitting North Koreans, or in

support of reunification of Korea. My research thus provides a unique opportunity to closely examine the expectations and uses of remittances from the sender and receiver's point of view.

### **Findings**

I present two findings, with implications and proposed actions, arising from my research. Finding #1 refers to the Filipino remittance receiver. Finding #2 involves financial contributions supporting North Korea.

**Finding #1:** Remittance receivers in the Philippines are often too young to discern the best use of money received.

They often feel socially isolated and ill prepared to make wise adult decisions. Their narrative identity is one bounded by poverty and separation from a parent who is remitting money home from another country.

A recommendation associated with this finding is to examine the personal narratives of recipients in the Philippines appropriating their narratives and sharing their stories so that others can better understand their lifeworld. In Santo Tomas where I conducted my research, there are no public or social services available for young remittance receivers.

### Implications

All of my conversation participants who receive remittances reflected, either directly or indirectly, a sense of diminished self-esteem resulting from their status as a remittance receiver. I heard how difficult it is to grow up without a mother physically present. Both Abigail and Ivy maintained that they are a minority among their peers who have mothers living at home. Ivy indicated that there aren't people to talk to about her lonely and

economically challenged life. Letty and Nieves are grandmothers who are raising their children's children while their daughters live and work in the Middle East. They both long for physically unified families and the opportunity to enjoy their retirement status without having to raise their grandchildren. These are four narratives out of millions in the Philippines. It is a reasonable assumption that their loneliness and marginalization is shared by many others.

### Proposed Action

The government of the Philippines provides no support services for the poor who rely on remittances. Data collection and dissemination on migrant remittances should be accompanied with legislative and moral action to provide suitable programs on financial planning, caregiver responsibilities, and other services aimed at easing the plight of the young migrant remittance receiver.

**Finding #2:** NGOs are providing financial contributions for humanitarian causes in North Korea which can, at times, prove to be unhelpful in light of mixed emotions about reunification on the part of both South and North Koreans.

An increasing number of NGOs and religious groups are traveling to North Korea to provide humanitarian aid and create peace-building initiatives. While providing financial contributions to North Korea would appear to be ethical action, implications discussed below indicate the need for thoughtful consideration before financial help is provided. North Korean refugees are leaving this country in growing numbers, often traveling through China, en route to South Korea. This exodus does not reflect the scope of peoples' views of reunification since often those North Koreans who may have a better life do not endorse reunification efforts.

### Implications

The Koreas face many challenges around reunification, cultural diversity, and economic stability. As South Korea moves further toward providing more aid to other countries in Asia, North Korea's future is uncertain economically and politically. The development work in Asia by respected organizations like KOICA, Korea Development Institute (KDI), The Asia Foundation, Give 2 Asia, USAID, AUSAID, Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, and many other NGOs, churches, sociopolitical associations and government agencies working in Asia need to continue their efforts to assist in the prosperous development of Asia, including North Korea. However, it is essential to determine how effective humanitarian aid is amidst a wide variety of opinions in Korea about reunification. The quality of life for elite North Koreans provides another implication should North and South Korea reunify. Not only will prosperous South Koreans feel the effects of financing reunification, the wealthier North Koreans will also be affected.

### Proposed Action

Teaching South Korean students about the history of Korea before 1970 will promote a fuller understanding of Korea today, as it has been shaped by historic events. History can be taught through storytelling (narrative) to inspire discourse between generations. While it is doubtful that South Korean students will learn much about North Korea, the reminder that all Koreans share one nationality may serve to further the broader narrative about a reunified Korea.

## **Reflections from the Researcher**

My understanding of world history was shaped in an undergraduate class on world civilization. As I recall, much of the history was western, European with a Christian emphasis. The history of Asia portrayed the Asian continent as an object of conquest by the west. I don't recall learning much at all about eastern religions. Being of Asian descent, I felt like my ancestors' history was inconsequential. When the Peace Corps told me I was going to Korea, I had to find the country on a map as my knowledge was limited to some vague history lectures on the Korean War where the emphasis was on the sacrifices made by US military who fought for the South Koreans, giving their lives for their freedom.

I lived and worked in rural Korea at a time when the country was struggling to pull itself out of foreign occupation, war, and poverty. It was not an easy assignment for a young Asian-American female to be living and working alone in a remote rural setting, doing a job I was ill prepared for. I lacked the self-reliance to feel I could be effective. I was misunderstood, and I misunderstood. I was stoned by Korean soldiers who mistook me for a Korean comfort woman, or bar girl — as only these women would wear western clothing and walk alone on the unpaved roads connecting the village I lived in, to the health clinic where I worked. In spite of these misunderstandings, or perhaps because of them, I have continued to care deeply about Korea and Koreans, a determined, feisty, and intelligent people. I share this personal narrative to underscore an observation about prejudice and communicative rationality.

Gadamer (2004:278) writes, “the prejudices of the individual, more than his judgments shape the reality of an individual's world.” According to Gadamer, we all



have prejudices. To expect that one can be prejudice-free is unrealistic; to acknowledge one's biases, to appropriate one's history, to retell a history fueled by imagination, is to look for that envisioned future anchored by ipse-identity or selfhood, a constructed, dynamic narrative identity (Ricoeur 1998:246).

It is as if Ricoeur were walking alongside this idealistic, young American Peace Corps volunteer in rural Korea struggling to literally understand Koreans, while faced with ever-present misinterpretations of my identity by Koreans, when Ricoeur (1981:142-143) declares, "the moment of understanding corresponds dialectically to being in a situation: it is the projection of our own most possibilities at the very heart of the situations in which we find ourselves...what must be interpreted in a text is a proposed world which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my own most possibilities." Capable human beings are vulnerable and our lives reflect those weaknesses. For the capable human, emphasis is on the possibility of understanding one's self as an agent responsible for its actions. Self-knowledge only comes through our relation to the world and our life with and among others in that world.

My work at The Asia Foundation takes me to Korea regularly for fundraising meetings and development work. In October 2012, I had lunch with former Prime Minister Lee Hong-koo. When he learned I was a former Peace Corps volunteer in Korea, he expressed genuine gratitude for the Peace Corps, and for volunteers like me, who came to Korea to help at a time which is now a distant memory for many Koreans. He told me that many Koreans like him are thankful for the efforts of the 2000 Peace Corps/Korea volunteers. I share this personal narrative to fuse my early interactions with Korea and with the Koreans in my life today bound by communicative action. As

Habermas (1984) suggests, communicative rationality is an aspect of learning recognizing one's mistakes and choosing another way of thinking about something.

Another example comes from Young Sook who was born in South Korea and educated in the US. As a leader of a church related peace-building mission, she went to North Korea assuming that religion was not relevant to North Koreans. Her recognition that North Koreans devotion to Kim Il-sung was god-like led her to observe that for those North Koreans; he is their god. She doesn't need to agree with them but her recognition of their belief allowed for a more meaningful discourse with the North Koreans.

Discourse is continual as evidenced by my own narrative on Korea spanning 40 years. Koreans have endured many years of foreign occupation, followed by six decades of separation caused by the Korean War. Each of my Korean participants mentioned the decline of traditional culture, the loss of memory about the war, and doubts about the possible reunification of Korea. South Korea is becoming increasingly more global and less nationalistic, and the decline of culture may continue to erode. Emplotment of narrative offers the opportunity to bring diverse components into the country's narrative, including appropriation of narrative, action described by Habermas (1984) as choosing another way of thinking about something, and attestation, or the assurance of being oneself.

### **Summary Statement**

In the conclusion of "Asian Experiences with Remittances" Hugo (2005:368) writes that remittance flows from migrants to their home countries have been largely neglected in the analysis of economic development in Asia. The reasons for this neglect are that remittances flow through informal channels, are underestimated in value, and

have the greatest visible impact in poorer communities. Pertinent to my research, Hugo (2005:369) states,

We do not yet have a solid understanding of how Asian diasporas operate and generate remittances. While most labor-exporting nations in Asia recognize the importance of remittances, policy and program development remains broad and limited in effect. While there is considerable variation between nations in this respect, there is huge scope for the development of integrated policies and programs, which can maximize the benefits to nations, regions, communities, and families that can result from remittances. At present...such developments are impeded by the fact that many migration flows are undocumented and the fact that labor migrants are often drawn from poor areas in which the lack of integrated regional planning and the dearth of investment opportunities reduces the impact which remittances have on regional and local economies.

My research provides a view of remittances from the Philippines and Korean perspective. Conversations document how diasporas operate and generate remittances, particularly among the poorer in both countries. This research supports the need for narrative to be included in the study of migrant remittances.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Letter of Invitation**

March 1, 2012

Dear (insert name):

I am seeking interpretive research conversations with selected members of the Philippine diaspora living in the United States, and with recipients of remittances in the Philippines. A parallel component of my research focuses on collective remittances flowing from South Korea to North Korea, and I will have interpretive conversations with South Koreans who are old enough to have family in North Korea and South Koreans who are too young to know family in North Korea. I believe that parsing my research between two diaspora groups can provide useful understanding about motivation and individual interests among remitters.

I am a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco conducting preliminary research for my dissertation. My research addresses collective remittances where diaspora groups provide financial support for community projects in their home countries.

I am inviting select people who have personally participated as senders and receivers of remittances, either individually or collectively, or are familiar with remittance practices. By engaging in these conversations, I hope that this research will have future implications in unfolding new understandings on giving motivation within select diaspora communities.

You will be granting me permission to record our conversation. Our conversation will provide data for the analysis of the subject I have described. I will provide you with a copy of our transcribed conversation for your review, comments, and editing. You may add to or delete any section of the conversation at that time. Once I have received your approval of the transcript, I will proceed with analyzing our conversation. Your name and affiliation, the date you have contributed, and the date of our conversation will not be held confidential.

Below you will find a series of proposed questions. These questions are intended as guidelines to direct our conversation.

- Please tell me what it means to you to be a member of a diaspora group.
- What motivates you to remit? How and to whom do you remit?
- When you remit, do you have expectations for recognition?
- Do you participate in collective remittances? How does this work?

I would like to emphasize that I am seeking stories that reflect your personal history and experience, with regards to the topic at hand. My hope is that our conversation will provide an opportunity for us both to reach new understandings about motivation to remit and benefits to receivers.

Sincerely,

Janice Gow Pettey  
Research Doctoral Student  
University of San Francisco  
School of Education, Organization and Leadership Program  
janicepettey@gmail.com



## **Appendix B: Confirmation Letter**

Date

Participant's Name

Address

Dear (Participant's Name):

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me about the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation. I look forward to hearing your insights about the remittance practices in the Philippines (Korea).

This letter confirms our meeting on (day, month, time). As discussed, we will meet at (place). Please contact me if you would like to arrange a different time or meeting place.

With your approval, I will be recording our conversation (audio and/or video), transcribing it into a written text, and providing you with a copy of the transcripts for your review. After you have reviewed and reflected upon the transcript, you may add, delete, or change portions of the transcript, as you deem appropriate. The conversations are an important element in my research. Please take notice that all of the data for this research project including your name are not confidential. Additionally, I may use your name in my dissertation and subsequent publications.

I appreciate your contribution to this research and look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Janice Gow Pettey

Research Doctoral Student

University of San Francisco

School of Education, Organization and Leadership Program

janicepettey@gmail.com

## **Appendix C: Thank You Letter**

Date

Dear (Participant's name):

Thank you for meeting with me on (date), and for sharing your experiences with remittances. I value the opportunity to speak with you and thank you for your time. Included with this letter is a copy of our transcribed conversation for your review. The transcript is a very important part of my research. I ask that you please review the transcript for accuracy and make any notations regarding changes, deletions, or additions you deem appropriate. I will contact you in the coming weeks to discuss your comments and notations. Once the review and editing process of the transcript has been finished, and upon your approval, I will use the revised transcript for my data analysis.

Again, thank you for participating in my research study. Your unique perspective about this topic is a valuable contribution to the research material I have collected. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Janice Gow Pettey  
Research Doctoral Student  
University of San Francisco  
School of Education, Organization and Leadership Program  
janicepettey@gmail.com

**Appendix D: List of Conversation Partners**

Name	Residence
1. Abigail (Teresa)	Santo Tomas, Pangasinan, Philippines
2. Brian Barry	Seoul, Korea
3. David Snell	Americus, Georgia
4. Gina Q.	Mountain View, California
5. Hey Ah Ohm	Larkspur, California
6. Hostess at Pyongyang Restaurant	Siem Reap, Cambodia
7. Ivy	Santo Tomas, Pangasinan, Philippines
8. Jay	Seoul, Korea
9. John Cha	Emeryville, California
10. Julie Santiago	San Diego California
11. Leticia	Santo Tomas, Pangasinan, Philippines
12. Max G.	Seoul, Korea
13. Nieves	Santo Tomas, Pangasinan, Philippines
14. Paula Ventura	Santo Tomas, Pangasinan, Philippines
15. Rhoda Arciaga	Union City, California
16. Reverend Young sook Kang	Denver, Colorado

### Appendix E: Glossary of Terms

Diaspora	A displaced population unified by common culture, ethnicity, religion
Emigrant	A person who leaves his or her country to live elsewhere
<i>Hawala</i>	A method for transmitting remittances using person-to-person transactions (Asian origins)
<i>Hundi</i>	See <i>hawala</i> ; practiced in South Asian countries
Immigrant	A person coming to a new country to live
<i>Juche</i>	Official ideology of DPRK (North Korea)
Migrant	A person who leaves their home to seek employment
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation Development
OFW	Overseas Filipino Worker
Remittance	Monetary transaction from a migrant to home – generally family members

## Appendix F: Pilot Conversation Transcripts

### Conversation with Rhoda Arciaga

October 30, 2011

JP: Hi Rhoda

RA: Hi

JP: Today is Sunday October the 30th, and it's about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. And, I am sitting at our kitchen table with Rhoda. And, Rhoda and I are about to have a conversation on her... it's a conversation on your experiences in/around remittances and memories if you know you have of living in the Philippines and things like that. So feel comfortable. We'll just go back and forth. Okay.

RA: Okay

JP: To start with, can you talk to me a little about how do you identify yourself with your family, with your friends, colleagues? What is your identity mean? What is that?

RA: As a Filipino or just (pause) Well, I was born in the Philippines, and before I was one I grew up here in the States. So, my identity growing probably until I was about maybe 15/16 years old, I didn't know much about my culture, so growing up, I guess you could say my friends were a mix of different ethnicities. Because I couldn't speak Tagalog, that kept a distance between me and a lot of the Filipino kids at school. And then when my father, who was in the navy, he decided to retire and bring us back to the Philippines.

JP: How old where you then?

RA: Fifteen actually. I was 15. My only... at that point the only thing I remembered about the Philippines was when we went in '87, which I was about 10 years old. So, I don't have really too much memories about that, but going back at 15 I had to finish high school. So, that was a culture shock. (pause) We had to learn, my brother and I had to... we had to have a tutor everyday for one hour after school so that we could learn Tagalog. We were willing, I mean we didn't have a choice because a lot of our subjects were taught in Filipino. And, I think that brought us closer to the culture, to our family, because I know had some friends who went back to the Philippines who were really, I guess you could say resistant to learning, and so they always had that umm (pause) trying to find the word, but they, they, they were distant, they didn't want to learn about their culture, about their country. They were forced to go to the Philippines.

JP: Ahh.

RA: Like they were being punished, I guess. For my brother and I, we were willing to learn the new language, learn the new culture. And people always ask us if we regret

going back, and sometimes even my parents ask us too if it was a mistake that they brought us back to the Philippines. But I always tell that if our dad didn't give us the opportunity to go back then I probably won't be the person that I am now, that I still, I am grateful, I am still rooted in the Philippines. When we have kids, I want them to, to be familiar with that, their side, and this side of their identity. So coming... today at work, my friends, my family, umm (pause) I guess it's made me more (pause) I'm not sure.

JP: Do you have, before you went to the Philippines and then now, as an adult living in the United States, do you feel that your identity has shifted at all? Or?

RA: Well, growing up, early elementary school, my parents were discouraged by our school, umm, they were discouraged to, it was suggested that they didn't talk to us in Tagalog at home, and that it should be English so that we weren't confused. So, we weren't formally taught. Once in a while, we were, we were spoken to in Tagalog, but just little, small phrases. But, for the most part, it was always English. My parents spoke in Tagalog, so my brother and I, we heard that a lot growing up, and we were able to understand a little bit. Our home, our household, wasn't completely westernized, or Americanized, despite the fact that my parents were discouraged from teaching us Tagalog. And so, I guess you could say we had the best of both worlds. Umm, even though they didn't speak to us in Tagalog, we heard it, we were exposed to it. We were exposed to the food. Um, not so much the culture, I guess just the food part of the culture. But, when we moved to the Philippines, that's when we had to learn Tagalog to keep up with our Filipino subjects, and umm, just being able to immerse to the culture, engaging with our friends and our family.

[JP: So, how did it shift, when you moved to the Philippines, your identity as being Filipino? Did it shift?]

RA: I think I feel more Filipino now. In the Philippines, I was able to, (pause) within 6 months I was able to adjust to school and the culture with ease. There was nothing that stood, that made the adjustment hard for me. So, I think I was able to embrace my Filipino-ness, I guess. In the Philippines, I had no problem with that. But since moving here to the States, I think I'm not as Filipino, umm, only because we're here in the States, things are different, the culture's different. But, I try to hold on to what culture I have of the Philippines by trying to speak to friends who are still fluent in Tagalog or visiting our local Filipino market, buying local vegetables, fresh fish, and just making dishes at home that I remember from when I was still living in the Philippines.

RA: I think so. I think so. I think umm (pause) when I was growing up I was (long pause) its also part of growing up, you try to figure out who you are.

JP Right.

RA: What you want to be. And then now that I've lived in the Philippines for maybe about 7 years or so, I guess more of the Filipino traits is more in me now, the way I think sometimes. I think has a lot too...

JP: Can you give me an example?

RA: Let's see...  
(pause)

JP: Or maybe think about when you find it happening like when you're in the company other Filipinos here or is it a certain of the year, or an occasion, or something?

RA: It's when I'm with other Filipinos. And then, I'm not as fluent in Tagalog anymore and so (pause) I have to think about this.

JP: Okay, if it comes back to you, just tell me. So, umm, have you ever remitted money or anyone in your family, your extended family, not just your immediate family? Are you familiar with remittances?

RA: I did it once for my, umm, for my parents, umm, when I started working here in the States, and then my dad said "oh it's okay, you don't have to do that, just keep it, you know". I guess it's because that's what everybody was doing.

JP: Oh, so you felt it was...

RA: I felt it was maybe, that it was my obligation to take care of them.

JP: Can you tell me, how did you do it?

RA: I actually did it from my bank to their bank. Which is umm, it's not a common way to do it.

JP: Oh, it isn't?

RA: No. From what I've heard from friends and other family members, they do it through Western Union. There are other smaller agencies, like Xoom. X.O.O.M. It's another remittance company; they do it that way because it's cheaper. Because bank to bank, the fee is high. And, me just moving back here, and I didn't know how to go about doing it, so I did it bank to bank. And the reason why I did it is because, I thought, I felt it was my obligation to take care of my parents, but they said no you're starting out on your own, you know just put it away for savings. So, that was the last time I really, I, I remitted money to them.

JP: Can you tell me, talk a little bit about the area that your parents live in, umm, and whether there's, if you've observed or parents ever talk about, I mean you know, are there people who are receiving remittances? Just explain that to me.

RA: Well my parents live in a province called Pangasinan, which is about umm, 3-hour drive north of Manila. So, just to give you an idea, it's, it's far from city, a big city. So,

just to give you an idea, when we moved there in '93, it was mostly farmland. Umm, but as the years gone by, it's become more developed, umm, and there are a few people, well not just a few... there's a good number of people that live in the town, the town's Santo Tomas, who have left and worked abroad, and they send money back home.

JP: Do, they come back or are they still?

RA: Some of them come back. Others, they've been there for decades. And, their kids, you know, their kids and their husbands are...

JP: Are they mainly women, or are they men and women?

RA: They are mainly women, but more and more men are going also. Taking up engineering jobs, or umm, cruise liners, they're cooks...

JP: Where do they, from in the area where your parents live, do they typically go to the same places or do they go to different parts of the world?

RA: They go different parts of the world. I don't know, I don't know anybody who's really in the same area. A lot of them, they go to Hong Kong, Singapore. The men, they go to Dubai, a lot of them do.

JP: And then, in terms of when they leave and they're remitting back, do you how are their remittances tend, how are they used? I know that a lot of times it's just family-to-family, so it's just personal. But, are there any examples or can you see results of...

RA: From personal experience, from personal observation, every time I go home, we go home to visit the family, there's always a bigger house on the street, or somebody's remodeling, or somebody has a car, or... it's not an instant result that you see but it's something gradual, like they'll finish the floor of their house, or what used to be wood is now a cement solid house with roofing and all the finishings, so it's something that you do see.

JP: And you know it's from remittances?

RA: Yes, and it's well known. When a family member leaves, it's well known in the town.

JP: Everybody knows?

RA: Everybody knows, that this person left and they're sending money back.

JP: So, do you, I mean with, I don't, I'm curious about women and if there's, if you know of any stories or examples of women who leave, and they leave their children. Who takes care of the children, and how does that...



RA: Umm, grandparents take care of the kids. The fathers who are left behind take care of the kids. But what I noticed from my extended family, when husbands and the kids are left behind, the grandparents end up raising the kids.

JP: Is unemployment a big issue?

RA: Yes. It is a big issue.

JP: I'm trying not to ask you, I don't want to lead you. In terms of what motives people, what causes people to leave?

RA: I've heard people say that anything is greener outside of the Philippines, any country, as long as you leave the Philippines; it's a better life. Umm. (pause) Unemployment is a big problem in the Philippines. Even if you're educated and have a degree, it doesn't guarantee that you'll find a job. Just by my experience after graduating from college there, I mean some of the qualifications they ask if you have finance for example, you have to be at least 5 feet tall to work. Something like that, there's hard guidelines. I mean it's shallow but it's one of the reasons, the qualifications, the requirements, it's who you know that can get you the jobs, and so people they just, they after a while they frustrated, and they just look, you know.

JP: So do you think that, I hear that some people will go and they think that it's just going to be temporary, a few years. And, then they're gone a lot longer than a few years, but that there seems to be an attempt that they will come home. Do you see that, or have you heard of about that? I mean do they come home, or do they tend to be gone and they have the kids come join them, or the family is separated for a long, long time?

RA: I've seen some neighbors, some of our neighbors, and some of our extended family, you know we'd hear they come home, they'll come home, and then they'll try to make a living only to realize that they're not making as much as if they were working abroad, so they end up going back.

JP: So they go back again?

RA: Some of them go back again, and leave the kids. They don't take the kids with them.

JP: How does that, does that affect the children?

RA: I'm sure, I'm sure it does.

JP: But' you've... I just think that just. Well, I shouldn't insert my opinion there.

JP: So, for people, anybody in your family, you've talked about remitted home that one time...

RA: Yes.

JP: The significance, if I heard you right, you said you felt like it was the thing to do.

RA: Mmm, hmm.

JP: So, is that, how does that, how do Filipinos get that? I mean how do you, how does that transfer, that uhh practice of knowing that you should be remitting if you're abroad and making money?

RA: I think for me, it's not so much, I think it's... part of the culture in the Philippines is that when your parents get older, because raised me for example, then it's my obligation, my responsibility to take care of them. So that's my personal reason why I thought I would remit. But if you compare it to the other families there, they're doing it because, they're doing it for their children. I was doing it for my parents. So, that's the cultural obligation on my part.

JP: Yup, do you think there's... most of the people that are remitting that you're thinking about do it because, uhh, you are how old?

RA: I'm 34.

JP: So, of your generation do it, you might be more inclined... Well, I was going to say that you might be more inclined to support your parents, but if you had children back in the Philippines?

RA: Even more so.

JP: Even more so?

RA: Even more so. That, I mean, I would support them. That would be my, I mean that's my responsibility as a parent. I'd want to have a better future... way of life.

JP: Ah, okay. Okay.

RA: And, I think that's what the motivation is for a lot of...

JP: What is the government, how do they, do they encourage this?

RA: I think they do, because they called these overseas workers the heroes. That they, leave their... I'm not familiar with it too much.

JP: I've heard this, that they're referred to as national heroes.

RA: National heroes, but I don't know why they would be considered national heroes when they're families behind, leaving their country, to go look for something better for them? I mean why can't they, why can't it be in their own country? For a country that is so family oriented... umm... why isn't the government doing anything to help them versus oh yeah, they're heroes, let them do it, it's bring money, and I think that's probably what it is, it's because it's money back to the country.

JP: But it feels, sounds to me like a lot of people who become overseas contract workers, they really believe this, that they're helping their country as well as helping their family.

RA: Right, and it's glorified. Like because they're these heroes, when something happens to one of the workers, he or she committed a crime and now they are going to have to face umm the consequences of the country they're working at. The Philippines, what they'll do is, they blow it up and they'll say poor so and so, they left their country and their family, and now they're going to face this. I think that's what makes them become a hero too. It's that image. You know, why do they have to go through this, these consequences, when all they were doing was helping their family. I mean that's one image...

JP: Where do you get your news about the Philippines?

RA: I get them online. If I catch... there's a local channel that shows the different news from different countries, I think it's KQED.

JP: Oh really?

RA: I'm not sure if that's the station, but in the evening they'll have like Mandarin and Filipino news, and so sometimes I'll get it there. They'll broadcast it.

JP: And then you also get it from other online sources?

RA: Hmm mmm.

JP: So are there, do you know if there are any sources that migrant, OCWs, use to stay in contact with each other?

RA: Umm...

JP: I heard something about a news, a magazine, for migrant workers, for women, and I can't remember... migrant workers in Italy and maybe in the United States, and it was their stories, and so they told they're stories, and it was shared online. Are you familiar with that, or anything like that?

RA: Umm, not too much. I remember few years ago, maybe 6, 8 years ago, I stumbled upon a website for overseas workers, and they would share their stories. Umm, but I don't... it wasn't much you know feedback, like a forum or anything like that. It was just stories submitted contract workers, sharing their plight is what they call it.

JP: So have you got a few strong memories of the time that you lived in the Philippines?

RA: A lot, a lot.

JP: Can you tell me some?

RA: Well, I went to college there.

JP: Uh huh.

RA: There are a lot of strong memories of that.

JP: Where did you go to college?

RA: I went to Saint Louis University in Baguio City, which is also north of Manila.

JP: Can you describe the area?

RA: It's umm, it's in the mountains. It's what they... it's in the mountain province area which is literally in the mountains. Cool weather, pine trees, fog, one of the reasons why I decided to go to school there versus Manila. And it was closer to home. Umm. I was a full time student. (pause) I don't know, there's just so many memories. I just had a good time, I think because I learned Tagalog, I was able to immerse myself.

JP: Why was that... explain why or talk about that was important.

RA: Learning Tagalog?

JP: Uh huh.

RA: There was umm (pause) when kids from the states go back to the Philippines (pause) they're looked at as being very umm independent and strong, but they were also looked at as being snobby, also. They separated themselves from the other Filipinos.

JP: The ones who weren't from the Philippines?

RA: The Filipino kids who grew up in the states.

JP: Uh huh.

RA: They were, they were separated. They separated themselves from their umm, from everybody else. And, I didn't want to be that way. I wanted to be able to immerse with the community. I wanted to be able to... I wanted them to get to know me because I wasn't like those kids. Umm, I wanted, I wanted my classmates to know me for who I was. Because, just to give you an idea of what these kids were like, they were into Hip Hop, they were into gangs. And, that's why they were sent to the Philippines, a lot of them were.

JP: Oh.

RA: Because, they didn't want to go to the Philippines.

JP: Oh.

RA: And, I was separating myself from that stigma. And so, going to college, what I did was, I tried not to speak English. I stumbled my way through Tagalog, so that they would talk to me. I mean that's, that's how I met my friends. And umm, and so once I opened my mouth and started talking, they would laugh and they'd say you're not from here. Umm, you know, I mean it worked, and that's how I, that how's I got to know my

friends. And, I have friends like Febe, who are also umm, she's my best friend. She, she also, same situation. Umm, she didn't grow in the Philippines, but she went back to the Philippines to go to college.

JP: Is that a fairly common practice?

RA: No, not really.

JP: No, so just the two of you?

RA: Just the two of us, just the very few of us. And, you know for her, just like me, she learned Tagalog because she wanted to be accepted also. Umm, and so that's how she and I became friends too. So, I mean that's...

JP: So you came, when did you leave the Philippines? After you graduated, right?

RA: Uh, 2000.

JP: 2000?

RA: Mmm hmm.

JP: And, the reason you, can you, do you want to talk about what your reasons were to leave the Philippines?

RA: I guess just like the other oversea contract workers. I couldn't find a job there.

JP: Really?

RA: Mmm, hmm.

JP: So you graduated from college?

RA: I tried, but I didn't try to hard because my intention was to come back to the states. But, I wasn't going to give up on the Philippines. I wanted to see if I could find something there, which... you know I had, we had, myself and a few other fellow graduates had a hard time looking for, for employment. So, that 's why I came back here.

JP: And you had family here, or friends here?

RA: I had family here, that helped me, umm, get on my feet.

JP: And here was California.

RA: Here was California.

JP: Northern California?

RA: Northern California. Yeah, and I had friends here too that helped me, and...

JP: So is that, umm, it's, I know that you've got family and friends here, but it feels like there's almost like a network, so that it's not really as scary a thing?

RA: Scary, yes, yes that is true.

JP: So, when you came over here, they knew you were coming and you had a place to stay and all of that?

RA: Yes.

JP: And, is that typical?

RA: That's typical, that is typical, that is typical. Umm, and the thing about Filipinos too umm, they like to network, or like do you know anybody that, that, that's umm, whatever it is, like jobs or something like that. Umm, so I guess you could say going back from our earlier question, where do the Filipinos go?

JP: Uh huh.

RA: They do go to different, they to different places around the world, but umm, the first thing they do is contact that one friend, in Hong Kong for example, and say hey do you know anybody who is hiring.

JP: So, did that networking help you get a job when got over here?

RA: Actually, umm, no. At first it didn't, because I just, I just sent out my resumes and things like that.

JP: So, this was probably the American side of you?

RA: Yes, this is the American side of me. And then when I landed my first job, there was a Filipina, Gina. She said hey, hey there's an opening at the hospital, why don't you apply for it. And, I said okay. And because of her, I was able to get my job at the hospital. And as recent as four months ago, she said there's an opening at the department, it's a promotional position, why don't you go for it. So, she was the one that helped me.

JP: So, it's a very supportive. I mean...

RA: Yes.

JP: The network is, uhh, people helping people?

RA: Yeah, people helping people. And, it's not about favors, you know, now that I helped you, I'm going to expect you to help me kind of network.

JP: So, there's no reciprocity inferred?

RA: No.

JP: You just do?

RA: We just do. Just, just out of, I mean just from my experiences alone, it's just from kindness, just by helping out, because umm, yeah they, they're just very supportive.

JP: So the Filipino people you know here in the Bay Area, do you sense that there's a strong tie collectively to the Philippines or does that tie get transferred more to where they're living now? Now, I know your parents are still in the Philippines, so that makes a big difference. But, if your parents weren't there, I don't know, maybe it's kind of hard to imagine what would be like, because they are there. Maybe from friends who don't have family? Do they all have family there?

RA: Not all of them have family in the Philippines. My friends, umm, a lot of them still do have strong ties to the Philippines.

JP: What do you think are some of the reasons why those ties are so strong?

RA: For others, I think it's because of, you know, for their children. They want their kids to be familiar with their heritage. I've heard that's a big thing.

JP: Oh even if the children, they want...

RA: They want them...

JP: Well I can understand that, coming from a Chinese family. I mean, culture's important, and you want to keep it alive.

RA: I think others too, just by my experience, a lot of us, including myself, umm, we didn't have that Filipino identity growing, and now that we've found it, we don't want to let go, of it. That's what my friends and I have talked about too.

JP: So, it's pride, I mean there's really pride involved?

RA: I think it's pride.

JP: What about religion, how important is religion?

RA: In the Philippines?

JP: Hmm mmm.

RA: It's big, it's very...

JP: The Catholic Church is huge. But, there's the Roman Catholic Church and then there's other branches of Catholicism?

RA: Other branches.

JP: And, the church is a big part?

RA: The church is a big part, to the extent that they, they're interfering with politics in the government. They're trying to (pause) persuade? You know, they're pushing their, they're pushing their thoughts on the government.

JP: Did you religious when you were living the Philippines?

RA: Not really. I went to church once in a while, but I've always tried to keep that (pause) I didn't (pause) I wasn't, it didn't influence me the way it does a lot of people, the way religion does for them, like oh God will take of that. You know, I'm not going to do anything because God will take care of that. And, that's the attitude of a lot of Filipinos.

JP: And they really believe that?

RA: And they really believe that. They'll pray and then they'll say, well you know what, if that's how it's going to be then that's because, you know, that's what God had in store for me. Or, they're not proactive, because, umm, whatever God has in store for them.

JP: Well, if you look at the history of the Philippines, I mean the Spanish were there for a long time, and the Church grew up from the Spanish influence.

RA: Mmm, hmm.

JP: What about any anti-American, I mean did you ever, uh, you know, being Filipino, going to school in the United States, then going back to the Philippines, and you know, there's some parts of the history of the Philippines were the Americans weren't very nice. I mean, they were terrible.

RA: Umm, I didn't experience it too much myself, being that I grew up here. But, there would be stories of umm, and I think it's a law now they don't allow American servicemen to (pause) to train the Filipino military, or something like that.

JP: Oh really?

RA: There's a law where, they've made them keep their distance. I think they can train a long side them. I don't remember what it was, but the military, they're not that...



JP: So, there's still a U.S. military presence in the Philippines?

RA: Mmm, hmm.

JP: Is it a... how large is it? Is it a very large one?

RA: It's not large, because they removed the bases, they removed the bases, that they were really happy about. Umm, I don't if ships, every time a military ship comes, there's always some kind of protest.

JP: But your dad was in the military. So, did he ever talk about his experiences being Filipino and you know, working for the U.S. military?

RA: Umm, he's experienced some prejudice too, being Filipino in the U.S. military, but that was the 60's.

JP: Yup, and there was a lot of that going on.

RA: Yeah, a lot of that going on.

JP: What about your mom?

RA: My mom, no, no, not so much. Not that she's told me though.  
(pause)

JP: Okay, so what would you like to see? I mean when you think about the Philippines, do you have any ideas about what you'd like to see happen there, or you know, big, little, things that you feel are important to you?

RA: Hmm. (pause) There's a lot. (pause)

JP: But, from your own, what you feel, I mean not just from the need out there, because there's a lot of need out there.

RA: Yeah, there is a lot of need out there. For me, what I would like to see (long pause), I'll have to think about this...

JP: Do you ever talk about talk with your friends or, I mean, like, I know, and on my family, some times you sit around and you end talking about, you joke a lot. It's like the Chinese way, we do this, we do that. But then, some times we get a little critical, or we poke fun at ourselves. I don't think that I... umm, see I don't identify with China because I've been here so long, but I have a strong identification with being Chinese, I mean, I am Chinese American, and you can't take that away from that. I guess it takes something to make me, to really get me going. Something has to happen, and then I think, I like this, I don't like this. Do sense, I mean, maybe, let me ask you a different kind of question... In terms of being Filipino in the Bay Area, where there's such a large

Filipino, such a large Asian population, does that, you know, have you always just felt very comfortable in this setting, or have there been times when you didn't feel comfortable?

RA: Umm, I've always felt comfortable, in a setting like this. And growing up in Hawaii too, it was the same thing. (pause) I guess one of the things. (pause) There's so many thoughts that are going through my mind about the, about the Filipinos here in the Bay Area, and how their thoughts are different, like they, they, umm, they're so random, like the kids who grew up here in the States who are Filipino but have never been to the Philippines, and then they, I guess it's misplaced pride, if that makes any sense, like umm... Their, their anger, and that's where I, that's where I feel like I'm not like them, where I feel like I don't belong in their little grew up, because their misplaced anger goes way back to when the Spaniards...

JP: Oh? And, they're aware of that?

RA: They're aware of that, but that's where their rooted anger is about the Philippines.

JP: So, I mean, so, you're saying that young people that Filipino kids here in the Bay Area, they have a strong enough understanding of the Spanish rule, well it was almost 300 years of it, so how could they not.

RA: I'm not sure, mostly the college kids.

JP: Oh the college kids? Okay.

RA: Yeah, Umm, they're aware of that, and so they have so much anger at them, they wanna...

JP: Who are they angry at?

RA: Anything.

JP: Anything and everything?

RA: Anything and everything.

JP: But, they're living here in the Bay Area?

RA: But, they're living here in the Bay Area. I mean, it's hard to explain.

JP: So, that's what you mean by misplaced?

RA: Yeah, I mean misplaced might not be a good word either.

JP: What about their parents, do you know?

RA: I don't know. I don't know where it comes from. Umm, I'd have to think about it more. A lot of the kids in our area, they have these groups, you know, Filipino youth...

JP: You mean where you live now?

RA: Where we live now. I'm not really too much familiar with it.

JP: And you live in?

RA: Union City.

JP: Is there a large Filipino population in Union City?

RA: It's very large. I had contacted this Filipino organization to volunteer, a few years ago, to work with the youth. But, they've never gotten back to me. And, there's one example of what I'd like to change, or something that has always frustrated me about working with Filipinos, is that they don't get back to you, or they don't, sometimes, it's negative. That umm, and I always joke around with my husband, like they're being Filipino again. You know, they only want, they only contact me when they need my vote. And that's seriously, that's when they actually contacted me was not because I was volunteering, inquiring but volunteering. They wanted me to vote for something.

JP: To vote for a person or to vote for an issue?

RA: For an issue, for an issue, I think it was.

JP: So, a high level of politics involved?

RA: I think, this one, they were just endorsing something, one of the issues.

JP: Is there a lot, is that something that's, do you remember how the political community was when you were living in the Philippines? A lot of emphasis on politics?

RA: A lot of emphasis on politics. Umm, that's one thing I'd to see change too in the Philippines.

JP: You're too young to remember Marco, right?

RA: Yeah, I am.

JP: Your parents?

RA: My parents, they told us stories before about martial law. Umm, I remember the coup when they, when he was exiled. I do remember that from seeing it in the news.

JP: Do you ever hear people talk about the Philippine-American war?

RA: No, not too much.

JP: But, are you familiar with it?

RA: Not really, not really.

JP: Yeah, I wasn't either until I read about it, and I went like, wow. And, I mean, there were a lot of people who died in that war.

RA: Was it a short, short war?

JP: Only about a year, yeah 1898.

RA: Because we touched on it, but I mean I don't remember anything about it, when they were talking about the countries who occupied and went to war with the Philippines.

JP: The book that I read said that there were up to 250,000 Filipinos who died in that. And this was pretty much American forces, because the Spanish-American war was over. And, uh, the U.S., the truce was signed. And then a day or two later, the U.S. invaded Manila, and then they said oops we didn't know.

RA: Wow.

JP: So, that's interesting though that's not a big umm...

RA: Yeah, it wasn't a big thing.

JP: Who were the heroes? Can you name some Philippine heroes?

RA: Umm, Jose Risal is the national hero.

JP: And, he was part of that independence movement?

RA: Him, as well as Aguinaldo.

JP: Who became president, right?

RA: He became president, and there were a lot of female figures too that were involved in that movement too.

JP: So, this is, we're kind of going off on a different tangent here, but there's been a number of women of have been presidents of the Philippines. And, the Philippines hasn't been a country that long? The republic's what, only 60 years old or something like that?

RA: Yeah, yeah it's young.

JP: So, the women, like, the first women president was?

RA: Aquino.

JP: And she was the widow?

RA: She was the widow.

JP: So, she's popular? Was she good?

RA: She was, I can't remember.

JP: In your mind?

RA: In my mind, I think that she was the first female president, umm. When Marcos' government was overthrown, she was the one that stepped up.

JP: Who was president when you were living there? Do you remember?

RA: His name was Ramos, Fidel Ramos. One thing that I remember about him was that umm, the economy, if I'm not mistaken, picked up then, that there was hope... That the Philippines, you know, rise, economically. And then a movie star, Joseph Estrada.

JP: Oh I remember that.

RA: He ran, he ran, and everybody knew him, and so he won. You know, very corrupt, they say.

JP: Is there a lot of corruption in the Philippines?

RA: There's a lot of corruption in the Philippines.

JP: At all levels?

RA: At all levels. I've seen them. I've been apart of it. Umm... yeah, at all levels. They know that if you have money, they'll try and get that from you.

JP: And, I mean it can become personal? Like, you know, you, as an American, are targeted because you're an American so you've got to have money?

RA: You could be, you could be, you could be.

JP: Wow, do you think there's hope?

RA: I don't know. I mean if, every candidate that runs for some public office there says that they're going to help minimize corruption in the Philippines, but it's still the same. I think it just has to start individually.

JP: So then, I mean, thinking about your parents who have retired there, and they're, I mean, they're isolated enough so they can live and not be affected by the corruption, or you just learn to live with it?

RA: You just learn to live with it. I mean they deal with it. And it's funny because they complain too. You know when they get all worked up, and then they talk about it, but then you know, they're living so they have to live with it. But, one of the things that they have to do every year, because they're both American citizens, is that they have to pay an immigration tax.

JP: To who?

RA: To the government.

JP: The Philippine government?

RA: Hmm mmm. And, so they have to go to one of the offices. And, I remember, I had to go through this too when I, when we were working there. I mean, so every year, we had to face some kind of corruption.

JP: So, it's not just paying a tax?

RA: It's like... one example is that we had to go to Manila, before they had these sub offices in the provinces. So, every year, we had to go to Manila, and stay overnight. And there was literally a window... there's a few windows... there's a window that says normal preparation for your paperwork, which will take a few days. And, down the umm, a few windows down, it says express, which will be done in four hours. And so, you pay that extra to get that done.

JP: And who, you pay it to the person there or the government?

RA: I don't know where it goes to, but it's the same, you pay at that window. And then at the same time, in the waiting area, there's a bunch of guys with briefcases. And then umm, they'll handle your paperwork faster than the express window. And so, so umm, so yeah, you pay this person, and then they will walk your papers. And, you just walk with this person, and whatever document you have to sign, you just sign it. And, then you're done in like an hour or two. And these guys are, I don't know how, you know where the money goes or what, but there, when you to this agency, this office, there's a waiting area, and then there's a section with a sign that's dedicated for these guys. So, the government is aware of that.

JP: So these aren't government people? These are just individuals. They're just, this is just their entrepreneurial uhh... wow, that's interesting.

RA: Yeah.

JP: That takes me back to remittances. So I wonder, do you know if when people send... so if you it through Western Union, it's going from someone to someone. So there's really no room for corruption in that, is there?

RA: No.

JP: That really is, umm, then how does the government benefit from this money this money that people are sending from, you know, from me to you, or you to me?

RA: I don't know. Maybe because they're spending it?

JP: Because the government encourages people. They say go abroad, go work abroad because you're helping your country. But, I don't understand how it helps the country. I mean, I've thought about that a lot and I just...

RA: I don't know, because, I think about that too. I mean like, because they have money, they're able to spend it? I don't know?

JP: Maybe it's because you send it, and it's being spent, and so then people who are receiving it can have more disposable income, so there's more disposable wealth?

RA: Well, I think so. I mean, that's how I see it, but I don't know how the government really benefits from it.

JP: So, if you, if you were to retire like your parents, and if you were to retire to the Philippines, would you have an expectation that you'd want your children to support you, if you needed it?

RA: No, no. I mean financially?

JP: Yeah.

RA: I don't think, I wouldn't have that expectation.

JP: Is there anything that would cause you to want to support some kind of project in the Philippines now, I mean financially? Not your parents, you've tried that.

RA: Hmm mmm, for like the town?

JP: Yeah.

RA: I would actually be hesitant to send money back.

JP: Why?

RA: I would like to know where my money goes, and I want to make sure that it goes to that project. Because of corruption, I don't know where the money will go to. So, I'd be hesitant to give.

JP: Yeah, you and I talked about this in an earlier conversation, but I have to put it into the tape so I can report on it. And that is, umm, I lost my train of thought. Thinking about sending money back to the Philippines, and knowing where it's going, I mean, and the corruption piece. Oh I know what it was, where was I? It was in Vancouver, and I was asking you about groups of Filipinos in Canada and then we talked about groups of Filipinos in Korea, in Seoul. And, a question I've had is where's there's large communities of migrant workers, oversees contract workers. Do you think that they talk to each other about how they are remitting? I mean, do you think that there's like channels or networks of sending money, or is that highly personal? You know, here in the United States, the American way is you don't talk to anybody; it's your own business.

RA: Hmm mmm, I think they would. I don't know, but just based on culture and my observation of other things, they speak openly about money, Filipinos do. So, I'm assuming that they do have these networks. Or, you know, how they go about sending it. Yeah, I think they're pretty open. I'm assuming they're pretty open about it.

JP: So, that's probably good, because what you were just saying that about how you really want to know where your money's going, if you had a group of friends you trusted, would that make a difference?

RA: That would make a difference, because, umm, I'm not part of any organization. My cousins who are, I guess, here, some are part of like an organization, like Northern California Pangasisan Organization, or something like that. So, if I was part of that group, I would be, I'd probably be more apt to donate money, or something.

JP: Because of the trust factor?

RA: The trust factor. Yeah, it's just the trust factor that I know these people, versus... Umm, and so, my brother and I, we were talking this morning actually, just to, related to this. He had, umm, he just had his 14th, I don't know why they chose 14th, 14th high school reunion. I don't know why it was 14th? They couldn't wait a year? And so, they were communicating on Facebook because they had classmates all over, abroad. And, they were saying that the classmates working abroad and living abroad, they should give more money because they're working abroad, which you know... and, so, my brother, he said that umm he wanted to donate, he said, but he chose not to because he didn't know where the money was going. And, they said it was going to go back to the school, but not all of it, it ended up that not all of it went back to the school.

JP: Where did it go?

RA: It went to food. You know, it went to other things. Which you know is part of it, but they were told it was going to be to the school. And, so, you know, I was telling him,



I said that's why I was hesitant too, because I'm approached, even from the Philippines, I'm approached. Hey do you think you can, you know, wire... And they're really open about it. Umm we need a thousand pesos, umm, do you think you can wire it to me? Here's my address, Western Union, you can use Western Union. But then I...

JP: These are people, friends in the Philippines?

RA: Yeah.

JP: Okay. And, so they give you a Western Union wire number?

RA: Everything. Wire number and everything, and I haven't even committed yet.

JP: Wow, that's very trusting.

RA: It's very trusting, but I'm not very trusting, I hesitated. And, I said to my mom, you know, umm, I asked my mom if it's legitimate, and if it's going to the school? And, I'd rather you send my money to something else, you know, maybe like the church or something like that.

JP: Do you think that a lot of the Filipino generosity here in the Bay Area, stays here in the Bay Area, with Filipino activities here? Umm, I mean I've heard this just from my fundraising experiences, that the Filipino community's a very generous community to things that they care about, which is like true for everybody. So, do you think that is a deterrent for money going back to the Philippines, because the longer people are here, the more they're going to be giving to Filipino events in Union City as opposed to sending it home to the Philippines, or no?

RA: Mmm, I don't think so.

JP: Well, this has been really, this has been very, actually has been a rich conversation.

RA: Has it?

JP: Yeah, it has. Let me take a quick look. Let's see if there's anything else that you want to say to me? Umm, did I uh? I think we covered it all? Is there anything you want to add to this? You will have a chance to umm, after I transcribe it, I will give it to you and you will have the opportunity to edit it. And you can say to me, I don't want you to put this in, or you got this wrong, so that you can change it. I'm going to try to get this back to you fast, because I need to have this transcription submitted with my proposal.

RA: Oh okay.

JP: And, I will use your name. I have your permission to use your name?

RA: Yes.

JP: And, okay. Well, that's it.

RA: Thank you.

## Conversation with Hey Ah Ohm

November 2, 2011

Hey Ah: My dad was from, one of nine sons, his father was descended from the royal family, like my grand-aunt was queen at the end of the Yi dynasty, and my father's side was very, his siblings were brilliant, and one of his brothers was an adviser to the Korean government so they used to send for him in a carriage and have him come down and give them advice. So my dad and his brothers studied high school from 7th year all the way. My dad was really smart. So anyway, we had a one, what do you call that, niece, from the North who stayed with us for a few months. There was one relative that I knew who stayed with us during the Korean war, one of my uncles, my father's brother's son, was a North Korean spy and he came to South Korea and stayed with us.

JP: He was a spy?

Hey Ah: Um-humm.

JP: for North Korea?

Hey Ah: Yes, and my oldest brother just graduated from military school like West Point and one of his friends was in the military with all of the Korean troops, and he was visiting...he was a classmate. We had a big home and he was staying in the attic. So they were both in our home and nobody knew except our family.

JP: Nobody knew?

Hey Ah: My mother was an activist for Korea during the Japanese occupation, she was always doing something. I think I got my philanthropic genes from my mom.

JP: How old were you at this time?

Hey Ah: I was eight Anyway, we could all have been killed.

JP: Was this before the partition? How did they come? Was this during the war?

Hey Ah: No this was after the partition. Korean War was in 1951. We moved to Seoul in 1945. So this was eleven years later. My uncle from North Korea. He stayed on the main floor of our house, and my brother's friend stayed in our attic.

JP: Oh my gosh.

Hey Ah: My father owned a petroleum company in Korea. They had a groundbreaking ceremony or something. All the important people went to South Korea for this ceremony. My dad was busy. My mom had housekeepers. We had a huge number of housekeepers,

maids, everybody. And the North Koreans came and they took away everything. They just ...

JP: They just came in...

Hey Ah: The family jewelry, everything. My mom dug a hole outside for the family albums, memory stuff, and letters from her parents. We really didn't have anything. My mom walked all day long just to come home with one cabbage, so I always, after the war I just felt..

My dad was away at this time and he heard our area was bombed, and he found out we were alive. He got a reservation for us at the refugee ship – Navy ship – and we moved south.

JP: Was this happening to you in Seoul or North Korea?

Hey Ah: This was all in Seoul. When I think about all this now, my mom, she was an incredible woman. During the Japanese occupation, we weren't allowed to use Korean language, even in the house for forty years. We had to speak Japanese, our names were Japanese. Anyway after the liberation from Japan, my mom would walk house to house checking on the housewives and asking if they could speak and write Korean. She started a classroom and she taught them Korean language. She was the woman who pushed for Korean women to have the right to vote. She worked with one woman who became a member of parliament. She started a nonprofit newspaper.

JP: She did? This was in the 60s?

Hey Ah: This was in the 50s. Before the Korean War. I was 6 years old, and she gave me a bunch of papers to give away.

JP: You had an amazing mother.

Hey Ah: Yes, she was really good. She didn't spend a lot of time with us, but she spent a lot of time for the country. The Korean government didn't have any money. She gathered...I asked my dad how did you become rich after the liberation? There were 3 people who all spoke English. My dad was one of the three – they got all the wealth –my dad got the petroleum company he was interested in. He was the only Korean man who was a principal during the Japanese occupation. He had a Masters' degree from Japan, so did my mom. They were very educated. What's funny is my mother got sewing machines from my dad, and she taught the housewives to sew military uniforms. The government didn't have money...

JP: and so she was sewing the uniforms with these other women?

Hey Ah: She was doing that. I remember one day she was carrying one of the sewing machines on her head and it hit something and it fell on her foot. The needle part it cut on the top of her foot. Oh, my younger brother and I were crying because of the blood,

screaming and crying. Anyway, she made these military uniforms. always helping the other women, teaching them Korean. We had a lot of maids, they were actually living with us, and she taught them Korean. She sent everyone all the maids to night school. She knew that education was important. So anyway, that's my mother. I was so proud to work for my mom. She died when I was eighteen. My birthday is March 17 and I could vote at 18. She got out of her sick bed and walked me to place to vote. She died in April. She's incredible. She loved her country so much.

JP: What's her name?

Hey Ah: Kim, Hyun-da (?)

JP: Do you know Koreans in the south or the U.S. who send money, donate to North Korean causes?

Hey Ah: Have you heard about Hyundai? They are the big company in Korea and they have a hotel and conference center in the North, and many factories. Hyundai is like the large corporate donor to the north. That's the way many Koreans in the south see it.

JP: I haven't heard about this center. It's built by Hyundai and they hire North Koreans to work there?

(The lunch bill comes, and after I pay, we agree to continue this conversation at our next lunch).

JP: Can we continue this conversation at another time?

Hey Ah: Yes, of course. I want to know about you. You met your husband in Korea.

JP: Yes, we were in the Peace Corps and we were married in Taegu. I lived in Gangwondo province on the northeast coast, near the DMZ. I love Korea. I go back as often as I can. We have a good friend from the Peace Corps who lives in Seoul. He never left after the Peace Corps. Now, he's a famous Buddhist painter. He paints for Buddhist temples around the world.

Hey Ah: I would like to meet him and see his work. I'm going to Korea in March.

JP: I will introduce you to Brian.