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THE ROLE OF CATHOLICISM ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE POLICIES IN MEXICO AND THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

Mexico and the Philippines have inherited predominant Catholic populations as a result of three centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Policies and attitudes on reproductive health care have largely been influenced by the lingering Catholic conservative presence in both countries. However, Mexico has had better success in tangibly separating church and state in matters of reproductive health care policy. How and why was Mexico so successful in liberalizing contraception and abortion laws, given its shared colonial and Catholic history with the Philippines? Using Roland Robertson’s global field model, this thesis will examine the factors that have contributed to the countries’ disparate policies on abortion and contraception. By assessing how deep the Catholic Church has penetrated the four dimensions of Robertson’s model in each country, this thesis will conclude that elements of Mexico’s road towards increased accessibility cannot be adapted in the Philippines despite the nation’s commonalities with its Latin American counterpart.
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INTRODUCTION

First, she threw herself over a staircase. She was unsuccessful. Next, she consumed a dubious herbal concoction. Again, she failed. Finally, she illicitly ingested Cyotec, a drug intended for gastric ulcers, only to fail once more. In an article published on October 25, 2009, *The New York Times* profiled the plight of Gina Judilla, a woman reflective of the many desperately seeking to limit the number of mouths to feed in the Philippines. According to the Asian Development Bank, approximately 20 million Filipinos live on less than $1.25 a day,¹ and the inability to financially support a child is documented by the Alan Guttmacher Institute as the main reason why women seek an abortion in the Philippines.²

In contrast to the United States, where the option to obtain a safe abortion is more readily available, Philippine policies force women to resort to clandestine, and often times, unsafe means to terminate a pregnancy (an unsafe abortion is defined by the World Health Organization as “a procedure for terminating an unintended pregnancy carried out either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both”).³


Furthermore, studies speculate that the rate of abortion is heightened due to the restricted accessibility of contraceptives to the Filipino population.⁴

Why are government policies on contraception and family planning in the Philippines extremely limiting? Despite a formalized separation of church and state in the current government, the Catholic Church has had a long-standing influence on Philippine politics, culture, and national identity. After 300 years of Spanish colonial rule, the Catholic principles that were transplanted in the 1500s have firmly been embedded, absorbed, and acculturated into the Philippine psyche. Based on the theology of “natural law” and the Vatican encyclicals *Humanae Vitae* (“Of Human Life”) and *Evangelium Vitae* (“The Gospel of Life”), the Catholic Church opposes any human interference to the gestation and birth of another human being. Accordingly, Philippine policies on reproduction have closely abided the Church’s teachings.

This ideology behind contraception and family planning has, however, run into the realities existing in a developing nation. The Philippines struggles with issues associated with overpopulation and poverty. It likewise struggles to adopt adequate responses to these concerns, such as policies that promote citizens to regulate family size. It is key to note that this struggle is not just a religious and ideological one. Because Catholicism flows within the Philippines’ history and culture, the struggle is

one that also involves fundamental, individual values, as well as national and personal identities for the 80.9% of the Philippine population who are Roman Catholic.\textsuperscript{5}

Mexico shares a history of Spanish colonialism that similarly lasted for 300 years. With Mexico having the one of the largest Catholic population in the world,\textsuperscript{6} Catholic influences thusly also penetrate much of Mexico’s culture and identity. The country, likewise, deals with population and poverty concerns affiliated with the third world. However, Mexico has had better success in tangibly separating church and state in matters of reproductive health care policy. For example, all 32 Mexican states maintain that abortion is legal in cases of rape. An overwhelming majority of states also finds abortion legal when the mother is risking death.\textsuperscript{7} Additionally, Mexico City, the nation’s capital, historically decriminalized first trimester abortions in April 2007.\textsuperscript{8} The Philippines solely tolerates abortion when the mother’s life is in danger. Officially, the country deems all motives for abortion punishable by law.\textsuperscript{9}

This paper will assess how and why the Philippines and Mexico have such disparate polices on family planning, given their commonalities. It will also examine whether or not Mexico’s road to increased accessibility can be adapted in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Fedora Castro, Eduardo Barraza, and Rosaria Taracena, \textit{Leyes Del Aborto En Mexico} (Mexico City: Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida, A.C., 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{8} Organo del Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Decime Septima Epoca, \textit{Gaceta Oficial Del Distrito Federal}, No. 70, April 26, 2007.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Revised Penal Code of the Philippines, art. 256-259.
\end{itemize}
Philippine context. It will do so based the theoretical framework used by Lene Sjørup in analyzing the Vatican’s influence on reproductive health care in the Philippines and Chile. In her study, Sjørup utilizes Roland Robertson’s “global field” model, which examines religion in terms of how human beings relate to their environments.\(^\text{10}\) Sjørup assesses the extent to which the Catholic Church, which she argues to be a global actor, has affected Philippine and Chilean perspectives on family planning by looking at Catholicism’s role within the four dimensions of Robertson’s model: 1) humankind, 2) the nation-state, 3) the international community, and 4) the individual. Through this model, she affirms that the Church has successfully linked itself to human conscience, to the politics of the nation, and discourses with the individual in the Philippines and Chile. By filtering into these levels, the Church substantiated itself as a legitimate player in the formation of reproductive health care climate in both nations.\(^\text{11}\) This paper will adapt and reimagine Robertson’s framework to study and compare the Philippine situation with that of Mexico.

Part I will explore the theologies behind reproduction and how these varying theologies appeal to humankind. It will begin with the Catholic theology that acts as the cornerstone to the Church’s stance on reproduction. This section will also address contradicting arguments by dissenting theologians and their relevance in thinking about existing issues in the Philippines and Mexico.


Part II will address the Church’s role in the Philippines and Mexico as a national entity, as well as discuss the counter-arguments to the Church regarding what is best for the nation-state.

Part III will proceed to analyze the international forces that shape discourses on reproductive health policies and how this global debate has affected discussions in the Philippines and Mexico. The forces discussed will revolve around the two U.N. conferences in Cairo and Beijing, the Millennium Development Goals, and foreign aid supporting family planning initiatives in Mexico and the Philippines.

The paper will touch upon Robertson’s fourth dimension of the individual in Part IV by examining how the Church and the current reproductive environment influence the choices of the women fundamentally affected by the theology, church-state relations, and the voices of the international community. It will also examine how these individual choices have affected society as a whole.

Part V will focus on how the dimensions of humankind, nation-state, the international community, and the individual and their interactions with the Catholic Church have microscopically affected the outcomes of two case studies. The two case studies of interest are the events surrounding: 1) the 2007 reform of Mexico City’s Criminal Code that legalized first trimester abortions in the nation’s capital and 2) the stagnation of House Bill 5043 (HB05043) entitled, “An Act Providing for a National Policy on Reproductive Health, Responsible Parenthood and Population Development.”
By assessing the extent to which the Catholic Church has influenced notions of humankind, has shaped the politics of the Philippines and Mexico, has played a role in the international sphere, and has affected individual choices on family planning, this paper will determine how the Church has shaped, or has been barred from shaping, the reproductive health policies in Mexico and the Philippines. It will conclude that the church-state separation and the reproductive health climate of Mexico are not viable in the Philippines based on how deep the Church has penetrated the four social levels of Robertson’s model.
PART I: HUMANKIND
CHAPTER 1
CATHOLIC MORAL THEOLOGY AND HUMAN REPRODUCTION

The Catholic Church has based its opposition against contraception and abortion on the theological notion of natural law. The Catholic understanding of natural law is premised on Thomas Aquinas’ reflections in *Summa Theologica*, which was written in the 13th century. In this work, Aquinas identifies four types of law: 1) eternal, 2) natural, 3) human, and 4) divine. To understand natural law, one must first understand eternal law. Aquinas bases eternal law on the following principle:

…[T]he whole world is ruled by Divine Providence…that the whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason…And since the Divine Reason’s conception of things is not subject to time but is eternal…therefore it is that this kind of law must be called eternal.¹

He argues that the eternal law is imprinted in all of humankind, for all are created by God. Therefore, the eternal law should be self-evident in every human being, directing him or her towards what is truly good. To further explain natural law, Aquinas references Romans 2:14 of the New Testament, which states, “When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves.” Aquinas claims that through human reason, the Gentiles, as human beings, discerned what was good as opposed to evil without having prescribed laws from the Divine to follow. Human beings have natural inclinations, but it is through the virtue of reason that individuals are able to align their actions with

the eternal law. Identifying eternal law by means of rationality is what Aquinas labels as natural law.²

As talk about reproductive rights became more prominent in the world stage during the 20th century, the Church officially tied notions of natural law with sex and human reproduction in Vatican encyclicals. The Church most notably does this in \textit{Humanae Vitae}, released in 1968, and \textit{Evangelium Vitae}, released in 1995.

\textit{Humanae Vitae} states, “a new and deeper reflection upon the principles of the moral teaching on marriage: a teaching founded on the natural law, illuminated and enriched by divine revelation”³ is needed to understand the fundamental meaning behind sexual relations. The document preaches that sex must only occur within marriage, for entering into marriage is a rational decision that two people make in order to realize God’s plan of love. Within marriage, sex is not an instinctual desire for carnal pleasure. By rationally engaging in marriage, individuals use reason and align the natural law with eternal law. Sex, hence, garners a deeper purpose, that of being both unitive and procreative. In other words, conjugal sex acquires a transformative power to bond husband and wife, spiritually and emotionally, as well as to open the gateway to life. Pope Paul VI declares in the encyclical that union and procreation must remain inseparable aspects of sexual relations. When a couple breaks the unitive and procreative characteristics apart, sex loses “the sense of true mutual

² Ibid., 15.

love and its ordination towards man’s most high calling to parenthood.”

Subsequently, it can be argued that a relationship that procreates, but is not unified, could lead to an environment conducive to the disintegration of the family. If the couple is not unified under marriage, the document supports chastity between a man and a woman who are in a relationship. Conversely, if a couple is unified, but chooses not to procreate, they are denying their most sacred duty – to bear and raise another human being in this world. Contraception is branded as an illegitimate way to regulate birth because it closes a couple off from the possibility of creating life. The document advocates for natural family planning, such as the rhythm method or periodic abstinence, because it “call[s] men back to the observance of the norms of natural law, as interpreted by their constant doctrine, teach[ing] that each and every marriage act…must remain open to the transmission of life.” Furthermore, the encyclical argues that practicing natural methods allows one to perfect the self through his or her practice of self-discipline and commitment to selflessness.

Unlike Humanae Vitae, Evangelium Vitae was released in a world where abortion had been legalized in more parts of the Western world, including that of the United States with the 1973 Supreme Court decision on Roe vs. Wade. It is the most comprehensive, authoritative Vatican document directly addressing the Catholic Church’s position over the issue. Evangelium Vitae begins by declaring that every birth calls into remembrance the birth of Jesus Christ and the completion of the good

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
news. Life is a gift from above, allowing humankind to grow in the fullness of God’s love. Thus, threats to life must be condemned. The encyclical criticizes the investment into scientific research that promotes the regulation of birth through means other than natural methods. It furthermore believes that contraception does not avoid unwanted pregnancies, but rather exacerbates temptations that could lead towards an abortion. The perceived sexual freedom that arises from the accessibility of such options is labeled by the encyclical as a “self-centered concept of freedom.”

Evangelium Vitae acknowledges, “[C]ontraception and even abortion are practised under the pressure of real-life difficulties.” However, it argues that the burdens of life do not excuse individuals from adhering to God’s law, for, at its root, abortion breaks one of most sacred commandments of not killing another human being. Pope John Paul II explicitly states:

I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written Word of God, is transmitted by the Church’s Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

Women who are committed to face all odds and are unconditionally willing to sacrifice for family are regarded as heroes. For all that Humanae Vitae champions in selflessness and self-discipline by practicing chastity and natural family planning,

\[ ^6 \text{Ibid.} \]

\[ ^7 \text{John Paul II,} \ Evangelium Vitae (Rome: The Holy See, 1995). \]

\[ ^8 \text{Ibid.} \]
*Evangelium Vitae* denounces those resorting to abortion as selfish and readily falling into sin.

Vatican statements on the procreative duties of humankind have grown stronger over time. With piercing language that talks of human reason, personal restraint, selflessness, unity, and parenthood, the Catholic Church has made passionate appeals that can resonate with the human spirit. Church officials in Mexico and the Philippines have reiterated such language in local statements, and have done so with sound, local support. For example, on the Sunday before the 2007 vote on decriminalizing abortion, nearly 2,000 people protested against the law’s passing in Mexico City. Mexico City continues to struggle with the law, for stigma remains, especially with health workers who find abortions appalling. Objections reached the level where the government was pushed to review the reform’s constitutionality at the Supreme Court in 2008. A portrait of Catholic support in the Philippines can be painted by the local reaction against the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. On July 25, 1994, a pastoral letter written by the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, was read across the country during mass, which stated, “Our children are being conditioned systematically to adopt a

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contraceptive mentality. Now they are being brainwashed to accept as normal, attractive, and even glamorous certain unnatural, abnormal and perverse sexual relationships and behavior….”¹² A range of 200,000 to one million people responded to the letter’s call, gathering in support at Rizal Park in Luneta on August 14, 1994.¹³ Attendees at the rally included former President Corazon Aquino, mayor of the capital city of Manila, Alfredo Lim, senators, celebrities, and heroes from the People Power Revolution of 1986.¹⁴ As evidenced by the strong, local Catholic opposition in both countries, the Vatican’s words on reproduction clearly speaks to the human condition of many Mexican and the Philippine citizens.

However, it is important to note that the Vatican’s official position on contraception and abortion is not the only Catholic theological position that exists. Explicit statements on the regulation of birth cannot be found in biblical scripture. The Vatican derived its stance from a particular trajectory of thinking that was pushed in the forefront during the course of the Church’s history. Sjørup makes the point that the Roman Catholic Church maintains a universalist mentality, meaning that it firmly believes that its stance is the one and only one that is right. It maintains a hegemonic, absolutist vision of morality. The next chapter will expand upon other Catholic

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frameworks that are also able to appeal to the human condition, some of which can apply to or have already found homes in Mexico and the Philippines.
CHAPTER 2

VARYING CATHOLIC THEOLOGIES REGARDING HUMAN REPRODUCTION AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE MEXICAN AND PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

As mentioned previously, the official Vatican position is not the only existing Catholic theology that rationalizes moral claims on contraception and abortion. The following chapter will review and assess other Catholic interpretations that fittingly address the reproductive concerns in Mexico and the Philippines, with proper consideration of humankind in the context of the times and the development issues of both countries. It will further examine the extent to which these theologies have been adopted by local populations, and how, or if, their impacts have affected sentiments on reproductive health care.

*The Papal Commission’s Majority Report*

*Humanae Vitae* was developed from a report issued by the minority of members of the Pontifical Commission on Population, Family and Birth. The Vatican established this Commission in 1963 to study the question of contraception before releasing an official statement on the matter. After three years of meetings and discussion, the majority of the group’s members produced the report, *Schema Documenti de Responsabili Paternitate* (“Schema for a Document on Responsible Parenthood”), in 1966, two years before the release of *Humanae Vitae*. Reverend Joseph Fuchs, a German Jesuit, Gregorian University in Rome; Reverend Raymond Sigmond, Hungarian Dominican, President of the Institute of Social Science of the
Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas; Reverend Paul Anciaux, Professor at the major seminary of Malines-Brussels, Belgium; Reverend A. Auer, expert on sexual issues, Würzburg, Germany; Reverend Michel Labourdette, O.P., theologian from Toulouse, France; Reverend Pierre de Locht, National Family Pastoral Center, Brussels; and thirteen additional theologians and experts authored the report.¹

The majority document shares many similarities to *Humanae Vitae*. The authors base their views on natural law, noting that couples must trust God’s revelation through it. Couples must continually reason and strive for spiritual perfection. In doing so, they must join in a marriage that is both unitive and procreative in order to fulfill their journey towards righteousness. Those closed off to procreation are rebuked as being hedonistic and egotistic. The report echoes *Humanae Vitae*’s position on abortion, articulating, “These solutions [government solutions for responsible parenthood] have contradicted the moral law in particular by propagating abortion or sterilization.”² Furthermore, the document substantiates much of its claims on the very same Vatican encyclicals that *Humanae Vitae* uses to support its views, such as *Gaudium et Spes* (“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today”) and *Casti Connubii* (“Of Chaste Wedlock”). Hence, the majority document hails from a very close theological trajectory.


Where the majority report differentiates with *Humanae Vitae* is on the permissibility of contraception when a couple is generally open to procreation. It does not believe that every single conjugal act must have procreative intent. Rather, the report supports that every conjugal act must be founded upon mutual love. The moral soundness of regulating birth through natural or contraceptive means should be measured by the “totality of married life and toward the realization of the authentic values of a fruitful matrimonial community,” as opposed to isolated incidents of sexual relations. Yet, a relationship with a completely contraceptive mentality is deemed as self-indulgent. A balance must be established, and the report sees that human control of physical processes is an innate human quality, therefore, suggesting that a couple can utilize contraception to accomplish responsible parenting. The report states:

> The true opposition is not to be sought between some material conformity to the physiological processes of nature and some artificial intervention. For it is natural to man to put under human control what is given by physical nature. The opposition is really to be sought between one way of acting which is contraceptive and opposed to a prudent and generous fruitfulness, and another way which is in an ordered relationship to responsible fruitfulness and which has a concern for education and all the essential, human and Christian values.4

According to the minority document, responsible parenthood must bear in mind the welfare of the couple and the children who are currently or will be in the family, the spiritual environment of the times, and the circumstances that the couple faces. These points are relevant in relation to those wrestling with reproductive decisions in

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Mexico and the Philippines. The cost of supporting a child is a chief concern facing families in these areas. The majority report directly addresses this worry in its criterion for choosing the right regulatory methods for a fruitful union. It states, “…[I]n choosing concretely among means, much depends on what means may be available in a certain region or at a certain time or for a certain couple; and this may depend on the economic situation.”

Further consideration of the different cultural practices throughout the world is promoted in the report as well. Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to keeping in mind that more study is needed to determine how Church teachings can be applied differently in various regions of the world. *Schema Documenti de Responsabili Paternitate* holds in high regard the awareness of the Church to the difficulties of the modern world, but also acknowledges that norms on morality can be driven to extreme levels. Unfortunately, with Pope Paul VI siding with the minority document, a rigid position on contraception that disregards the distinct conditions in a given region has produced an absolutist spiritual environment in Mexico and the Philippines. Yes, there are general principles that appeal to all of humankind, but an evaluation of humankind’s needs must not end there. Teachings must be customized in order to respond accordingly to the unique conditions afflicting different societies. *Humanae Vitae* and *Evangelium Vitae* both address the world in a completely universalist way, and only distinguishes different regions in a polarizing manner – as

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5 Ibid.
either sinful in promoting legislation for contraception or abortion, or on the side of moral law.

*Charles E. Curran and A Theological Discussion on Humanae Vitae*

Reacting to the theological polemics of his century and Pope Pius IX’s enactment of papal infallibility during the First Vatican Council, the historian Sir John Dalberg-Acton wrote, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Although the whole of *Humanae Vitae* and *Evangelium Vitae* are not considered infallible, meaning that the Pope’s words are free from error, its teachings are expected to be applied in an absolute way. Theologian Charles E. Curran and a little more than 600 Catholic scholars were fully aware of this and presented a response counter to *Humanae Vitae* within the same year of the encyclical’s release. Curran’s reaction and thoughts on contraception in following years are in the spirit of loyal dissent. In other words, he believes there is “the need for a pluralism of philosophical approaches in the Christian’s quest for a better understanding of man and his reality. There is no longer ‘one Catholic philosophy.’” He asserts that dissenting only adds to a healthy discourse on and evolution of Church doctrine. Below are his views on *Humanae Vitae* and thoughts to bear in mind when thinking about how conversation on abortion and contraception transpired in Mexico and the Philippines.

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Curran contends that official interpretations of natural law have become diluted in their sole focus on the physicality of natural actions. He argues that the tendency of Aquinas to define natural law on the grounds of biology is influenced by Ulpian, a Greek philosopher. Ulpian premised all of human behavior on the physical processes of nature. Curran acknowledges that Aquinas tried to steer away from this sole concept, but his adoption of Ulpian’s viewpoints led to a notion of natural law that is commonly identified with the human conformity to untouched, biological processes. This understanding is portrayed in *Humanae Vitae* in its emphasis on the procreative intention of the conjugal act. Interfering with a biological process that can lead to conception is considered immoral based upon the physical nature of sex. Curran mirrors *Schema Documenti de Responsabili Paternitate* when he says, “The morality must be viewed in a total human context, and not merely judged according to the physical act itself and the natural effect of the act seen in itself apart from the whole context.” He moreover believes that an inductive approach, or analysis of issues in their own context, is needed to see how moral theology can function in relation to the individuals and the good of an entire community. This paper finds it agreeable that a historical approach, rather than one based on the arrogance of absolute certainty, is necessary to face challenges and successfully triumph over them. Absolutism only creates gridlock and polemics, as evident in Mexico and the Philippines.

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8 Ibid.
Tying reproductive morality to the physical act of sex can be seen in key discourses condemning contraception and abortion in Mexico and the Philippines. Just a month after abortion legislation passed in Mexico City, the Archbishop of Mexico, Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, pronounced in a homily that government officials must be bound by their conscience and support legislation that are inspired by the values of human nature.9 This human nature refers to a physical act of which the Church believes must solely aim towards the creation of another human life. The Archdiocese of Mexico uses the same argument in condemning same-sex unions, for relations in such a coupling do not, by nature, generate children.10 In the Philippines, Cardinal Sin describes the contraceptive mentality as “unnatural, abnormal, and perverse” in the 1994 pastoral letter that was read at all Catholic masses in the country.11 Cardinal Sin links modern family planning methods to what he deems as practices against the rules of nature, which, according to the Archbishop, includes homosexuality, incest, and sodomy.12

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9 Noberto Rivera Carrera, “El Aborto es un Problema del Fundamento de la Salud” (homily, Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, March 15, 2007).

10 Norberto Rivera Carrera, “Pronunciamiento del Cardenal Norberto Rivera Carrera Sobre la Ley que Aprueba las Uniones Homosexuales en el DF” (statement, Archdiocese of Mexico, Mexico City, December 21, 2009).


12 Ibid.
Liberation Theology

To examine the unique conditions in Mexico and Philippines under what Curran calls, a historical inductive method, liberation theology’s appeal to humankind and its role in shaping the reproductive health mentality of both countries will be discussed.

Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian priest, first used the term “liberation theology” in 1971. It is a movement that grew in Latin America as a response to the social injustices propagated by the abuses of power. It champions the oppressed by applying spiritual values to transform current realities, and puts theory into action. Much of its inspiration comes from a major, if not central, theme in both the Old and New Testaments – to lift up the poor, widow, and the orphan. Michael Dodson describes two core strategies of liberation theology as: 1) interpreting biblical literature in light of today’s issues, and 2) organizing communities that aim for social justice under the guidance of clergy.

Liberation theology in Mexico can trace its roots back to Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, a 16th century bishop in Mexico’s southernmost state, Chiapas. He, along with other clergy, defended the rights of the indigenous against Spanish officials of the colonial regime. During the 19th century, Father José Maria Morelos, Father Miguel

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Hidalgo y Costilla, and other Catholic members, pioneered movements that criticized the colonial order and the Church hierarchy. These events were catalysts for Mexico’s independence from Spain in 1821. The mid-20th century bore witness to activities running under the official flag of liberation theology. Mexico could not escape the influence of the liberation movements pervading Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. This period was one of industrial development and growth for the middle class, but the period also exacerbated the conditions of those marginalized in rural areas. The poor thus reacted to fierce abuses, such as the usurpation of land. The 1960s was also a time for religious reevaluation in Latin America. The Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) convened in Medellin, Colombia in 1968 to discuss the effects of Vatican II in Latin America. Many concluded that the Church could no longer work with hierarchical structures that contribute to the economic struggles of the poor. However, future CELAM Conferences in Puebla, Mexico and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republica denounced the official practice of liberation theology because of supposed links to Marxism. This did not suppress bishops who believed in preferential treatment for the poor, and movements in the name of liberation theology continued to spread. Today, Christian Base Communities exist throughout Mexico. These communities try to implement Dodson’s second strategy of liberation theology –

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to build communities that address the particular social ills of their current environments.\textsuperscript{17}

Anthropologist Karen Nadeau refers to these communities in the Philippines as Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC). She dates their origins to friars who stood to defend Filipino natives from colonial oppressors. She reminds her readers not to completely equate church leaders with the abuses of Spanish rule.\textsuperscript{18} Many church officials did succumb to the temptations of power as representatives of the colonial regime. According to Filipino historian Renato Constantino, “the clergy in the islands were more powerful than the king’s official administrators because the latter were so few in number and because the friars played such an important role in the pacification campaign.”\textsuperscript{19} Clergy knew indigenous dialects, lived among the natives, and sustained a tenure of power that was much more permanent than their administrative counterparts. However, historian Horacio de la Costa identifies church leaders like Father Padrina Chirino in Cebu and Bishop Salazar who gravely opposed the abuses of their colleagues.\textsuperscript{20} With the ousting of the Spanish and the incoming of the Americans as a result of the Spanish-American War in 1898, resistance theology continued to

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.


have a place in the Philippines. Yet, BECs are not the only contemporary entities to embrace notions of liberation in the Philippines after Vatican II. In response to the Marcos’ dictatorship, the Philippine Catholic Church adopted Vatican II’s spirit of activism. During the People Power Revolution, it rallied together a movement centered on prayer and civil disobedience to overthrow Ferdinand Marcos. In doing so, the Church showed preferential treatment for an oppressed nation as a whole. The hierarchy itself relativized values from Catholicism to uplift all of Filipino society. In Mexico, the Church hierarchy did not wholeheartedly accepted notions of liberation theology in a relatively public way.

*Liberating Women Through Feminist Theology*

Feminist theology is seen as a form of liberation theology, for it aims to interpret scripture that is free from the patriarchal influence of past centuries. In terms of reproductive rights, feminist theologians believe that theological positions should not define women simply as gendered, reproductive beings, whose primary purpose in life is domesticated motherhood. Theologians like Elina Vuola, Ivone Gebara, and Maria Bidegain want to dispel the mentality that women must feel shame or guilt by not fulfilling their so-called natural obligations. Rather, the body must be celebrated. Examining the specificities of the reproductive debate in Mexico and the Philippines can be further supplemented by looking at feminist theology, in addition to liberation theology. The interplay in addressing the plights of the poor, the colonized,
the oppression of women, and the realities of the third world will be conducive to looking at the unique issues that frame discussions in both countries.

Feminist theology was first formally discussed in Mexico in 1979, during the same time as the CELAM conference. A group of Latin American, female theologians gathered at a meeting themed, “Latin American Women, Church, and Theology.”21 These women summoned theologians to integrate the female experience into the framework of liberation theology. In 1986, feminist theologians from around the world assembled in Mexico to formulate theological methods to conduct work on the issues of women of developing nations.22 However, Vuloa remarks that feminist theology must attain a more prominent platform in the 21st century debate on the reproductive issues of Latin American women. She criticizes that liberation theology has greatly ignored the concerns of third world women in its emphasis on the political, economic, and social conditions of the marginalized labor force. Even Latin American feminist theology has been relatively quiet on the issue, for it has focused upon the patriarchal effects on doctrine and symbology.23

In Philippines, feminist theologians began to appear in the 1970s, and most notably during the People Power Movement, which brought an end to President

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22 Ibid.

Ferdinand Marcos’ dictatorship.\textsuperscript{24} The two most well respected feminist theologians in the country are Mary John Mananzan and Virginia Fabella. Their work, although largely groundbreaking in terms of Asian feminist theology, have also avoided direct discourse on sexual ethics and reproductive rights.

Feminist theology is a suitable place to engage in productive discussion about the reproductive issues of both countries. Feminist theologians must take a more sizeable role in the debate. However, while conducting work to link secular feminist movements and liberation theology, theologian Rosemary Radford Reuther witnessed that Catholic feminist theologians feared condemnation from Catholic Church for involving themselves with reproductive issues.\textsuperscript{25} However, if Mexico and the Philippines are to steer clear from polarized sides and absolutist arguments, both feminists and the Catholic Church must find a stage in which the sensitivities of each side are respected. Feminist theology prides itself for being conscientious of the concerns of women and has made efforts to detach doctrine from the physicality of the female sex, while respecting the virtues of the Catholic faith. The female expression of liberation theology is a sound forum for not only healthy discourse on reproductive rights, but for effective praxis, like movements organized by BECs, in order to develop solutions that are customized to the Mexican and Philippine contexts.

\textsuperscript{24} Pui-lan Kwok, \textit{Introducing Asian Feminist Theology} (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000).

Conclusions

As noted in the previous chapter, Church doctrine on contraception and abortion is rooted in the notion of natural law. However, natural law has been misconstrued in Vatican encyclicals in its focus on the biological processes of sex. The Vatican has voiced its theological positions in an absolutist manner, ignoring the distinct reproductive health conditions of humankind in relative regions of the world. Other Catholic theologies exist that criticize the Church’s pronounced emphasis on the physicality of conjugal acts and castigate its hegemonic viewpoints. Feminist theology, which has roots in liberation theology, is a way in which discussion and action can incorporate the trials of the marginalized women in developing countries. Yet, its involvement in reproductive issues is sorely lacking. Part II of this paper will examine the history of the Mexican and Philippine nation-states to show how government policies have or have not broken from the absolutist stance of the Roman Catholic Church on reproductive health care.
PART II: THE NATION-STATE
CHAPTER 1

THE ROLE AND THE REACTIONS TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE MIDST OF BUILDING A MEXICAN NATION-STATE

Despite being a part of the past, culture, and identity of many Mexican citizens, the Roman Catholic Church has had a long-standing battle against state authority. Since the colonial era, there has been a movement to wean the country off from the Catholic control that was established by the Spanish Crown of the 1500s. Once Mexico won its independence, the tides of history placed people in power who deemed the Church’s presence as a reverberating symbol of colonial oppression. As a result, a significant amount of anti-clerical legislation has been passed over the years, consequently building a nation-state that has established a tangible separation between church and state. Many have argued that the effects of anti-clerical laws have gone so far as to produce a religiously discriminatory sentiment against the Church. This environment has enabled advocates for reproductive health to have a more prominent voice than the Catholic Church in government policy. Chapter 1 will review the role of the Catholic Church in building the Mexican nation-state and the anti-clerical reactions that have allowed for a political environment that is more open to the reproductive rights of Mexican women.

*Early Colonial Era*

At the time in which the first settlers arrived in Mexico, the Spanish Crown was ruled by a Catholic monarchy. The Papal Bulls of 1493 provided religious provisions
to spread Catholicism alongside Spain’s conquests for territory.¹ Francisco Hernandez led the first troop of Spanish Conquistadores to Mexico in 1517 with the intent to both expand the empire and the Catholic faith. The first permanent missionaries arrived shortly after in 1523.²

To successfully convert the indigenous population, clerics tried to customize the Catholic faith to fit native customs. According to historian Burton Kirkwood, clerics merged Aztec elements into their teaching of Catholicism in a process known as syncretism.³ Despite showing an early awareness for local culture, the missionaries nevertheless worked to replace existing religions with the Catholic faith. Respect for indigenous practices ended in 1569, when King Philip II established the Holy Office of the Inquisition and forbade clerics to blend Christianity with native practices.⁴ This act is reflective of the hegemonic dominance that the Crown and the Church imposed in Mexico in following years.

The encomienda system was established to organize natives in a designated area under colonial authority and to be evangelized into the Catholic faith. A social hierarchy grew out of this system, placing Peninsulares, or Spanish-born authorities, at


the top echelon of society and situating the natives in society’s lower class. To subjugate the indigenous population, natives paid tribute and were forced to become laborers to meet financial and, often times, debt obligations. The encomienda system was replaced with haciendas, with the passage of the New Laws of 1542. This shift can largely be attributed to Bartolome de las Casas and his fight against native injustices within encomiendas. Unfortunately, the hacienda further perpetuated class differences and provided colonial authorities with more social stability.\(^5\)

Serving as the spiritual force that glued the natives and ruling authorities alike, the Catholic Church was exempted from paying taxes. Fueros, or privileges bestowed by the Crown, also allowed the Church to have judicial systems distinct from civil courts. Church power was further enforced by generous landholdings granted by the Spanish Crown. Historian John Schwaller ascribes most of the Church’s earnings to tithes on the agriculture that was produced on Church land.\(^6\)

*The Colony and Bourbon Reforms*

In 1700, King Charles II of Spain died without a direct heir to the Crown and the Spanish Empire. Philip of Anjou, the French-born grandson of Charles’ sister,


\(^6\) John Frederick Schwaller, *Origins of Church Wealth in Mexico: Ecclesiastical Revenues and Church Finances, 1523-1600* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press).
Maria Theresa of Spain, succeeded the deceased king. From the House of Bourbon in France, he became the first Bourbon king of Spain.\(^7\)

During this time, the Enlightenment was pervading much of Europe. The Age of Reason and the advancement of science and technology led thinkers to question religious ideologies. Society was becoming more secularized. The Bourbon king brought the spirit of the Enlightenment to Spain, and, in a matter of time, anti-clerical reforms began seeping into the New World.\(^8\) The Church’s wealth and special privileges were deemed counter-productive to a coherent operation of the colony. Its power and independence, especially that of the Jesuits, were seen as a threat to the Crown. The Jesuit order was, hence, expelled from the colony in 1767. In addition, the Church’s courts and the exemption from taxation were repealed. In 1804, the Royal Law of Consolidation confiscated Church lands and authorized the government to auction them off to individuals.\(^9\)

More change for the Church, both in Europe, and in the Americas, occurred after invasion of Napoleon into Spain in 1808. Napoleonic occupation led to the creation of the Spanish Constitution of 1812. This document has been called the

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\(^7\) Brian R. Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 110-111.

\(^8\) Derek Davis, “Introduction,” in *Church-State Relations and Religious Liberty in Mexico: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Derek Davis (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, Baylor University, 2002), 5.

cornerstone for liberalism in Spain and the greater part of Europe.\textsuperscript{10} Although the Constitution of 1812 kept Catholicism as the state religion, much of the Church’s power was reduced in Spain.\textsuperscript{11} For the Mexican colony, this meant that colonial clerics had a weakened ally in Spain, and that the liberal sentiment spreading throughout Europe and the Americas was attaining more legitimacy. Anxieties amongst conservatives and the Church in Mexico consequently intensified.

\textit{Mexico’s Road to Independence}

Manuel Hidalgo y Castillo has been referred to as the Father of the Mexican War of Independence. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the origins of liberation theology can be rooted in his efforts against colonial bureaucracy and Church hierarchy. Hidalgo could not escape the influences of the Enlightenment as a clerical student. Although he remained very devoted to the Catholic faith, he questioned and continued to question traditional church practices into his adulthood. For example, he shunned the privileged lifestyle typical of the priests of his time. He also challenged Church teachings on the absolute authority of the Pope, the virgin birth of Jesus, and the celibacy of spiritual leaders. Witnessing the destitution of his parishioners in the town of Dolores, Hidalgo taught the natives self-reliant techniques in agriculture and manufacturing so that they could be less dependent on the Spanish economic system.


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
Doing such violated laws protecting the commercial interests of the Spaniards. Tired of the colonial abuses and the politics occurring in both the colony and Spain, Hidalgo led an insurgent movement in 1810 that amassed 50,000 soldiers in the town of Celaya, 15,000 in Valladolid, and more than 100,000 in Mexico City during the Battle of Monte de las Cruces. Early in 1811, Hidalgo was captured, excommunicated, and beheaded. Father Jose Maria Morelos y Pavon picked up where Hidalgo left off, only to witness the same end as his predecessor in December 1815.

Augustin Iturbide used to his advantage the political instability initiated by the Bourbon reforms, the reactions to the French occupation of the Spanish Crown in Europe, and the colonial insurgent movements to rally behind him a rebellion that was strong enough to defeat the royal army on September 27, 1821. Independence for Mexico was won. The Catholic Church supported Iturbide largely because Iturbide declared that he would establish Catholicism as the one true religion for Mexico, and because Iturbide restored much of what was taken away in previous years. However, Kirkwood suggests that Fathers Hidalgo and Morelos would most likely have been surprised by Iturbide’s aims after gaining independence, for Iturbide was more concerned about equating the elite status of the Creoles, or Spaniards born in the New

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World, to that of the Peninsulares. Yet, due to his alliance with clergy, Iturbitude’s desire for elitist power and the instability of his government were closely affiliated with Catholic Church.

The Reform Laws of the 1850s and the End of the 19th Century

From the year of liberation to the 1850s, Mexico went through short-lived governments that ranged from monarchies to a parliamentary system. By 1855, much of Mexico’s failure to achieve stability as a nation-state was attributed to the Church. Also by this time, political factions had become solidified between liberals and conservatives. The first major reform to reduce the influence of the Church since independence was Ley Juarez, which was passed in November 1855. The biggest proponent of the law was Benito Juarez, the Minister of Justice under President Juan Alvarez. This law restricted the *fueros* of the Church and prohibited the separation of civil and clerical courts. Ley Lerdo continued liberal policies against the Church in 1856. This law authorized the selling of Church land and forbade the Church to own any future real estate. In 1857, these liberal reforms were engraved into the nation’s legislative backbone, the Constitution. This document was the first to allow freedom

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15 Ibid., 86.
16 Ibid., 89.
17 Ibid., 101.
18 Ibid.
for all religions in Mexico.\textsuperscript{19} Later that year, Ley Iglesias furthered polices of anticlericism by overseeing church fees from the poor and abolishing charges for baptisms, marriages, and funeral services.\textsuperscript{20} Legislation passed in the summer of 1857 that allowed civil marriages, instituted a civil registry for births, unions, and deaths, reduced religious holidays, and prohibited religious celebrations outside of church buildings.\textsuperscript{21} Tensions between liberals and conservatives culminated in the War of Reform, which began in 1858. At the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, conservatives managed to institute a monarchy, with Archduke Maximilian of Austria as Emperor. Sadly, conservatives were unable to undo the changes of the Reform Laws. With the liberals back in control, Mexico terminated its diplomatic tie with the Vatican in 1867.\textsuperscript{22} Church-state relations achieved some stability with the coming of President Portifico Diaz in 1876. Diaz “appeased liberals by vigorously maintaining the anticlerical laws on the books, but also pacified the church by not enforcing the laws.”\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Derek Davis, “Introduction,” in \textit{Church-State Relations and Religious Liberty in Mexico: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives}, ed. Derek Davis (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, Baylor University, 2002), 7.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Burton Kirkwood, \textit{The History of Mexico} (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000),102.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Brian R. Hamnett, \textit{A Concise History of Mexico} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 164.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Derek Davis, “Introduction,” in \textit{Church-State Relations and Religious Liberty in Mexico: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives}, ed. Derek Davis (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, Baylor University, 2002), 8.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Church and State Relations in the Early 20th Century

Diaz was overthrown in 1910, initiating the period known as the Mexican Revolution. Those seeking a more liberal direction for the country came into power and formulated the Constitution of 1917, which put a cap to the number of priests in specific Mexican regions, barred foreign priests from holding clerical offices, and outlawed ecclesiastical rights and teachings in private schools and homes. It was the most aggressive anti-clerical document of its time, and sought to not only reinforce but to strengthen the terms of the 1857 Constitution. The document of 1917 currently holds as the standing Constitution in Mexico. The Calles Law of 1926 reformed the penal codes, heralding harsh punishments for violators of the Constitution. Religious officials and their supporters reacted by waging the Cristero Rebellion. Clerics suspended religious ceremonies nation-wide with the Pope’s permission, and armed rebels instigated violent campaigns for three years. President Emilio Portes Gil put an end to the rebellion by promising to sustain anti-clerical laws without actual enforcement.24

Pacification of Church and State Relations

Increased pacification between church and state may have resulted from sympathies ignited by the pernicious and long-standing malevolence against the Church. Starting from the 1950s, the Catholic Church gradually attained former rights. For example, the Church could indirectly own property through the creation of private

24 Ibid., 9.
25 Ibid.
organizations, clerical instruction could commence in parochial schools, and religious
services could be held outside of church buildings. Pope John Paul II’s visit to Mexico
in 1979 also pacified some tensions in the country.26 Nevertheless, animosities
persisted. By this time, the formal political factions consisted of the Institutional
Revolutionary Party (PRI), which is made up of liberals, and the National Action Party
(PAN), which houses conservatives. The election of 1986 was tainted with rumors of
election fraud. PRI’s supposed victories propelled the Archbishop of the city of
Chihuahua to boycott and suspend masses. Although of the PRI, President Carlos
Salinas professed that he would reform church and state relations in order to minimize
hostilities. The gesture of Salinas to invite clergy to his inauguration marked the first
ecclesiastical presence at a government function in six decades. After the Pope’s
second visit in 1990, President Salinas flew to the Vatican in July 1991. At his State of
the Union four months later, he called for an abolishment of anticlerical amendments
in the Constitution. In 1992, several changes passed as legislation and Mexico
reestablished diplomatic relations with the Holy See.27 In spite of this, calls to regulate
Church power were not completely silenced. For instance, clerics still could not hold
an elected office, publicly denigrate the government, or own mass media outlets.28

26 Ibid.


28 Derek Davis, “Introduction,” in Church-State Relations and Religious Liberty in Mexico:
Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Derek Davis (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-
State Studies, Baylor University, 2002), 11.
However, in a historic move, Vicente Fox of the conservative PAN party was elected President in 2000. This election ended the PRI’s 71 years of government control. As the first openly practicing Catholic head-of-state since 1910, Fox aligned much of his agenda to appease the Church.\textsuperscript{29} Felipe Calderon continued PAN’s time in power by being elected President in 2006.

\textit{Political Environment Leading to Legislation on Reproductive Rights}

Mexico’s movement towards secularization has a history that dates back to the Bourbon Reforms of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. The pronounced efforts to separate church and state opened the forum to discuss issues of reproductive health care more so in relation to the Philippines. For example, the first state penal codes, which were instituted in 1871, at the initial stages of Mexico’s most forceful campaign for liberalism, allowed abortions when a woman’s life was in danger. The codes also distinctively differentiated abortion from infanticide.\textsuperscript{30} In 1917, the same year in which the Constitution was established by a liberal administration, the first family law reform was drafted. Although it did not directly take a position on contraception or abortion, the law’s removal of illegitimate labels on children who were born out of wedlock, and the allowance for common law marriages prompted pamphlets on family planning to circulate throughout Mexico.\textsuperscript{31} From 1970-2000, when the PRI held most of Mexico’s

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
elected offices, state laws liberalized their provisions on abortion, ultimately leading to the legalization of abortion in cases of rape in all 32 states. As of 2008, 30 states permit abortion when accidents induce abortion; 29 states allow for it when the mother is in danger of death; 14 states condone abortion when the fetus has genetic deficiencies or is malformed; 11 states permit it when there is serious damage to the health of the mother; 11 states condone abortion if a woman is artificially inseminated without her consent; the state of Yucatan allows abortion when a woman who has at least three children cannot afford to have another child; and one state, the Federal District, or what is also known as Mexico City, allows for an abortion if a woman chooses to terminate a pregnancy within twelve weeks of gestation.

Conversely, conservatives and the Catholic Church have also won political battles. The states of Morelos, Baja California, Compeche, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Nayarit, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Ro, San Luis Potosi, Sonora, Yucatan, and Veracruz have amended laws that conclude that life begins at conception. The dispute over abortion is hotly debated, as it is in much of the world. In comparison to the Philippines, however, the enduring push for the separation between the Catholic Church and the state in Mexico’s history has allowed more room for reproductive rights to be acknowledged in government policies.

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32 Ibid., 159.


The events that transpired in Mexico’s history pitted the Catholic Church in a polemic against the government. A different set of historical events situated the Church in close alliance with the Filipino people and their governing bodies. Although a formal separation between church and state exists, the Church’s role in shaping much of the Philippines’ national identity has made it difficult to pull the Church apart from government affairs, enabling Catholic officials to influence modern politics. What this means for the reproductive health debate is that Catholic ideologies have often suppressed policies advocating for reproductive freedom. This chapter will review how the Catholic Church became such an integral player in molding the Philippine nation-state. It will also assess how the close tie of the Church to the government has made an impact on reproductive health policies in the Philippines.

The Colonial Era

The Europeans first stepped foot on Philippine soil in 1521, but it was not until 1565 did the Spanish conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi have an official mandate to evangelize the natives into Christianity under the Spanish Crown. Historian Steven Shirley labels the initial conversion of the indigenous population as a “tremendous success.” With only 267 friars, approximately 200,000 natives were baptized by

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1590.² This and future successes can largely be attributed to the fact that the Filipinos were instructed with a Catholic education through their native languages. The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands.³ When the Spaniards arrived, natives were isolated from each other, establishing their own languages and systems of tribal organization. Catholicism was a way to develop cultural and political hegemony that was manageable for colonial governance.⁴ For those colonized, it cultivated a shared Catholic identity with neighboring islands, despite differences in speech. Hence, the inception of the Philippines – the grouping of the islands into one cohesive entity – will forever be linked to the Catholic indoctrination of the indigenous peoples. In contrast to colonial Mexico, whose Holy Office of the Inquisition prohibited the merging of native customs with Catholic practices, the Philippines’ first bishop, Domingo de Salazar, a student of Bartolome de las Casas of Mexico, called for a synod, or a council of priests, authorizing Catholic teachings to be relayed in the tongues of the


indigenous. Much of the dialects in modern Philippines exist today because the colonial Church preserved the use of native languages in its catechismal activities.

The political organization of the Philippine colony was similar to that of Mexico. Natives were grouped into reducciones, or native communities subjugated under colonial authority and concentrated around a religious center. These reducciones evolved into encomiendas and haciendas. According to Renato Constantino, however, the goods generated from this feudalistic system were not as profitable as other colonies of New Spain. This compelled the Crown to delegate less colonial authorities in the Philippines, leaving church officials at the head of many communities. As in Mexico, some Spanish friars defended native rights, and others succumbed to the corruption of power. The national hero of the Philippines, Jose Rizal, exposed the gravity of Church abuses in his novel, Noli Me Tangere, which was published in 1887. Rizal’s work is considered to be the most monumental literary piece in Philippine history. It generated a spirit of national identity that was not imposed upon, but rather engendered by the Filipinos themselves. The friar abuse that culminated over the years thusly contributed to the catalytic force generating an indigenous revolution against colonial rule.

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Revolution and the Fight Against Spanish Rule

The Cavite Mutiny of 1872 was a prelude to the revolution that began in 1896. It is key to note here that anti-friar sentiments were mostly directed towards Spanish friars at the time. Filipino clergy members vied for independence alongside ilustrados, or native intellectuals like Jose Rizal, and other compatriots seeking freedom. Shirley makes the point that the revolution, for many, was not against the Catholic faith, itself.\(^8\) By making this distinction, it is important to acknowledge that indigenous clergy members played an important role in the initial formation of the Philippine nation-state. The Cavite Mutiny is a good example of the leadership of native-born clerics in the fight for independence and nationalization of the Church. Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora, also known collectively as Gomburza, were suspected of encouraging the 1872 uprising of 200 Filipinos.\(^9\) Their arrest and execution by Spanish officials are commemorated in Jose Rizal’s sequel to *Noli Me Tangere, El Filibusterismo.*

However, the nationalistic intentions of Filipino priests were eventually clouded by general sentiments of anti-clericalism. John N. Schumacher notes that once Filipino clergy and initial leaders of insurgents were silenced after the Cavite Mutiny, lay students who were educated in Europe took up the movement for resistance. This


\(^9\) Ibid.
generation was largely influenced by the anti-clerical ideals burgeoning in Europe.\textsuperscript{10} Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo, the two main leaders of the revolution, were freemasons that desired a more subordinate role for the Church.

Despite the secular mentality of many of the revolution’s leaders, there remained devout Catholics who acknowledged that the rise of nationalism must be credited to Filipino priests. Leaders who sympathized with the Church wanted to protect the rights of religious authority and nationalize the Church, not entirely break away from the ecclesiastical institution. Their sympathies were within reason, for Filipino priests were indeed a major force in rallying the people behind the revolution.

Schumacher states:

\ldots[T]he Filipino clergy played a large role in sustaining Revolutionary morale, and a number of them took part in the deliberations carried on at the highest levels of Revolutionary leaders…Though one or other of the Filipino priests spoke against the Revolution in the beginning, before long all took part in exhorting the people to support it, whether in church sermons or in private conversations. It was in this respect that they were as a group most important to the Revolutionary government.\ldots\textsuperscript{11}

Once the Philippines declared independence from Spain on June 1898, dispute over a unified or separate government relationship with the Church still remained. During the drafting of the first constitution at the Malolos Congress, the primary vote to separate church and state ended in a tie. In a second round of deliberations, the separatists


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 23.
broke the gridlock with just a single vote.\textsuperscript{12} Despite the victory, the exceptionally close vote reflected the pronounced Catholic presence among government officials, and foreshadowed the strength of the Catholic Church’s influence in future politics.

\textit{U.S. Occupation}

The hopes of the Malolos Constitution had to wait as soon as the United States defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Filipinos fought hard to free themselves from further colonial rule against the Americans in 1899, but the U.S. acquired the Philippines upon their victory and its capture of Aguinaldo. In their initial observation of their new acquisition, the Americans concluded in a commission report that the Philippines’ social infrastructure was weak and that the Filipinos were unprepared to govern themselves.\textsuperscript{13} With a culture that divided the affairs of church and state, the U.S. was adamant about transferring its vision for government and religious freedom to implement their notions for progress in the Philippines. Trying to do so in a country that had close church-state relations for more than 300 years proved to be overwhelmingly arduous for the Americans.

The first mandate to effectively separate church and state in the Philippines was the Organic Act of 1902. To subdue remnant unrest from the Revolution and the Philippine-American War, William Howard Taft, the first Governor-General of the Philippines, recommended that friars be removed from Philippine soil, for he noticed

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\textsuperscript{13} Renato Constantino, \textit{Philippines: A Past Revisited, Vol. 1} (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Services, 1975), 243.
many resistant movements rallying behind the Church. He was also a proponent of the Cooper Bill, which called for the American purchase of friar lands, and the reselling of property to the Filipinos. The U.S. also instituted a public school system that many Catholics criticized as hiring more Protestant teachers and eliminating religious instruction. In spite of U.S. efforts, Taft recognized, “…the vast majority of the population still needed and held affection toward their Catholic faith.”\(^{14}\) The U.S. resorted to using this lingering affection to their advantage, by utilizing it “to foster pro-Americanism, making the United States’ colonial occupation more tolerable to the Philippines.”\(^{15}\) The U.S. executed this by ascribing itself with the removal of corrupt Spanish friars and the increase of training native Church officials. By 1917, the U.S. left Filipinos in charge of most religious matters in the Philippines.\(^{16}\) American efforts were able to weaken the tie between church and state to some degree, but through it all, the Church remained very relevant in mobilizing the Filipinos to shape the evolving politics of the nation.

The 1930s brought a period of more self-governance for the Filipinos. Manuel Quezon, the Senate President of the Philippines, secured the passing of the Tydings-McDuffle Law in Washington, D.C. This enabled the Philippines to establish a Commonwealth before its independence, which was guaranteed by the U.S. through

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 38.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.

\(^{16}\) John N. Schumacher, “Church and State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Church and State: The Philippine Experience* (Manila: Loyola Papers Board of Editors, 1978), 53.
the Jones Law of 1916.\textsuperscript{17} The Commonwealth’s Constitution allowed for religious freedom, but did not explicitly include a provision for the separation of church and state.\textsuperscript{18} This feature sets the document apart from the Constitutions of 1898, 1973, and 1987. Shirley believes that it is because the authors of the Constitution were Roman Catholic, calling it “the product of the finest Catholic minds assembled from the nation’s parishes and universities.”\textsuperscript{19} Schumacher claims that it is because both sides of the church-state debate were reaching a new equilibrium.\textsuperscript{20} A union of church and state had passed the point of practicality and the hostilities of anti-clericalism had waned by this time. Both assessments portray that complete secularization of the state was far from being accomplished by the mid-twentieth century. The Philippines finally received its full independence after World War II in 1946, with the Commonwealth’s Constitution as its cornerstone. The Constitution of 1935 remained the foundation of the country until 1973, when a dictatorship ruled the land, subsequently triggering an unprecedented rise of Church involvement in Filipino politics.

\textit{Marcos vs. Sin}

The personalities and ideologies of two men clashed head to head in the 1970s, generating one of the most explosive and dynamic periods in Philippine politics.

\textsuperscript{17} Renato Constantino, \textit{Philippines: A Past Revisited, Vol. 1} (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Services, 1975), 332.

\textsuperscript{18} Republic of the Philippines, 1935 Constitution.


\textsuperscript{20} John N. Schumacher, “Church and State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” \textit{Church and State: The Philippine Experience} (Manila: Loyola Papers Board of Editors, 1978), 61.
It all began when Ferdinand Marcos was elected president in 1965. At this time, the economy was on the rise, democratic stability was sustained, and social development was growing. Not only was the Philippines proceeding on a promising route, the Philippines was a leading force in the developing world. Policy analyst William H. Overholt states:

… [T]he Philippines' average economic growth rates exceeded all of Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and South Korea… Democracy in the Philippines seemed far more complete and deeply rooted than in India, Malaysia, Colombia, and Venezuela. The press was freer than elsewhere. Two parties regularly alternated in office. There were no political prisoners or other human rights abuses. The democratic parties had deep roots in nearly every village, and their patronage system integrated an extraordinary diversity of competing regional and ethnic groups.\(^{21}\)

With a brazen personality and self-projected sense of heroics and destiny, Marcos ascended into the presidency with promises to further build the economy and bolster the country’s infrastructure. He succeeded in building more roads, schools, and hospitals, but at the cost of mass spending and disenfranchising those in rural areas.\(^ {22}\) Whether his previous successes were enough for reelection or whether rumors of election fraud were true, Marcos was able to secure a second term in 1969. This term was tainted with economic turmoil, student protest, and increased Cold War fears over Communism. The peso became increasingly devalued and economic growth decelerated. Much of this was attributed to the embezzlement of public funds by


Marcos and his wife Imelda.\textsuperscript{23} This, in turn, exacerbated the conditions of the poor, who found solace in a Catholic Church that had yet to challenge the exploitation of the Marcos regime.

Cardinal Sin entered the picture in 1974. Martial law had already been in place for two years. The civil liberties of the people and the freedom of the press were suspended. A curfew was implemented and enforced not only by local police, but also by a military that was expanded under martial law. Crony capitalism took place, and political enemies of Marcos were largely exiled.\textsuperscript{24} Cardinal Sin’s arrival to the Philippines gave the Catholic Church a powerful voice for which to finally raise vehement opposition against the abuses of Marcos’ despotism. Open condemnation for the government from the Church was first heard in a mass vigil on September 1, 1974. Over 5,000 people heeded the Archbishop’s call to unite in prayerful resistance.\textsuperscript{25} In the following years after this vigil, Cardinal Sin continued to encourage the Filipinos to declare hopes through prayer and execute civil disobedience to topple the autocratic government. Under the guidance of the Catholic Church, a resounding energy escalated by the 1980s, and, in 1983, a defining moment transformed this energy into an unstoppable force.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} Steven Shirley, \textit{Guided by God} (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2004), 57.
People Power Revolution

Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino was assassinated on August 21, 1983. He was killed by one of Marcos’ men at the Manila International Airport upon his return from exile. As one of Marcos’ most formidable foes, Aquino had made the decision to come back and finally do something about the reign of terror. 26 Although he was cut short of his mission, Aquino’s death instigated a series of events that perhaps made a quicker and more forceful ousting of the Marcos administration than he would have ever anticipated.

As the mastermind of the People Power Revolution, the Church paralleled Aquino’s death to the death of Jesus Christ, thus linking religious sentiments to political fervor. Shirley states:

…Ninoy Aquino was the fallen savior who wished his fate could be altered by God but realized it could not….His Golgoatha [where Jesus is said to have been crucified] was the Manila airport and his cross was the tarmac where he, like Jesus, was betrayed by his own people and executed by their corrupt government. 27

Furthermore, his wife, Corazon Aquino, was portrayed as the Virgin Mary, mourning after her beloved savior. 28 Such imagery powerfully resonated with the Filipino people. Corazon Aquino embraced her new role. Being a devout Catholic, she often sought the advice of Cardinal Sin. With her as the Church’s champion and chosen

26 Ibid., 68.
27 Ibid., 71.
28 Ibid.
leader to overthrow the government, the people had a framework in which to mobilize. Pressured to hold a snap election by the people and the U.S., which still provided aid to uphold democracy in the Philippines, Marcos opened the polls on February 7, 1986. When Marcos was declared the winner, cries of election fraud erupted in the Philippines and in the U.S. From February 22-25th crowds gathered in protest. Over three million people flooded the streets. On February 25th, Marcos fled the Philippines, allowing Corazon Aquino to claim her place as President.

The vital role of the Church in leading the Revolution and guiding Corazon Aquino into the presidential office did more than just revitalize the relevancy of the Church in politics. It buried itself into the heart of the modern nation-state. Aquino once again looked to the guidance of the Church in drafting the Constitution of 1987, the framework that stands to this day. While the document officially separates church and state to pacify religious minorities within the country, the Constitution is amenable to the Church’s vision for the country. To uphold its religious notions about family, the Church’s antagonistic stance towards abortion is solidified in Article 2, Section 12, which states:

The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. The natural and primary right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency

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30 Ibid.

and the development of moral character shall receive the support of the Government.\textsuperscript{32}

Article 15, Section 3 further supports this position with the provision that “[t]he State shall defend the right of spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions and the demands of responsible parenthood.”\textsuperscript{33} Aquino’s presidency marks the start of a Catholic Church that is heavily involved in modern politics, especially in terms of family planning and access to reproductive health care.

Repercussions for the Reproductive Health Debate

Ferdinand Marcos was aware of the social, economic, and developmental problems affiliated with the rise in population. The regulation of population size and initiatives for family planning were situated as top priorities in his political agenda. In 1967, he joined other signatories by endorsing the United Nations Declaration on Population, which stated, “[T]he population problem must be recognized as a principal element in long-range national planning if governments are to achieve their economic goals and fulfill the aspirations of the people.”\textsuperscript{34} Two years after, Marcos set up the Commission on Population (POPCOM) to conduct studies and make policy recommendations on how to manage population growth. At his State of the Nation address of 1970, the President announced that national family planning was to become

\begin{itemize}
\item [33] Republic of the Philippines, 1987 Constitution, art. 15, sec. 3.
\end{itemize}
official policy. His goals for the policy included educating the public about the
dangers of rapid population increases, relaying information about birth control, and
providing reproductive services, especially in destitute and rural pockets of the
country. The official legislation was instituted in 1971 through the Republic Act
6365. Once martial law was declared in 1972, Marcos expanded his family planning
program by strengthening the POPCOM’s role and raising its annual funds from 4.5
million pesos to 15 million pesos. Presidential Decree No.79 ordered health
professionals who had been trained and authorized by POPCOM to provide sanctioned
contraceptives to patients seeking them. Marcos embedded his initiatives in Article
15, Section 10 of the Constitution of 1973, which declares, “It shall be the
responsibility of the State to achieve and maintain population levels most conducive to
the national welfare.” In the years following, Marcos aggressively implemented other
steps, such as amending the Internal Revue Code to allow tax exemptions for only up
to four children, permitting the use of sterilization, lifting custom duties on family
planning supplies, mandating private employers to provide family planning services for
female employees, allowing for oral contraceptives to be available without a


36 Alejandro N. Herrin, “Development of the Philippines’ Family Planning Program: The Early
and Programs, ed. Warren C. Robinson and John A. Ross (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2007),
280.

37 Ibid.

38 Republic of the Philippines, 1973 Constitution, art. 15, sec. 10.
prescription, requiring those seeking a marriage license to receive education on family planning, and authorizing local governments to pay for all projects dealing with population and responsible parenthood. In the midst of all these activities, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) denounced the government for advocating practices antagonistic to natural family planning.39

Aquino put a stop to Marcos’ plan for population control. Having close ties to the Catholic Church, her family planning initiatives faithfully adhered to the Church’s support for the natural family planning methods, as seen in the Constitution of 1987. In fact, she shifted the political focus from family planning to family well-being. She placed Mita Pardo de Tavera, a staunch conservative, at the head of POPCOM. Statistics show that once Aquino ascended into power, health personnel promoting family planning decreased from 10,000 to 200, and couples using birth control dropped from 45% in 1986 to 36% in 1988.40 Aquino was pushed to partially build back family planning initiatives because the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) suspended funds in 1990, thus motivating the Philippine government to carry more of the weight in terms of family planning.41 Nevertheless, natural family planning was emphasized in a much higher regard than other contraceptive methods.


41 Ibid.
When Fidel Ramos became President in 1992, the Catholic Church struggled with having a Protestant as head-of-state. Ramos pledged to revitalize the family planning program by aiming to reduce the growth rate below 2%, hiring Juan Flavier, a strong proponent for reproductive rights, as Secretary of the Department of Health, and opening the range of available contraceptive methods. The tension between church and state over matters of reproductive care reached its peak at the U.N. Conferences in Cairo and Beijing, which will be further discussed in Part III of this paper. Towards the end of Ramos’s presidency, tensions over family planning cooled once Ramos realized that opposition from the Church would not dissipate. For example, he instated Carmencita Reodica as the new Secretary of Health in 1996, who vowed to give equal consideration to both sides of the debate. By 1997, general hostilities diminished after the Church vehemently disapproved of Ramos aims to amend the Constitution to extend his presidency. The Church galvanized 600,000 protesters in Manila and 100,000 in Bacolod to wage opposition. Witnessing the strength of the Church in rallying the population, Ramos silenced major actions that were antagonistic to ecclesiastic authorities.

President Joseph Estrada wanted to continue Ramos’ plans for population control. However, his persona as a gambler, alcoholic, and playboy tainted his

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42 Ibid., 12.

43 Ibid., 15.

presidency. Luis Singson, Estrada’s long-time confidant and the governor of Ilocos Sur, uncovered the truth to his scandalous lifestyle, but Singson did so knowing that his political position would be severely threatened. Therefore, he sought protection from the Church and advice from Cardinal Sin before announcing that Estrada had been seizing tax revenues and gambling up to 414 million pesos. An impeachment trial commenced in December 2001, but it failed to acquit Estrada from any wrongdoing due to the cover-up of vital evidence that consisted of Ramos’ bank records. Cardinal Sin and the Catholic Church did what it could to counter the decision and staged another People Power Revolution. The movement is known as EDSA II (named after the main highway in Manila where protesters centrally gathered). Estrada was removed from office and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, a figure who also sought guidance from the Church to overthrow the Estrada Administration, became President.

Arroyo has seen her fair share of impeachment attempts throughout her current administration. However, as a devout Catholic, Arroyo has the backing of the powerful Church. Shirley claims that this support has enabled her to stay in power. He asserts that the absence of the Church in rallies against Arroyo have not given

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45 Ibid., 134.
46 Ibid., 150.
crowds sufficient strength to depose the government. Loyal to her faith, Arroyo established reproductive policies that align with the position on contraception and abortion of the Church. At the beginning of her administration, she prohibited public funding of modern contraception and reversed many family planning initiatives of earlier years. Although seven members of her current cabinet are in support of modern contraceptives, Arroyo still maintains that natural family planning is the favored mode to manage family size.

The Catholic Church’s fundamental role in toppling Marcos’ government gives it the potency to influence modern politics. Furthermore, the abuses of Marcos’ despotic regime overshadow the ruler’s progressive reforms on population control and reproductive health care. Marcos’ policies are forever tainted with sentiments of antagonism. The Church, being the deemed protagonist of the People Power Revolution, has only gathered more political influence in recent years. It successfully blockaded leaders who wished to bolster family planning programs, and has affirmed its position on contraception and abortion with leaders like Aquino and Arroyo. The Philippines will hold presidential elections on May 10, 2010. Like in previous years, the Church is calling for citizens to vote for candidates supporting a natural family planning platform. Those who seem to be in favor of opening access to modern contraceptives or are open to legislative debate over the issue are Benigno Aquino, Jr.,

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49 Carolina S. Ruiz Austria, “The Church, the State and Women's Bodies in the Context of Religious Fundamentalism in the Philippines,” Reproductive Health Matters 12, no. 24 (November 2004): 98.
son of Corazon Aquino and the slain Benigno Aquino, Sr., Eddie Villanueva, former President Joseph Estrada, Jamby Madrigal, Richard Gordon, and Nicanor Perlas. Candidates against this move are Gliberto Teodoro, Manuel Villar, and John Carlos de los Reyes.\textsuperscript{50} Despite vocalizing opposition or support, no clear agenda on family planning has been articulated by any candidate as of March 2010. With Cardinal Sin’s passing in 2005, the Philippines has yet to see if the Church is still either capable of rallying people behind a favored candidate, or able to stall the initiatives of a president who advocates for reproductive health reform.

Conclusions

Church-state relations in Mexico and the Philippines developed through the circumstances of their distinctive histories. Both of their revolutions against Spanish rule were, in the end, won by leaders who wanted to separate religious affairs from politics. However, Marcos’ declaration of martial law and the Church’s role in overthrowing the most infamously corrupt Philippine government positioned the Church closer to the reigns of politics than in Mexico.

In a sense, the spirit of liberation that was sparked post-Vatican II was embodied differently in the Philippines than in Latin America. In this archipelago, Catholicism was relativized at a wider scope, one that was applicable to an oppressed nation as a whole. Liberation theologies in Mexico work outside the realm of the church-state dispute. To a greater degree, Catholicism in Mexico has garnered an

absolutist voice as conservatives continue to bury themselves in a 300 year-old polemic against secularization. Philippines managed to sustain a Church that was more personal, and one that proved to champion all of society during its darkest hours.

For the reproductive health care debate, this means that a Church that is friendlier to a persuasive State is able to solidify their vision for family planning. The Philippines has been able to freeze efforts in population control. During periods in which aggressive family planning programs were implemented, the CBCP repeatedly released pastoral letters claiming that the real issue to the country’s problems is corruption, not rapid population growth. Yet, the Asian Development Bank has linked unchecked growth to long-term development difficulties, high unemployment, increase in overseas workers, crowded schools, weakened social services, and environmental devastation. Political scientist Robert L. Youngblood adds to this list, noting that the rise in street children, homelessness, and the explosive number of shanty-towns are also attributable to unregulated population increases.

The Philippines has one of the highest population growth rates in Southeast Asia. Others have been able to decelerate growth because of reproductive policies. For example, Thailand, which approximately shared the same total population and

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52 “Philippines: Opposition by Catholic Church to Birth Control Results in Great Hardship and Poverty,” *Women’s International Network News* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 64.

economy size as the Philippines in the 1970s, has obtained a 0.9% growth rate, down from 2.1% in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{54}–\textsuperscript{55} The Philippines has sustained a growth rate of 2% or higher since that time period.\textsuperscript{56} Whether the Philippines will attain a sustainable and efficient response to its rapid rise in population is still undetermined based on the uncertainty of the upcoming elections. However, if one were to solely look at church-state history of Mexico and the Philippines, one could conclude that it would be difficult to pry the Philippine Church apart from its close relationship to the Philippine State, hence, making it arduous for reproductive policies to be implemented in a manner similar to the one found in Mexico.


PART III: THE INTERNATIONAL SPHERE
CHAPTER 1

THE U.N. CONFERENCES IN CAIRO AND BEIJING AND THE U.N. MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Two key U.N. conferences catapulted the issues of reproductive rights and population control onto the global stage – The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, and the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing in 1995. These events were landmark meetings identifying rapid population growth and the hindrance of reproductive health as widespread human rights and development concerns. In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reiterated positions established in Cairo and Beijing and solidified objectives to adequately respond to pervasive inequities in the world. This chapter will review how Mexico and the Philippines participated in the Cairo and Beijing meetings, and will disclose their progress in adhering to the MDGs. In this review, Church involvement in shaping the positions of both countries during these conferences will be examined. It will also assess the Church’s influence on the government efforts attempting to respond to MDGs.

Cairo

The United States released a commission report in 1952 expressing concern that population increases could deplete the world’s raw goods and natural resources. Thereafter, a rise in international bodies and granting agencies, like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the MacArthur Foundation, UN Population
Fund (UNFPA), and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) emerged.¹ By the 1970s, the United Nations wanted nations’ to codify basic principles on population control in order to collectively establish a sustainable future among all peoples. Nations gathered at the first UN World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974, and attended a second meeting in Mexico City in 1984. By the ICPD of 1994, discourses evolved beyond controlling numbers, and expanded into the development concerns and human rights violations of the third world. Conversations had shown that rapid population increases were inextricably linked with existing inequities within nations.

In the Philippines, the CBCP was adamantly against the ICPD. The CBCP surmised that the topic of reproductive rights on the ICPD agenda was a means to universalize the legitimacy of abortion. The rally mentioned in Part I, Chapter 1 that gathered 200,000 to one million people at Rizal Park was an effort by Cardinal Sin to wage protest against the objectives of the Cairo Conference. The Ramos government took great notice of this gathering and invited the Church to discuss their issues about the ICPD. After a closed-door meeting that lasted for six hours, the Church and the government came up with guidelines that would act as the basic premise for the Philippine delegation’s position in Cairo. It was also agreed that these guidelines would shape future policies on population and reproductive health care.² To further


² Ibid, 72.
ensure that the Philippine delegation would not counter the Church’s notions on family, the CBCP lobbied to have Macagba Tadiar and Marilen Dangulian removed as delegates. During preparatory meetings for the ICPD, these women were tasked with the chapters on gender, women’s rights, reproductive health and access, family, and maternal mortality.\(^3\) According to Danguilan, they took a stand that was consistent with Philippine law, yet independent from Church and foreign influences. However, it was known that Danguilan was an advocate of abortion if the woman’s life was in danger, in cases of rape and incest, and if there were grave fetal malformations.\(^4\) With Dangulian and Tadiar gone, at the actual ICPD, the Philippine delegation closely adhered to the agreed guidelines established by the Ramos administration and the CBCP. In spite of this, the Holy See expected more vocal support from the delegation when it disagreed with the contentious points about reproductive and sexual rights.\(^5\)

In Mexico, Church interference over who would be going to the ICPD and what the delegation should say was not as prominent as it was in the Philippines. The strict separation between church and state, and the Reform Laws of the 1850s prohibited the Church, and its governing body in Mexico – the Mexican Episcopal Conference – to provide any say in government decisions, including choosing a delegation. However, being that Mexico is predominantly Catholic, when the delegation faced the Holy See

\(^3\) Ibid., 61.

\(^4\) Ibid., 61-62.

\(^5\) Ibid., 106-107.
at Cairo, it remained discreet about issues on sexual health. In fact, in Mexico’s opening statement, Alfonso Navarrete, a representative of the Mexican delegation, made no mention of issues concerning reproductive rights. Without creating a loud stir over the subject, Mexico simply endorsed the ICPD’s stipulations for reproductive rights, including the expansion of post-abortion care.

The Holy See has participated in U.N. conferences as a non-state permanent observer since 1964. This means that the U.N. recognizes the Holy See as a state who does not wish to vote, but as a state able to vocalize its opinions during deliberations. The Holy See used this privilege to the fullest extent in contesting Chapter 8, Paragraph 25 (8.25) of the ICPD Program of Action. The Holy See did not approve of using the term “unsafe abortion” in 8.25 because it connotes that there are safe abortions. The Vatican deems that all abortions are unsafe. The intractable positions of the Vatican helped to keep discussions over 8.25 in three days of debate,

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and two days at a working group. The section of 8.25, which originally stated:

> Although the main objective of public policy is to prevent unwanted pregnancies and reduce the rate of abortion, women should have ready access to quality health-care services that include reliable information, counseling and medical care to enable them to terminate pregnancies in those cases where it is allowed by law, if they so decide and that provide for the management of complications and sequelae of unsafe abortion.

was rephrased as follows:

> Any measures or changes related to abortion within the health system can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process. In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe.

Additionally, the term “unsafe abortion” found in the first sentence of 8.25, warranted a footnote explaining, “Unsafe abortion is defined as a procedure for terminating an unwanted pregnancy either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimal medical standards or both.”

The debate and delay over 8.25 and other sections of the ICPD’s Program of Action convey the forceful presence of the Vatican in Cairo. Its bold demeanor at the Conference disquieted both Mexico and the Philippines from blatantly taking a stance against the Church.

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Beijing

In the Philippines, bishops revived familiar tactics to display their opposition to the FWCW’s agenda on reproductive rights. Once again rallies were held on August 15, 1995 to protest the Beijing Conference. Cardinal Sin also demanded that the Philippine delegation, for which he threw a dinner party, solely support natural family planning methods at the meeting.14

Rather than the Church causing the most uproar about the FWCW, women’s rights movements in Mexico were invigorated by the FWCW and the previous meeting in Cairo. According to Santa-Olaya, et al., “…[T]he ICPD and FWCW…have had significant impact on the Mexican’ women’s health movement, to a great degree than any previous international accords, treaties or conventions.”15 Dignitaries agreed that successful execution of the ICPD Program of Action and FWCW’s Platform of Action required international organizations to partner with local entities.16 Although Filipino women’s organizations were in strong attendance in Beijing and bolstered their initiatives thereafter, women’s rights’ organizations in Mexico exceptionally took advantage of funding opportunities from abroad. In fact, since the late 1990s, with the exception of 2002, 2005, and 2007, reproductive rights’ groups in Mexico have steadily been on The Foundation Center’s list of top reproductive health grant

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recipients. Other than having women’s rights’ groups diminish the voice of opposition, Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida (GIRE, Information Group on Reproductive Choice) founder Marta Lamas reported that more than three quarters of the public, and Mexican government debates, supported abortion rights just prior to the Cairo and Beijing meetings.

The Holy See was again present at the FWCW. This time dispute circled around reproductive rights, parental responsibility to educate young adults about sexual health, punishment for women undergoing illegal abortions, and compassionate post-abortion care from health workers. The Holy See was just as ardent about deleting words and reworking phrases in the FWCW Declaration and Platform of Action. The Philippine and Mexican delegations were once again diplomatic in their deliberations by not raising fervent opposition at the meeting. Official statements from both countries make no mention of the aforementioned issues. Mexico, instead, showed

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its forthright disapproval after the Beijing Conference through its aggressive implementation of many of the FWCW’s provisions.

**Millennium Development Goals**

The Millennium Development Goals were agreed upon by 189 nations at the 2000 Millennium Summit. They consist of eight aims that are to be achieved by 2015. The eight goals are:

1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2) Achieve universal primary education;
3) Promote gender equality and empower women;
4) Reduce child mortality;
5) Improve maternal health;
6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7) Ensure environmental sustainability; and
8) Develop a Global Partnership for Development.\(^2\)

Of these goals, the one most directly associated with issues of reproductive health care is Goal 5, which calls for the improvement of maternal health. Indicators to assess improvement include maternal mortality ratio and contraceptive prevalence, among others. The U.N. aims to reduce maternal mortality ratio by three quarters, and

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endeavors to provide universal access to reproductive health by 2015. Goal 3, which pertains to the empowerment of women, can also be tied to reproductive health concerns. However, Mexico and the Philippines have interpreted this goal largely in the context of women in the workplace, as seen in these countries’ opening statements at the FWCW.

In 2004, the *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* published how Mexico and the Philippines were progressing in context of the MDGs. Ricardo Fuentes and Andres Montes’ studies show that Mexico is making considerable improvements in terms of maternal health, and will most likely reach targets for the year 2015. The most recent statistics on improved maternal mortality ratio and contraceptive prevalence is in Part IV of this paper. Conversely, the research by Solita Collas-Monsod, *et al.* assesses that the likelihood of the Philippines reaching the MDG goal of improved maternal health is low.

Filipino bishops have contributed to the prominent use of natural family methods among couples and the misinformation disseminated about modern contraceptives. The Church in Mexico has not spread comparable influence due to the long-standing separation of church and state and its censorship from public discourses

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that was first instituted under the Reform Laws of the 1850s. The CBCP harbors suspicions about international standards, claiming that foreign ideals are being imposed upon a historically and culturally conservative country. Hence, suspicions have filtered down to the reliability of the contraceptives being distributed by reproductive health advocates. Cardinal Sin and other bishops have claimed that condoms are scientifically defective.\textsuperscript{26, 27} Even if the average Filipino is unaware of the official position of the Church on contraception, the CBCP’s thoughts on contraception have reached parts of the general population. Correct information may be barred because stigma remains among health workers and sex education is absent in schools. Both instances are byproducts of the Catholic culture that exists in the Philippines and the Church’s influence on political decisions. A more in depth look on the Church’s impact on local individuals will be evaluated in Part IV of this paper.

\textit{Conclusion}

The ICPD and the FWCW were vital meetings that pushed the issues of population growth and reproductive health onto the international stage. These meetings led to concrete goals for the world to respond to global inequities. These goals are articulated in the MDGs, which includes advancing maternal health. The Philippines has not been able to meet Goal 5, partially because of the stigma and


mispresentation that the Church has helped spread. Although Mexico was cordial to
the Holy See’s presence at the Cairo and Beijing meetings, the Mexican government
did not let the Vatican’s views change the government’s intent to adhere to
international standards on reproductive health. Alternatively, the Philippines
succumbed to the wishes of the Vatican on the international stage and allowed the
Church’s views to hinder the country from respecting the MDGs. Referring back to
Robertson’s global field model, the Catholic Church has been able to have an effect
internationally by presenting resolute opposition and influencing the Philippines to
follow in its footsteps in the global arena.
CHAPTER 2
INTERNATIONAL FUNDING AND AID IN MEXICO AND THE PHILIPPINES

The NGO-state interaction is critical in making sure reproductive health goals are realized. If NGOs on the ground are not international organizations themselves, international groups financially support many local NGOs in developing countries. Subsequently, to assess the gravity of conditions and how reproductive health action should proceed, international bodies have funded many studies about the reproductive health situations in Mexico and the Philippines. This chapter will address the relationship between international organizations, NGOs, and state governments. It will also assess whether Catholic sentiments have obstructed the aims of these factions in implementing policy and international agreements into reality.

NGOs and their Relationship to the State and International Sphere

In 2005, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation estimated that the Philippines receives $25.6 million in international funds for family planning initiatives. The breakdown is as follows: $19 million from USAID, $4 million from UNFPA, $1.1 million from the Packard Foundation, $1 million from the German Development Bank (KFW), and $500,000 from the German Technical Cooperation.1 Although natural family planning has been strongly advocated by heads-of-state in recent years, modern

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contraceptives are permitted in the Philippines and are gaining more supporters in government and contemporary society. However, it has been difficult to overcome decades of stigma and misinformation about contraception. International groups have been vital in fully maximizing the legality of contraceptive use and conquering fears about condoms and birth control, especially within the government and public health system. For example, USAID is specifically allocating money to educate and garner support from local government units (LGUs) for a stable and non-judgmental family planning agenda. USAID has provided funds that have fostered a relationship between the international reproductive health group, EngenderHealth, and the Philippine Department of Health to instill an understanding approach to post-abortion care patients among health workers.\(^2\)\(^,\)\(^3\) However, international groups have expressed frustrations with the local government. President Arroyo’s stance on contraception has cultivated a political climate that is not wholly devoted to the distribution of modern contraceptives. By financial ability and choice, the government allocated less than $1 million to family planning in 2005.\(^4\)


Mexico has about 210 local NGOs dedicated to reproductive health care initiatives. The majority of their funds come from international organizations. However, priorities have shifted from advocating a basic family planning program. Initiatives on modern contraception have successfully grown since their implementation in the 1970s, and much of this success can be accredited to the dynamic between international groups, NGOs and the State. For example, the year following the ICPD, the Mexican government crafted policy explicitly encouraging the establishment of government and NGO relationships to respond to reproductive health issues. Discourses are now touching upon abortion rights and emergency contraception access in order to improve maternal health levels in Mexico. GIRE is an NGO that has been a strong proponent of abortion rights. It successfully led a campaign with the help of MacArthur funds to decriminalize first trimester abortion in Mexico City. For a time, however, international groups were barred from assisting Mexico in its most pertinent reproductive health battle. The ICPD meeting in 1984 in Mexico City prohibited the use of U.S. funds from supporting abortion-related services overseas. Known as the “Mexico City Policy,” it withdrew USAID grants and technical help to NGOs advocating for women’s and reproductive health rights;

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6 Ibid., 46.

prohibited grant recipients from lobbying to liberalize abortion laws with foreign funds; and forbade NGOs funded by USAID to encourage the abortion option among women in countries where abortion is legal in cases of rape, incest, or endangerment to health or life. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton lifted this restriction in 1992. What followed was an increase in the liberalization of abortion laws that led to the legalization of abortion in the instance of rape in all 32 Mexican states. Current U.S. President Barack Obama followed in Clinton’s footsteps when former President Bush reinstated the Mexico City Policy in January 2001. However, the passing of the 2007 law in Mexico City depicts the strength of the interaction between international groups, NGOs, and the Mexican State, for the climate was conducive enough to legalize first-trimester abortion without the help of public funds from the U.S.

Catholic Reactions

The Catholic Church in the Philippines deems the attempted implementation of international standards as intrusive. In 2008, the CBCP stated:

Foreign-funded lobby groups have been operating for more than a decade to openly advocate for the enactment of population control laws, as well as abortion-friendly laws in pursuit of the UN Cairo Conference objective of universal abortion rights. It makes one wonder why countries with below replacement fertility rates, desperate for babies and spending huge sums of money to encourage their own citizens to bear more children, contradict

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themselves by spending huge sums of money to suppress our population growth.\textsuperscript{10}

According to the CBCP, international institutions are trying to delegate what they deem is right for the world. Bishops see this as a threat to their vision of a just society. The Church in the Philippines has also had significant experience in rallying groups and organizations under its wing, thus raising sufficient opposition against NGOs promoting modern contraceptives. Faith-based organizations have even had success in attaining foreign aid to promote natural family planning. With funding from USAID, the AWARENESS project distributes CycleBeads to women so that they could more accurately monitor their menstrual cycles.\textsuperscript{11}

Faith-based groups have also presented a significant challenge to reproductive rights advocates in Mexico. Organizations like Vida Humana Internacional have paralleled international aid for reproductive health as a new form of imperialism. It is true the Mexico has been one of the world’s largest recipients of reproductive health grants, and many of these grant-makers are based in the United States. On this note, Vida Humana Internacional states:

\begin{quote}
As one of the largest and most populated countries in Latin America, Mexico has long been a target of U.S. population controllers. Until the Robles Reform was approved, abortion was illegal in every Mexican state. All that changed,
\end{quote}


however, in January 2002—thanks, in large part, to funding provided by U.S. pro-abortion foundations.\textsuperscript{12}

In contrast to the Philippines, however, this perspective is one among many in Mexico. The Church’s ties to the Philippine government have made it and its affiliates the most prominent political lobbying group against abortion rights in the Philippines. Although the strength of Catholic Church is considerable among the Mexican population, it bears no authority in the politics of Mexico.

\textit{Conclusion}

Foreign assistance has been essential in keeping reproductive rights initiatives afloat in Mexico and the Philippines. However, NGOs in Mexico have proven that it can influence policy without depending entirely on U.S. public funds. Conversely, international organizations feel restricted in the Philippines due to Arroyo’s views on modern contraception. The Catholic Church in the Philippines has contributed to the constraining environment by lucratively mobilizing organizations from supporting international standards on maternal health and spreading suspicions about contraception. Although opposition is shared by clergy in Mexico, its opinions are one among many in a political climate that has historically kept the Church position at bay with regard to politics. Hence, NGOs supporting reproductive rights have attained a stronger voice in Mexico than in the Philippines. In fact, international organizations deem that Mexican NGOs have been so successful at improving reproductive health

that many are pulling out their funds due to the belief that local organizations can sustain themselves through self-financing mechanisms and local support.\[13\]

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PART IV: THE INDIVIDUAL
CHAPTER 1
PUBLIC SENTIMENTS ABOUT CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION

Mexico’s comparatively liberal policies on reproductive health care and foreign aid do not immediately equate to the acceptability of and access to family planning services by the local population. As a nation with a Catholic majority, Church doctrine has influenced professionals who are entrusted with providing information and administering services, as well as has affected individuals seeking care. This chapter will examine whether Mexican policies are effectively translated in real situations, such as whether individuals are aware of laws on family planning, and whether individuals who uphold religious convictions execute responsibilities mandated by law. To gauge how individuals are affected by policies on reproductive health, contraception, and abortion, it is necessary to first look at the public sentiments of those administering services, and of those who are of reproductive age.

Opinions of Health Personnel on Reproductive Health Services

According to the Ministry of Health, obstetrician-gynecologists (OBGYNs) or general surgeons are the only health professionals authorized to execute first-trimester abortions in Mexico City.¹ However, access to legal abortions has been obstructed by health professionals who refuse to provide services due to their moral claims. For

example, in 1999, Paulina, a 13 year-old girl who was raped in Baja California, was coerced to bring her pregnancy to term, despite the legality of abortion in cases of rape. On August 24, 2008, *The New York Times* reported, “[S]ome 85 percent of the gynecologists in [Mexico City’s] public hospitals have declared themselves conscientious objectors” due to religious convictions. General statistics in Mexico show that although 84% of physicians of a 2002 national survey thought abortion should be offered in public hospitals, only 4.9% of them have actually provided this service and 23% of respondents have assisted women with abortion complications. The latter statistic is staggering, considering that about 150,000 women are admitted to public-sector hospitals due to complications. Among medical residents in Mexico City, only 5% said that they would be willing to perform an abortion. Martha Silva, *et al.* links these responses to the religiosity of doctors who refuse to provide services.

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Of the 1586 physicians that Silva’s team surveyed, 13.8% never or almost never went to church, leaving 85.3% of respondents saying that they attend church services.\textsuperscript{7}

Several health providers in Mexico also harbor disparaging sentiments towards women who seek abortion. In the study conducted by Silva, \textit{et al.}, 50% of respondents viewed women seeking abortion as reckless and licentious.\textsuperscript{8} These notions deter women from seeking help.

In the Philippines, abortion is illegal in all cases. Yet, many women who have complications from clandestine abortions seek help from health professionals. A large proportion of providers view these patients as criminals. Procedures have been delayed, anesthesia has been denied, and there have been threats of reporting these patients to the authorities because disapproval is so severe among health care workers.\textsuperscript{9} Hospitals have also completely shunned women suffering from complications, depriving them of any service.\textsuperscript{10}

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\textsuperscript{7} Martha Silva, Deborah L. Billings, Sandra G. Garcia, and Diana Lana, “Physicians’ Agreement with and Willingness to Provide Abortion Services in the Case of Pregnancy from Rape in Mexico,” \textit{Contraception} 79, no. 1 (January 2009): 59.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.


Attitudes of the General Public on Contraception and Abortion

Substantive studies on the attitudes of those of reproductive age have not been published since Mexico City legalized first trimester abortions in 2007. The Guttmacher Institute, however, recorded opinions in 2002 from young individuals ranging from 15-24 years old. The Institute’s results show that of the 907 that were surveyed, 70% support abortion when pregnancies result from rape, 83% support it when the mother’s life is in danger, 77% agree to it when the mother’s health is at risk, 50% condone it when the fetus has genetic defects, 19% support abortion in cases of economic restraints, 13% agree to it when the mother is single, 22% support it if the woman is a minor, 11% condone abortion under conditions of contraceptive failure, and 20% advocate elective abortions.¹¹ These results show that the general population is more open to the idea of abortion and approve of it under various circumstances.

By comparison, since abortion is illegal in the Philippines, sentiments on contraception among Filipinos are more varied than they are in terms of abortion. In a study by Sing, et al. in 2006, about half of women who had abortions in the Philippines were not practicing any form of family planning. The other half was practicing some form, and of this segment of women, about 75% of them were using natural family

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planning methods like withdrawal and the rhythm method.\textsuperscript{12} The absence of family planning and the sole reliance on natural methods can largely be credited to the stigma affiliated with modern contraception.

Despite the liberalization of abortion policies in Mexico, public sentiments obstruct these laws from being enforced or accepted by physicians and patients across the country. However, the sentiments on abortion are more diversified in Mexico than in the Philippines, where discourses on abortion are diminished in light of the legal codes. Filipinos are wrestling more so with the issues surrounding contraception. In Mexico, the contraceptive prevalence is 71%, ranging from 2003-2008, with most women using modern contraceptives.\textsuperscript{13} The Philippines has a modern contraceptive prevalence of 33% as of 2003.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Education and Access}

Negative sentiments on abortion and contraception are caused by the distribution of misinformation, the lack of education, and limited access to knowledge and services.


The ignorance of health professionals about legal codes and about the condition of women who seek abortions contributes to the denigrating attitudes towards women. Studies show that 60-80% of health professionals in Mexico are aware of the legality of abortion in some cases. However, a large percentage is unaware of which specific circumstances render abortion lawful.\(^{15-16}\) Silva, et al. suggests that misconstrued knowledge about the perceived unlawfulness of certain types of abortion are influenced by the belief systems of many physicians.\(^{18}\) In the Philippines, a project launched by EngenderHealth and the Philippines Department of Health is aiming to train health professionals with the skills needed to counsel post-abortion care patients, provide family planning advice, and manage abortion complications in a compassionate manner. Commenting on the project, a nurse states, “[Before training,) I thought, ‘Why not condemn these patients? They have killed the baby inside.’ But after, I see them not as murderers, but as people needing counseling.”\(^{19}\) By 2005, the Department


\(^{16}\) Deyanira Gonzalez de Leon Aguirre D and Deborah L. Billings, El Aborto en México (Mexico City: Ipas, 2002).


of Health aimed to establish fifty project sites to educate health professionals about administering compassionate reproductive care.\textsuperscript{20–21}

Fears about the side effects and the safety of contraceptive and abortive procedures have discouraged women from seeking care in Mexico and the Philippines. Ignorance pertaining to access and the legality of reproductive services also prevent women from managing their reproductive health.\textsuperscript{22} Much of this is a result of the dissemination of inaccurate information among individuals. By comparing data, it can be determined that misinformation about contraception is more pervasive in the Philippines than in Mexico, given that a large majority of Mexican women utilize modern methods unlike their Filipino counterparts. Family planning counseling is sorely lacking in the Philippines. Therefore, information mostly derives from neighbors, relatives, friends, and the Church, rather than health professionals in the Philippines. According to the Social Acceptance Project-Family Planning, an initiative sponsored by AED and USAID, Filipinos who try to induce abortions resort to misguided methods, such as 1) drinking aspirin with 7-Up, 2) pushing sperm outside of the body, 3) jumping multiple times after sex, and 4) douching with vinegar. Other

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myths include that intra-uterine devices can be lost inside the body, condoms should be used for casual sex, and vasectomies call for the removal of the penis.\textsuperscript{23} The Catholic Church is also guilty of propagating false facts and suspicions in the Philippines. Cardinal Sin is quoted as stating that condoms have microscopic pores, making them completely ineffective against sexually transmitted diseases and preventing pregnancy.\textsuperscript{24}

The complete lack of education provides room for misinformation to penetrate individual discourses. Although families who are using contraceptives are using modern methods in Mexico, there is a segment that is not successfully using contraception. The abortion rate as of 2006 is 33 per 1,000 women of reproductive age, which is comparatively high on a global scale.\textsuperscript{25} The Catholic influence may deter sexually-active women from using contraception. However, studies also show gaps in sex education among adolescents. National expansion of sex education with

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substantive curricula and qualified instructors is yet incomplete. Conversely, Mexico’s status of sex education is much improved in comparison to the Philippines where sex education is not taught in any school curriculum. In fact, throughout her tenure, the Education Secretary of the Philippines has “denied the Department of Education (DepEd) was teaching about sex, apparently to avoid incurring the wrath of the Catholic Church...” Hence, unlike Mexico, where the Catholic Church competes with school-based education, the Church’s influence completely censors sex education in Philippine schools. The absence of sex education exacerbates the amount of negative sentimentality about modern contraception. With the Philippine Church having a more pronounced voice than other sources, couples are also driven to rely mostly on natural methods, which have higher failure rates. This combination in the


Philippines helps to contribute to the 1.43 million unintended pregnancies per year and the abortion rate of 27 per 1,000 women of reproductive age.\textsuperscript{31, 32}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} Fatima Juarez, Josefina Cabigon, Susheela Singh, and Rubina Hussain, “The Incidence of Induced Abortion in the Philippines: Current Level of Recent Trends,” \textit{International Family Planning Perspectives} 31, no. 3 (September 2005): 144.
\end{itemize}
CHAPTER 2
THE CATHOLIC SELF

The Catholic Church may have a more pronounced voice in the Philippines because religiosity is more of a public matter than it is in Mexico. The People Power Revolution utilized faith as an external, unifying force to overthrow Marcos. A renewed sense of national pride and national identity was closely linked to being Catholic. The events of the late 1980s are current enough to shape the modern identity of many Filipinos, especially of those who have obtained government positions. If leaders were not Catholic already, such as Fidel Ramos, much was still owed to the Church in helping to end the Philippines’ most horrendous dictatorship.

The long-standing move towards secularization in Mexico has transformed religion into a more private aspect of one’s identity.¹ The historical efforts to deny a public platform for the Church have pushed one’s Catholic identity as one of many identities, rather than at the forefront of one’s personhood. In other words, it is more feasible to compartmentalize an individual’s duties without continuously questioning, either consciously or subconsciously, if actions adhere to religious or religiously influenced national ideals. According to Fuentes, et al., “many Mexicans self-identify

as Catholic, but do not follow Church teachings exactly.” Catholicism has acquired a more cultural persona, an element that has shaped the inward meaning of family, community, and character. In contrast, one’s external identity – the modern Mexican national identity – is not indebted to the Church. If anything, it was fashioned to antagonistically respond to Church power.

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CHAPTER 3
EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL REPRODUCTIVE DECISIONS ON THE NATION

Family planning policies in Mexico and the Philippines were launched in the 1970s to offset concerns about the detrimental effects of rapid population growth on the development of each nation. With Mexico having a more successful family planning mechanism, this section will examine whether Mexico has better managed its socio-economic responsibilities in contrast to the Philippines.

In 1970, when family planning programs were first initiated, Mexico’s total population was approximately 48.2 million and the Philippines stood at 36.7 million.\(^1\),\(^2\) Records from 2009 show that Mexico houses 111.2 million inhabitants and the Philippines holds about 98 million people.\(^3\),\(^4\) The percent difference of the two populations from 1970 is 27%. In 2009, the difference shrank to 13%. This is an indication that the growth rate of the Philippines is increasing at a higher rate than that of Mexico. The Philippines’ population growth rate is about double the size of its


Although growth rates have decreased for both countries since 2007, the issue of overcrowding is much more pronounced in the Philippines, considering the country is only 300,000 square kilometers. Mexico has 1.96 square kilometers of land to accommodate its inhabitants.

With regard to poverty, there are significantly more individuals living under the international poverty line of $1.25 US dollars in the Philippines. Two percent of the Mexican population are below the poverty line, whereas 23% of the Philippine population are living in exceptionally impoverished conditions. It is difficult for official censuses to calculate the number of street children, but estimates from the ground approximate that about 1.9 million children are impoverished and homeless in Mexico City. Of this statistic, 240,000 are abandoned. In a 2000 report from the Hilton Foundation, it is suggested that 2 million children are homeless in all of Mexico. The report also cites that Action International Ministries have calculated that the number of street children in the Philippine capital of Manila ranges from 50,000 to 100,000.

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

In terms of national estimates, the 1989 Conference on Street Children in Asia approximates more than 1 million kids on the street in the Philippines, and the Philippine Resource Network claims that there are more than 1.5 million.\textsuperscript{11,12} In a study by the Guttmacher Institute, 72\% of women terminate their pregnancies because they cannot afford to have a child. Financially constrained mothers who do not practice family planning and are unable to have an abortion contribute to the number of children who are homeless in both nations. An additional indicator of poverty is maternal mortality according to numerous scholars and international bodies. The adjusted maternal mortality ratio from 2005 in Mexico was 60 per 100,000 live births, and it was 230 per 100,000 live births in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{13,14} Insufficient reproductive care contribute to inflated maternal mortality ratios. In 2000, the National Population Council in Mexico recorded that unsafe abortions were the third leading cause of

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maternal mortality.\textsuperscript{15} In 1994, the Philippines’ Department of Health attributed 12% of maternal deaths to illegal abortions.\textsuperscript{16}

In terms of economic growth, the Philippines is weaker in comparison to Mexico. According to UNICEF, the GNI per capita, or average income of an individual, is $9,980 US dollars in Mexico. The GNI per capita of the Philippines is $1,890. However, the GDP growth rate has remained at 1.6% since 1970 in Mexico. The Philippines’ GDP growth rate has significantly improved and surpassed Mexico, changing from 0.6% from 1970-1990 to 1.9% from 1990-2008.\textsuperscript{15,18} These results show that a link between rapid population growth rate and the economy are somewhat ambiguous if the economy is the only characteristic used to assess a country’s development.

\textit{Conclusions}

Catholic influences affect public sentiments about reproductive health. However, these sentiments circle around the abortion debate in Mexico. The Philippines struggles more with contraception initiatives, which have stably improved in Mexico since the 1970s. The negative attitudes of Filipino individuals are generated

\textsuperscript{15} National Population Council, CONAPO, \textit{Reproductive Health Notebooks} (Mexico City: Government of Mexico, 2000), 69.


by the complete lack of education and the distribution of misconstrued information about contraception. Many myths have been corroborated by the Church. The Philippines, therefore, has not managed to effectively control population escalation, hence, destabilizing the Philippines population growth rate and unsuccessfully addressing issues of poverty. Although gaps to effectively translate policy into reality still remain in Mexico, the country, at least, has instituted polices from which to learn and grow. Filipinos cannot even begin to learn from and reconcile with reproductive standards, for widespread plans are largely non-existent. The struggle to reconcile contradictions in modern society hails from the close tie of one’s identity as a Catholic and one’s identity as a Filipino. Mexico has learned to compartmentalize the self to a greater degree because of the secular formation of the nation-state.
PART V: CASE STUDIES
CHAPTER 1

REFORMING MEXICO CITY’S PENAL CODE ON ABORTION

Amendments to Articles 144-147 of Mexico City’s Penal Code decriminalized first-trimester abortion in the capital city. It is important to note that each state in Mexico possesses its own penal codes. Hence, reproductive policies are not uniform throughout the country. Mexico City was recognized as a distinct state in 1996. The Mexico City Law is the most liberal law that exists in Mexico, and one of the most leftist-policies in all of Latin America. Currently, only Cuba, Guyana, and Puerto Rico accompany Mexico City on its stance on abortion. This chapter will discuss the events leading up to the reform in April 2007. The case study will microscopically examine why the Catholic Church insufficiently permeated the four dimensions of Roland Robertson’s global field model, thus rending its influence ineffective in the passing of the 2007 law.

Humankind: The Church’s Appeals to Human Conscience

Debate over the Penal Code’s reform lasted for four months before a final decision was made. Legislators and the public were invited to voice their opinions over the benefits or the detriments of legalizing first trimester abortions. Although the Catholic Church was forbidden to voice political opinions according to the Mexican Reform Laws of the 1850s, it still had a cultural hold on the people. As noted in Part I,

\[\text{Graciela Jasa-Silveira, “Legal Pluralism in Family and Reproductive Rights in Mexico” (presentation, annual meeting of the Law and Society Association, Montreal, Quebec, May 27, 2008).}\]
Chapter 1 of this paper, Catholic theology appeals to the public’s conscience on the basis of natural law. However, in 2007, allegations of child abuse among Church clergy were exposed on an international level. The reputation of the Church was damaged at the time of the debate; consequently injuring the Church’s legitimacy on all fronts, including its thoughts on reproductive health. Its impact on human conscience was diminished among legislators and lay persons when the conscience of the Church was highly questioned.  

Catolicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD, Catholics for the Right to Decide), also made a dissenting Catholic argument that resonated with the general public. They insisted, “Catholic doctrine establishes that Catholics must follow their consciences on moral issues,” and “there has been no official statement by the Catholic Church that converts moral teachings into dogma.” In light of a Church hierarchy that threatened to excommunicate individuals supporting the reform, this dissenting argument bode well among those who still culturally identified themselves as Catholic.

*The Nation-State: The Strength of the Church and State Separation in Mexico City*

As previously depicted, the separation between church and state has been made very clear over the course of Mexico’s history. The separation was firmly confirmed with regard to reproductive health care policies in 2000. Rosario Robles, Mexico

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3 Ibid., 352.
City’s Mayor from 1999-2000, ushered “Ley Robles,” a proposal to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape, artificial or involuntary insemination, threat to a woman’s health, and genetic or congenital defects of the fetus. It also reduced the severity of penalties against women seeking illegal abortion. \(^4\) Subsequent to its passing, the Supreme Court further validated its constitutionality in January 2002. Justice Olga Sanchez Cordero, the Court’s sole female representative, portrayed the unmistakable division between church and state over abortion when she pronounced, “El tema que se analiza el día de hoy, nada tiene que ver con principios éticos, morales, religiosos o políticos, este es un tema eminentemente jurídico,” which means, “The issue that is discussed today, has nothing to do with ethical, moral, religious or political; this is an essentially legal issue.” \(^5\) The 2000 changes to the Penal Code were reaffirmed in the 2004 reform, for it left “Ley Robles” virtually untouched and solely strengthened punishment for those who coerced women into terminating their pregnancies. \(^6\) Overall, the 2002 and 2004 reforms to the Penal Code established a legal precedent, which forged abortion’s public acceptability, as well as bolstered female autonomy with regards to her health.

\(^4\) Ibid., 348.


In addition, the adamant discord between conservative and liberal groups contributed to an atmosphere conducive to the passing of the 2007 reform of the Penal Code. In 2006, PAN, the political party with historical ties to the Church, won the presidential election. However, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), one of the major liberal parties in Mexico, still had control of Mexico City’s legislative assembly and its mayoral office. To make the point that liberal polices were still very much alive under a conservative President, the PRD was motivated to further push liberal reforms, which included the passing of same-sex civil unions in 2006, decriminalizing first-trimester abortion in 2007, and, later, permitting passive euthanasia for the terminally ill in 2008. When strong local support for legalizing first-trimester abortions was articulated during public debate, the PRD profited from painting a stark contrast between conservatives and liberals in the political field.\textsuperscript{7,8}

The International Sphere: International Climate and Global Influence on the Abortion Debate of 2007

Part III of this paper noted that the international sphere, particularly the U.N. and the Millennium Development Goals, formed objectives to eliminate poverty by managing population rates and maternal mortality, and setting aims to increase human rights and gender equality. This international movement motivated Mexico to comply

\textsuperscript{7} Maria Luisa Sanchez Fuentes, Jennifer Paine, and Brook Elliot-Buettner, “The Decriminalization of Abortion in Mexico City: How did Abortion Rights Become a Political Priority?,” \textit{Gender and Development} 16, no. 2 (July 2008): 353.

with international obligations by establishing concrete family planning initiatives. Abortion rights were seen as another means to respond to international concerns of poverty and human rights. Furthermore, successful social actors in the four-month debate were, to a large extent, funded by international organizations that wanted to bolster Mexico’s capacity to comply with international standards. For example, GIRE undertook a large leadership role in advancing the decriminalization of first-trimester abortions by providing the PRD with technical information and substantive arguments. In 2006, the year just prior to the Penal Code’s reform, GIRE received a three year grant of $270,000 from the MacArthur Foundation “in support of the defense and promotion of reproductive rights in Mexico through recording, documenting and litigating reproductive rights violations and training government, non-governmental organizations and members of the local community.” The Foundation Center also lists GIRE as one of the top fifty recipients of foundation grants for reproductive health in 2006. Additionally, CDD, previously mentioned as a strong player during the legislation’s debate, received “$270,000 [over three years] to improve the

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implementation at the state level of federal policy that promotes young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights in Mexico.\textsuperscript{12} The competition for funding and the historical limitations of Church involvement in politics restricted the hierarchy's power in the public debate. Conversely, proponents for legalization were sufficiently strengthened by international forces to dominate public discourses.

*The Individual*

Part IV discussed the relative ease at which Mexicans are able to embrace their Catholic personas privately and distinctly from public concerns. Fuentes, \textit{et al.} states:

Mexican society has undergone a gradual secularization; many Mexican’s self-identify as Catholic, but do not follow Church teaching exactly. For example, many use birth control, live in civil unions, have abortions, and do and accept things that are officially proscribed by the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{13}

The modern self in Mexico is accustomed to living with the contradictions of contemporary society because of the secularized nature of the state. This social atmosphere provided a gateway for abortion law to take place. Even if individuals culturally view themselves as Catholic, present realities could be internalized and rationalized without choosing absolutes. Therefore, it is this internal compartmentalization of varying identities that has enabled Mexicans to steer away


\textsuperscript{13} Maria Luisa Sanchez Fuentes, Jennifer Paine, and Brook Elliot-Buettner, “The Decriminalization of Abortion in Mexico City: How did Abortion Rights Become a Political Priority?,” \textit{Gender and Development} 16, no. 2 (July 2008): 355.
from the Church’s absolutist visions of right and wrong with regard to reproductive health care.

**Conclusion**

This case study shows that the Catholic Church was unable to penetrate all four dimensions of Ronald Robertson’s global field model. The Church did not have the capacity to act as a global actor in the realm of reproductive health care politics in Mexico. The hierarchy’s reputation was too damaged to significantly appeal to human conscience at the time of the Penal Code’s debate; the separation between church and state stood prominent as ever during discussions about abortion reform; international standards and funding strengthened the positions of women’s rights and reproductive rights organizations in public discourses; and the individual’s ability to compartmentalize national and Catholic identities in Mexico shaped a social climate that was favorable to changes in abortion law. Thus, in April 2007, Articles 144-147 redefined the term abortion, applying it only to the termination of pregnancy after 13 weeks of gestation. Ending pregnancy before 12 weeks was permitted, and the Supreme Court confirmed the ruling in 2008.
CHAPTER 2
IDLE PROPOSITIONS? BARRIERS TO HOUSE BILL 5043

The Philippines does not have stable government mandates for national family planning, sex education curricula, objective post-abortion care, social incentives for population control, and campaigns to disseminate proper information. Much of this is attributed to the stagnation of proposed legislation. House Bill 5043 (HB05043), formally known as “An Act Providing for a National Policy on Reproductive Health, Responsible Parenthood and Population Development,” aims to fulfill all of the aforementioned objectives. It is the most recent legislative proposal from the 14th Congress of the Philippines, with origins dating back to two bills in the 13th Congress of the Philippines: 1) HB00016 of 2004, entitled, “An Act Creating a Reproductive Health and Population Management Council for the Implementation of an Integrated Policy on Reproductive Health Relative to Sustainable Human Development and Population Management,” and 2) HB03773, called, “Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005.” These bills, along with HB00016’s Senate version (SB1546), did not make much progress. Future transfigurations or consolidations of the house bills, known as HB00017 of 2007, HB02753 of 2007, HB00812 of 2007, and HB03970 of 2008 also reached dead ends.¹ Roadblocks remain for the latest version, HB05043. In 2008, the bill was not approved passed its second

¹ House Bills Query Online, Philippines House of Representatives (accessed April 11, 2010).
reading in the House, for it did not reach the 120 quota with 108 votes.\(^2\) Whether it will gain traction in the upcoming administration is hotly contested in the electoral campaign of 2010. It also remains to be seen if the bill will be revitalized and become a priority issue when the 15\(^{th}\) Session of Congress commences in the summer of 2010.

A large factor in contributing to the obstruction of initiatives on reproductive health care and population growth is the Catholic Church. This chapter will review the Church’s success in directly penetrating at least three of the four dimensions of Robertson’s global field model in the discourses around HB05043.

*Humankind: The Culture of Death*

The CBCP successfully used pastoral letters in critiquing the social climate and the political direction of the country during Marcos’ presidency and the presidencies thereafter. Its tactics were no different in responding to HB05043 and its legislative predecessors. The Philippine bishops regard HB05043 as a bill that could open other political movements supporting DEATH, an acronym that stands for Divorce, Euthanasia, Abortion, Transexuality, and Homosexuality.\(^3\) According to Julius Bautista, “the campaign against [HB05043] is not merely one about sexual health and demography, but a general crusade against a broad spectrum of the moral tribulations

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of Filipino society.”

To augment appeals to conscience, the bill was not only tied to other supposed immoralities, Church discourses about the bill were also tied explicitly to the 40th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*. On July 25, 2008, the Archdiocese of Manila and pro-life supporters took a stand against HB05043 by sponsoring a prayer rally, a familiar device of civil protest used in the People Power Movements. *Humanae Vitae’s* notions of sacrifice, motherly duty, family, and love were commemorated, reiterated, and directly reapplied to arguments against HB05043. About 12,000 church officials and lay people coalesced at the University of Santo Tomas, including boxer Manny Pacquiao, the Philippines’ biggest international celebrity.5

Further appeals to humankind entailed the Church’s threat of sacramental denial. In July 2008, Archbishop Jose Dosado commanded that supporters of HB05043 should not present themselves at communion during mass. To withhold the Eucharist tainted one as guilty of a mortal sin. This means that he or she possesses the full intent to commit an act contrary to the Bible’s commandments found in the Book of Exodus. The commandment that would be violated by supporting HB05043 is “thou shall not kill.”6 Sacramental denial was a gesture connoting condemnation of the

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soul and a potent judgment on one’s personal character. The slander to a supporter’s conscience was additionally exacerbated with Pope Benedict XVI’s approval of sacramental denial for those advocating for HB05043 in the Philippines.⁷

*The Nation-State: The Strength of Church Influence in Politics*

Unlike the CDD in Mexico, dissenting Catholic voices are diminished in light of a domineering Church hierarchy. Figures like Cardinal Sin acquired such a prominent public persona from the People Power Revolution that his proclamations about contraception and abortion carried much weight among legislators and the people. Even sympathizers to reproductive rights within the CBCP and Church clergy could not convey their opinions successfully if it ran slightly counter to Cardinal Sin’s positions. Coeli M. Barry states, “In interviews with women religious, veterans of anti-Marcos marches, human rights activists, and teachers in theology schools, they lamented at times how powerful Sin had become; how he had come to overshadow others in the church.”⁸ Since Cardinal Sin’s passing in 2005, the CBCP inherited the power and authority that Cardinal Sin helped build. It continues to dictate an orthodox and absolutist viewpoint that expects the citizens and its government to follow.

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Philippine bishops have fostered the idea that political corruption is the root of poverty in the Philippines. The CBCP believes that the country’s destitution is not reflected in statistical analyses on population growth rates and maternal mortalities. On the contrary, the Church officials argue that the moral breakdown of political figures is fully responsible for impoverishment. Specifically in response to HB05043, Archbishop Oscar Cruz vocalized, “The bill will lead to the implementation of an immoral policy...it slants the idea of responsible parenthood to issues of depopulation, which proponents claim will result to progress among underdeveloped countries like ours.” He adds further:

No human act, no legislative bill, no executive function, no judicial work is over and above morality. Morality is neither irrelevant in politics, not indifferent in a secular society. Irrespective of the race, color and creed of those concerned, the moment individuals fool around with private morals, the moment the government disregard public morals, then the families and country are in big trouble respectively. This is the standing lesson of history.

Once again, this perspective champions the existence of universal principles that all must follow. It disregards diversity in beliefs, needs, and realities. The term “morality” is interpreted as a value system that is known and applied by all persons, especially by government officials chartered to protect the well-being of the country. Unlike Mexico, the Philippine Catholic Church is not afraid to speak in the public sphere and has had unhindered outlets for which to vocalize their opinions. This has


10 Ibid.
allowed it to vehemently criticize the government with more authority and tenacity than its Mexican counterpart. It continues to intercede in politics, by hoping to influence the political future of the county in its release of 20-page guidelines for Eleksyon 2010 (Election 2010). The guidelines steer voters to elect presidential candidates who do not support HB05043.\textsuperscript{11}

*The International Sphere: Standards as Symbols of a New Imperialism*

To adhere to the international goals set up by U.N. conferences and the Millennium Development Goals is seen by the CBCP as a foreign, unwelcome pressure. HB05043 and previous efforts are attempts by several legislators who agree with international bodies that population management and reproductive health care are essential means to eradicate poverty. The hierarchy’s basic qualms with HB05043 and its predecessors take root in the simple term of “reproductive health.” It views the term as a deceptive descriptor that tries to universalize legitimacy for abortion.\textsuperscript{12} Hence, all family planning initiatives, like the promotion sex education and modern contraception use, are treated as one; they all equate to abortion in the eyes of the Church.

The efforts of international funders to promote reproductive health throughout the world are seen by the CBCP as coercive. The CBCP deems external funders as


detached from the local realities of the Philippines, and is hostile to the imposition of ideals by foreigners who are unfamiliar with the culture and history of the country.

The historic power of the Philippine Catholic Church has enabled its opinions on international goals and aid to filter into the social and political climate surrounding HB05043. Even if the average citizen is unaware of or do not agree with the hierarchy’s direct attitudes, the Church’s indirect influence in shaping access to proper information is tangible. Its implicit effects are significant obstacles to international bodies and funders seeking to build greater contraceptive awareness in the Philippines. According to Representative Edeel Lagman, the primary author of HB05043, misinformation is the main impediment halting the bill’s progress. The next section will evaluate the Church’s role in fueling the spread of incorrect information.

*The Individual*

Individual opinions about HB05043, especially in the context of Eleksyon 2010, are best conveyed by a January 2010 survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS). The survey questioned 2,1000 registered voters. It revealed that 38% of them will vote for presidential candidates who support HB05043, 35% are unfamiliar with the bill, 20% will not let positions on the bill affect their decisions, and...
6% will not vote for candidates who favor HB05043.\textsuperscript{15} This shows that a majority is not swayed by Church opinions on the bill. The survey also shows that only a small proportion of those surveyed firmly align their decision with the Church.

The survey further depicts that 68% of polltakers believe that couples should have access to all family planning methods from public health providers. Approximately 52% find that natural family planning methods are “almost always effective” or “effective most of the time.”\textsuperscript{16} The former statistic is promising, for it conveys that the general population is vying for reproductive rights. Tides are turning, as evidenced by the January 2010 appointment of a new Secretary of Health who is a staunch supporter of modern contraceptives and HB05043. However, the latter statistic remains staggering, considering that many still believe that natural methods are the best means to manage family sizes. As cited earlier, studies have shown that widespread practice of natural family practices have led to numerous unintended pregnancies and abortions that could have been preventable with access to accurate information.\textsuperscript{17}

Bautista emphasizes that if the explicit Church stance does not deter couples from modern contraception, the misinformation that has been propagated in part by the


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

Church has obstructed the use of condoms and birth control. For example, he chronicles the story of Nang Ising, who is ignorant of the Church’s official claims on contraception, but whose husband refuses to use condoms because of suspicions of condom porosity.\textsuperscript{18} To this day, the CBCP believes condom use is unreliable. As recent as March 2, 2010, CBCP President Nereo Odchimar stated, “Given its high failure rate, the condom cannot really put a stop to AIDS.”\textsuperscript{19}

Increasing support for HB05043 among individuals portrays that the Church is not completely influencing individual mentalities. However, it has partially contributed to the misguided claims about contraception. It is here, rather than its direct attitudes on HB05043, where the Church has been able to more readily influence individual decisions.

\textit{Conclusion}

Being that the hierarchy has not been able to win over the electorate who supports HB05043, the Church has directly penetrated at least three dimensions of Robertson’s global field model. The hierarchy has used familiar tactics of opposition to appeal to human conscience, has utilized its strong political platform to raise resistance against the bill and its predecessors, and has created suspicions with which international bodies are struggling to compete. Yet, the Church’s indirect influence on


spreading incorrect information has enabled it to implicitly penetrate the dimension of the individual. Hence, the overpowering presence in politics has contributed to the stagnation of reproductive health bills in recent years. It waits to be seen if the strength generated from the People Power Movements remain or if it has significantly waned in the upcoming elections of May 2010.
CONCLUSION

The Catholic Church in the Philippines has been able to penetrate all four levels of Robert Robertson’s global field model – the individual, the nation-state, the international sphere, and the individual. The CBCP has closely abided by the Vatican’s theology on natural law and how it applies to notions of family and procreation. Philippine bishops have used the teachings in *Humanae Vitae* and *Evangelium Vitae* to appeal to the human conscience of Filipinos. The Church is also inextricably linked to the formation of the Philippine nation-state, especially cementing its role in politics by leading a national movement to overthrow the Marcos dictatorship. In the international sphere, the Holy See held staunch opposition to liberal understandings of reproductive health, and the Philippines closely followed its position in the Cairo and Beijing Conferences of 1994 and 1995. By firmly standing by the Catholic Church all these years, the government has allowed a culture to develop in which the majority of women using family planning methods resort to natural approaches such as the rhythm method or withdrawal. This has contributed to the amount of unintended pregnancies, clandestine abortions, and unchecked population control. As a result, poverty levels, population growth rates, and maternal health statistics are considerably higher than in Mexico.

The Mexican Catholic hierarchy has been unable to sufficiently penetrate the dimensions of Robertson’s model. The Catholic Church in Mexico appeals to conscience according to Vatican teachings, yet the movement towards secularization in
the formation of the Mexican nation-state has barred Church involvement in politics. Despite the Vatican’s presence in the international discourse about reproductive health, Mexico has managed to push a relatively successful family planning program, which was initiated in the 1970s. The country been effective to the point where discussions about reproductive care have migrated to the topic of abortion, whereas Filipinos still struggle with the issue of contraception. Because Mexico has cultivated a modern contraception culture within individual citizens, scholars project that the country is able to attain the MDG goal of lowering the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015.

Major contributors to the progress of reproductive health in Mexico are agents of civil society. Robertson’s global field model would do well to acknowledge this fifth dimension. The women’s movement and reproductive health advocates were essential factors in pushing contraception and abortion on the political agenda. Yes, funding from international agencies significantly enable them to do their work. However, they have made significant contributions on their own accord by providing technical assistance to government, implementing policies on the ground, and interrelating with the women most affected by these policies. The Philippines has its share of women’s rights groups and reproductive health supporters making commendable improvements. Nevertheless, the overwhelming presence of the Philippine Catholic Church has constrained Filipino civil society at a much higher degree when juxtaposed to the social and political climate of Mexico.
By using Robertson’s global field model, it can be concluded that the Philippines cannot emulate Mexico’s road to increased accessibility to reproductive health care services despite their shared colonial history and the pervasive spread of Catholicism in both countries. The Philippines needs to make its constitutional separation of church and state clearer in its activities so that international and civil society groups can empower the country to develop stable family planning initiatives and sufficiently respond to the debilitating conditions of its society.

If the Philippines cannot appropriate elements of Mexico’s route towards increased access to reproductive services, the country must find its own pathway that is sensitive to its history, culture, and politics. More work in liberation theology, especially in feminist theology, is needed to supply the Philippines with options that are mutually respectful of both sides of the reproductive health care debate. It provides a platform to incorporate Catholic ideals, and also offers language that removes the constraints of hegemonic Church doctrine on family and motherhood. If the Philippines cannot make a complete move towards secularization in terms of family planning, feminist theology can provide a moderate ground for which to house discussion on reproductive health care. More study on feminist theology may also do well in Mexico, where citizens are comfortable with contradictions between their Catholic self and modern realities. Instead of compartmentalizing different identities and growing accustomed to polemics, hypocrisies and inconsistencies, individuals may
begin to reconcile faith with contemporary society through concepts developed in
liberation and feminist theologies.
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