Finding ‘Refuge’ and ‘Home’ in Religion: The Case of Unificationist and Roman Catholic Filipina Marriage Migrants in Korea

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Abstract

If Durkheim “was convinced that religion, as an institution, had lost its vitality...in modern societies” (Chidester 1986: 7), how come many people, if not all, still hold on to it? This study on religion and Filipina marriage migration to Korea based on participant observation and in-depth interviews with ten Filipina marriage migrants argues that religion, in this era of migration and globalization, has not lost its influence as some of its functions still hold true today. The sense of alienation caused by their unfamiliarity with their new society, new culture and their being discriminated as ‘others’ have led them to find or form new communities and new identities. Results
of the interviews reveal that religion has facilitated their integration into the society, has extended to them physical and social refuge against their marginalization and has provided them a sense of belonging to a new community and new religious identity.

Keywords: Filipina Marriage Migrants, Marriage Migration, Religion, Roman Catholic Church, Unification Church

Introduction

Of the total 82 359 Filipinos in Korea in 2010 (Commission on Overseas Filipinos 2010 Report), Filipino marriage migrants were considered the second biggest population in Korea. As of 2010, it is estimated that there were 1 694 Filipino marriage migrants living in Korea (Ibid). They are mostly located in different parts of Korea but most of whom reside in the rural farming areas (Yim 2009).

Filipinas married to Koreans through the Unification Church in the first half of the 1990s are said to be the first group of Filipinas to marry Korea men. It is reported that there were 983 Filipino-Korean couples who got married in Manila in 1996 administered by Rev. Moon through a satellite screen (Kim MJ 2009). However, they are not the first Filipinos to be married with Koreans. In fact, it was the Filipino soldiers who came to
Korea during the Korean Civil War (1950-53) who were first married to Korean women. Some of the Filipino soldiers while stationed here during the war married Korean women and after the war, they brought their Korean spouses with them back home to the Philippines. However, tides have changed and Filipinas now more than Filipino men are spouses of Korean nationals. I term these women Filipina marriage migrants in the course of this study. ‘When, why, and how did they migrate to Korea?’, ‘How did they and still do, deal with the existing difficulties and cultural conflicts?’, and ‘What role did religion play in their adjustments as migrants in Korea?’ are the questions this research aimed to answer.

Religion and Migration

What is one thing that connects migration to religion? The answer lies in the sense of alienation migrants feel in their new society. As Hollifield points out, “migration like modernization itself, may contribute to a sense of alienation (2008: 217). But what does this term alienation mean? And what does religion have to do with it? Marx, Weber and Durkheim are the three great social scientists who considered alienation the central theme of their works (Seeman 1959).

Marx’s idea of alienation is more of a class-based one. For him, alienation is when a worker has lost his/her species-
essence or species-being, i.e., his creativity, value, “intrinsic meaning and pride in work” (Ibid: 790). The worker is seen as “alienated to the extent that the prerogative and means of decision are expropriated by the ruling entrepreneurs” (Ibid: 784). In this sense, he/she becomes estranged with himself/herself and is degraded into commodities (Ibid: 790). This sense of alienation is brought about by the emergence of capitalism, a system which creates social inequality and social injustice between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Religion, Mark further contends, has not alleviated the proletariat from it; rather it has even justified the existence of such because it teaches the poor to accept their lot and not to complain about it. On the other hand, Weber views alienation as disenchantment or the “de-magification of the world” (Bell 1977: 427). This term refers “the idea that the world has lost its mystery, that men and not Gods can rule the world, or that beyond there is nothing, just the void, the underlying thread of modernism which is nihilism” (Ibid). This, Weber believes, has contributed to the lost of appeal of religion. Meanwhile, Durkheim’s alienation is associated with the term anomie which refers to normlessness. Anomie as normlessness refers to a situation where “the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behavior” (Ibid). Along with this sense of alienation and secularization of the world which “derives from the rationalization of life, the
profanation from the imperious self of modernity” (Ibid: 442), Durkheim believes that religion has been losing its influence. The once powerful Religion that socially cemented and bonded people has now become “no longer the ‘collective conscience’ of the society” (Ibid).

It is within this line of argument that this research aimed to focus on. This study contends that religion still exerts its influence in this modern world. Aside from taking normlessness as one component of alienation, I would like to include isolation as another component of the term. Specifically, in the case of Filipina marriage migrants in Korea in this study, it is this sense of alienation caused by their unfamiliarity with their new society, new culture and their being discriminated that led them to find or form “new communities and new identities” (Hollifield 2008: 218) which they found in the religious institutions.

Emile Durkheim defines religion as ”a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called Church, all those adhere to them” (quoted in Religionfacts.com). Religion in this sense is composed of material and nonmaterial aspects and is consisted of three things, namely; ideology, a building/place acting as an institution that advocates and propagates such ideology and the people who believe in them. In this manner, the ideology is the nonmaterial form, the church is the material form; and the
people who adhere to and practice such ideology is both the material and nonmaterial forms. As a material form, people are physical and social beings that form a community of believers. As a nonmaterial form, such ideology in the form of beliefs and practices are contained within the minds and thoughts of its believers, and the people believing and practicing such teachings out are a combination of both forms.

As Durkheim further points out, religion functions in several ways. First and foremost, religion unites people morally. It provides stability and cohesion to them. It holds them together literally in the church and symbolically in beliefs. As a collectivity, it provides them religious and moral identity. Second, in achieving the purpose of uniting them together, religion employs strategies of providing meaning and purpose to their lives and using social control methods. Third, in doing so, religion integrates people into the norms and traditions of the society. Thus, religion is seen as one mechanism that keeps the social order of the society.

It should be noted, however, in the era of globalization and migration, such traditional functions do not suffice in explaining the influence of religion in the lives of the migrants. With the emergence of transnational religion and transnational migrants, the role of religion goes beyond that.

In the face of uncertainties living in a foreign country, religion specifically transnational religion has played a very important
role in the lives of many, if not all, migrants and would-be migrants. More often than not, the church has been a very important institution where migrants greatly depend on. Religious institutions function in their lives in many ways. It operates as a source of spiritual, economic and social resources, respect, and refuge in their adjustments into their new society.

As a source of spiritual support, religion is used as a justification in the migration process by those who plan to migrate. It takes a crucial role in their decisions to migrate, preparations for the journey, arrival, settlement in their new society, and development of transnational linkages. It provides them spiritual encouragement to endure the hardship of migration specifically to those who take perilous journey such as the undocumented migrants (Hagan and Ebaugh 2003; Williams 2008). As a source of identity, religion provides them social identity, ethnic identity, historical identity, religious identity or gender identity (Chong 1988; Hagan and Ebaugh 2003; Hirschman 2004; Cadge and Ecklund 2007). As a source of economic and spiritual resources, religion provides them opportunities for economic mobility and social recognition through information-sharing such as housing and employment (Hirschman 2004, Lee 2006, Cadge and Ecklund 2007; Connor 2009, Kim, EM et. al. 2009). Furthermore, the church acts as surrogate families to those children whose parents are working (Hirschman 2004). And interestingly, in the case of transnational
churches, they help migrants retain their social capital back home as well as provide migrants access to social capital in the host society (Cadge and Ecklund 2007). As a source of refuge, religion through churches offers migrants refuge from the discrimination of the host society due to their marginalized status. As a source of respect, religion provides its members opportunities to do volunteer work within the church. Religious organizations influence the members to reach out to other ethnic communities and participate in civic and political life of their host society (Hirschman 2004, Cadge and Ecklund 2007). Doing so gives their migrant believers a sense of recognition from the members of their host society.

Religion, as Durkheim again points out, has united people in moral ways which contributes to the making of the ‘collectivity’ and has ushered them to their social integration/assimilation into the society. And as the above-mentioned studies emphasize, religion has become an institution that caters to the needs of the migrants - socially, spiritually and economically. It should be noted, however, that religion does not always function positively. Religion confines women in the private domain of homes and within the boundaries of domestic services and controls their actions morally (Fresnoza-Flot 2010), thus strengthening its patriarchal nature (Ebaugh and Chafetz 1999). As such, religion limits the capabilities of woman to exercise their agency as creative individuals and active citizens beyond the private sphere.
of homes.

It is within this context that this research on 10 Filipina marriage migrants in Korea and the role of religion in their lives was conceived. This study argues that contrary to Durkheim’s view of religion as losing its vitality in the modern world, I argue however, that religion has not lost its influence particularly in this era of globalization and migration. Religion has not only become the Filipina marriage migrants’ social, economic and spiritual resources; it has also become their source of respect and recognition and their source of belonging. Their identification with their own religious groupings and their affiliation with the larger Filipino community in Korea as recognized Filipino organizations at the Philippine Embassy in Korea is one resource which they make use of to deal with their material and spiritual needs and one strategy to confront their marginal status in the Korean society.

**Research Methodology**

This research is based on the case studies of ten Filipina marriage migrants who belong to two religious organizations namely, Roman Catholicism (hereafter RC) and Unification Church (hereafter UC). The experiences of these women were captured as best as possible through my in-depth interviews with them and my personal observations when I visited, talked,
and socialized with them. Such experiences were meticulously transcribed, written down and carefully analyzed.

Profile of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Occupation prior to coming to Korea</th>
<th>Length of stay in Korea</th>
<th>Husband’s Age</th>
<th>Husband’s Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inbay</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Antique</td>
<td>UC</td>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
<td>Vocational Course</td>
<td>missionary</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>married</td>
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<td>Faith</td>
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<td>Cabanatuan</td>
<td>UC</td>
<td>Office work</td>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>married</td>
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<tr>
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<td>35</td>
<td>South Cotabato</td>
<td>UC</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
<td>College Level</td>
<td>Assistant Manager</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>separated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lorna</td>
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<td>Pasay</td>
<td>UC</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>Book Keeper</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>driver</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Middle of divorce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>College Level</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>widow</td>
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<td>Con</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Iloilo</td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>Vocational Course</td>
<td>salesclerk</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Separated</td>
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<td>Janler</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Iloilo</td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Uniform RC</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>salesclerk</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Sweet</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Valenzuela</td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Domestic work</td>
<td>College Level</td>
<td>Domestic Work</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>farmer</td>
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<td>RC</td>
<td>Domestic Work</td>
<td>College Level</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
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Note: *UC*- Unificationism

*RC*- Roman Catholicism

In total, I interviewed twenty-one but since I decided to focus on the two religious groups, the Unification Church and Catholic Church, I decided to concentrate on the Unificationists and the Roman Catholics who belong to the ‘S’ Center. Their total number is ten, four Unificationists and six Roman Catholics. Based on the data I gathered, the Unificationists are older, more
educated, work in white collar jobs and have stayed in Korea longer than the Catholics. They have been living in Seoul from the day of their arrival in Korea. On the other hand, the Catholics are either divorced or separated from their husbands and the age gap between them and their husbands is higher than those of the Unificationists.’ They originally lived in the provinces in Korea and their husbands are farmers except for two.

In terms of their ages, all respondents range from 35 to 59 with an average age of 43.2. In the case of the Unificationists, their ages range from 35 to 59 with an average age of 46.2. Meanwhile, the ages of the Roman Catholics range from 36 to 48 with an average age of 41.1. Thus, it can be seen the Unificationists are much older than the Roman Catholics. Furthermore, it can be assumed that those who get married through marriage agencies are younger, where youth is a part of their ‘desirability’ in the marriage market. With regards to their husbands’ ages, their ages range from 46 and to 60 with an average age of 50.8 as compared to the Filipinas’ average of 43.2 which makes a 7.6 age gap. Specifically, the average age of the husbands of the Unificationists is 53.7 as compared to their average age of 46.2 which makes a 7.5 age difference. Meanwhile, the average age of the husbands of the Catholics is 48.8 as compared to their average age of 41.1 which makes a 7.7 age gap. Thus, it can be seen here that the age gap is higher
between the Catholics and their Korean spouses than the Unificationists and their Korean spouses. Based on this age gap, it can be assumed that Filipinas who got married through marriage agencies are much younger than those Filipinas who got married through Unification Church, but there is no way to assume that Korean men who got married through marriage agencies are much younger than those who got married through the Unification Church. This is primarily because Korean men who turn to marriage agencies or Unification Church are usually old bachelors in the rural farming areas or divorcees who usually live with their children in the cities. However, one thing is for sure: Filipinas are almost always way much younger than their husbands.

As for their educational attainment, two graduated from university, five reached college, two obtained vocational training and one finished high school. Eight of them had worked in the Philippines before coming to Korea. Specifically, the Unificationists have higher educational status than the Catholics. It is therefore no wonder that the three among the four Unificationists do white collar jobs as English teachers and office worker while the Catholics do blue and pink collar jobs in the field of factory and private houses performing domestic chores.

As for their marital status, two are only married among them, three are divorced, three are separated, one is a widow and one is in the middle of divorce at the time of the interview. It should
be noted that the Catholics are all single mothers except for one who does not have a child. Except her, all the children of my respondents are young and are in their early years of education in the primary level with the oldest being in the 6th grade level.

All respondents have lived in Korea for at least 10 years. The average year of residence for the Unificationists is 12.2 while it is 10.6 for the Catholics. It can be observed that Unificationists have stayed in Korea a little much longer than the Catholics.

All respondents came from various parts of the Philippines. Looking at the following map, the Philippines is divided into three big islands, namely; Luzon (the northern part) where the capital city, Manila, is located; Visayas (the central part) and Mindanao (the southern part). Nine of them came from the province while one from Metro Manila, four from Minadanao, four from Visayas and two from Luzon. This makes majority of my respondents, *provincianas* (Filipino term for women who come from the provinces) who can speak other languages other than Filipino and English, the official languages in the Philippines. As I myself, am also a *provinciana*, it was interesting to converse with them in mixed languages during the interview. My being ‘one’ of them ethnically and linguistically is an advantage because it that made them easily comfortable to open up their thoughts, opinions and even their very own personal experiences. At the same time, it is also a disadvantage as this cannot free me from committing personal biases in favor of
them.

Four women in this study are affiliated with the UC in Korea managed by the Koreans and six women are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church managed by a Filipino chaplain called Hyehwadong Filipino Catholic Community (hereafter HFCC). Both churches are located in Seoul. As this study focused on the role of religion in their lives, I deem it wise to first present the salient features of the two mentioned religious institutions for a better understanding of their influence in the lives of my respondents.

**Unification Church**

Unification Church or the so-called -The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HAS-UWC) was founded by Sun Myung Moon or simply Rev. Moon, on 1st May 1954. His teachings are mostly based on the Bible and are heavily influenced by Taoist and Confucian philosophies. These are all compiled into a book called, ‘Exposition of the Divine Principle’ (EDP) which is considered the main text of the Unification believers, also called as Unificationists.

One of the basic teachings of the UC is that the Fall of Man was the result of the illicit sexual relations between Satan and Eve. As a consequence, Adam and Eve were driven away from the Garden of Eden. From that sin, mankind started to suffer. In
order to save the world from evils, God sent Jesus. However, Jesus died without finishing God’s plan of saving mankind. Unificationists believe that Rev. Moon is the Second Messiah sent by God to finish the mission Jesus was not able to fulfill.

One of the primary goals of the Unificationists is to create an ‘ideal family’, or a ‘family of sinless blood.’ One thing Unification Church is famous for is its arranged marriages which are usually done though picture matching and mass weddings. According to Rev. Moon, intermarriage is one way to create ‘ideal families’ that would contribute to peace and true love across the globe.

The Philippines has not been spared from such interethnic marriages. Many Filipinas got married with Koreans in the first half of the 1990s through the UC. These women are said to be the first group of Filipinas who married Korean men. They distinguish themselves from other international members within the Unification Church, and from other Filipino groups in Korea, as the Philippine Women’s Association in Korea (PHILWAK) in 1998, which was later changed to Philippine Blessed Missionary in Korea (PBMK) in 2009 which has hitherto been used.

**Roman Catholicism**

In contrast to the 58-year existence of UC, Roman Catholicism has existed in the Philippines for more than 500 years brought
about by the Spanish colonization of the country. It has been
the dominant religion in the Philippines and more than 80% of
Filipinos is Catholics (CIA Factbook). In fact, my Unificationist
respondents were raised up Catholic devotees prior to their
conversion to Unificationism in the Philippines.

Contrary to the belief of the Unificationists, Roman Catholics
believe that the Fall of Man from the Garden of Eden was
brought about by Eve eating the fruit of the knowledge of good
and evil. Moreover, Roman Catholics do not absolutely believe
that the purpose of all humans is to procreate, though marriage
with the purpose of procreation based on love is one of the holy
sacraments of the Church. There are people who can live their
lives unmarried like the priests and nuns. In Korea, the
Hyehwadong Filipino Catholic Community, composed of various
Filipino migrants in Korea specifically migrant labor workers, is
a well-known Filipino Catholic group in Korea. It is frequented
by Filipinos living not just in Seoul but also by Filipinos living in
other parts of the country.

The history of HFCC can be traced back to the Catholic
worship gathering first held in 1991 at the house of Gary
Martinez in Wangsibri (Kim, SI 2010). The first mass was
transferred and was held in Jayangdong through the initiative
and support of Sr. Mary Ann and the Mission Society of the
Philippines (MSP) in December 1992 (Ibid). Jayangdong
eventually became the Jayangdong Filipino Community, thereby
making it the first Filipino Catholic Community in Korea. As the number of worshippers grew and the Church receiving more complaints from the Koreans living nearby about the noise they could not understand (Personal Interview, Bong, 21 March 2012), the Korean Catholic Archdiocese of Seoul transferred the mass to Hyehwadong after 4 years in December 1996 (Kim, SI 2010). Since then, HFCC started to flourish.

According to Sambayanan, the official website of Hyehwadong Filipino Community (HFCC), HFCC’s mission includes catering to the needs of all migrant workers with Mary as the model, organizing activities and programs to promote holistic formation of volunteers, building and extending the family spirit within and outside the community, and establishing linkage with other communities and organizations and agencies to help support the needs and project of the migrant workers. There are about 2,000 church-goers on Sundays at the Hyehwadong Catholic Church and about 250 volunteers in 20 ministries at the Pastoral Center for Filipino Migrants (PCFM). Fr. Alvin Parantar has been the chaplain since 2008, replacing Fr. Glenn Giovanni Jaron.

The Pastoral Center for Filipino Migrants (PCFM) in Songbokdong, which is located nearby Hyehwadong, is managed by the Missionary of the Society of the Philippines (MSP) under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Seoul. Its primary function is to temporarily shelter and provide counseling to Filipinos in distress. Most Filipinos who come for help are migrant workers
who have labor and health problems and Filipina marriage migrants who are victims of domestic violence. The Center currently rents two buildings to shelter these women and their children who live and sleep separately from each other. When the mothers work outside on weekdays, the nuns and volunteers take care of their babies and children at the agabang (아가방), literally translated as ‘child room.’ The mothers can take their children out only on Saturdays or on their days off and return them to the nuns the following day. It is from this Center that six of my Catholic respondents came from and whom I learned from my key informant who has been assisting the Filipino chaplains managing the Pastoral Center for Filipino Migrants (PCFM) for about seven years. How religion is interwoven in their various migration experiences is described, explored and analyzed in the following.

A. Unificationists

The primary reason of the Unificationists for coming to Korea is to fulfill their goal of achieving the ‘ideal family’ composed of a husband, wife, and children. It is a family born out of marriage that is ‘blessed’ by Rev. Moon, thus calling their marriage a ‘Blessing.’ Theirs, I argue, is a desire for a marriage strongly based on ‘spirituality’.

Until I learned the teaching from the Unification Church that what is the
purpose of being a woman? We even have this saying that you would only feel what it feels to be like a mother if you become one, right? Until I attended many seminars, until I myself, wanted to get married at an early age, although I didn’t have the knowledge about marriage (Joy, 35).

Unificationists believe that a woman is born to procreate. They desire to achieve their goal of motherhood espoused by the teachings of Rev. Moon, their founder and Father. They believe that a woman’s life becomes only complete once she gets married and gives birth. This belief reinforces the traditional role of women as mothers and wives. Not fulfilling one’s roles as mothers and wives simply means a life live without purpose. However, as children of Rev. Moon, he would not allow that. In order for such roles to materialize, Rev. Moon can give these women their partners whom he can see through his clairvoyance. As one respondent confidently remarks,

We have faith in Rev. Moon that he can give us the best partner for our future life, that is how we believe. Besides, Rev. Moon can see the future of each person, he can see if people can create this kind of family. That is why he can match millions of people around the world. It is God’s will for people to create an ideal family based on the Divine principle. It is also the purpose of God’s creation. That is why God created man. Of course, God wants a give-and-take relationship, like parent-and-child relationship. We are all God’s children. That is the very purpose of Church, to give God glory and joy by fulfilling and making an ideal family (Faith, 41).

Based on her words above, the Unification Church can be
seen as reinforcing the Confucian traditional role of children to obey the will of their father, which is clearly evident in the nature of Unificationism, not to mention the founder as coming from, and oriented towards, such Confucian society. In this regard, Unificationists in this study were willing to be matched to any man of any nationality blessed by Rev. Moon as part of their responsibility to get married and procreate which are both the will of their Father on Earth in the person of Rev. Moon and their Father in Heaven in name of God. Interestingly, upon learning that they would be matched to Koreans, they became more excited and willing to come to Korea like the following respondent.

As my knowledge about the Unification Church increased, I felt I wanted to marry in my early age. I decided to marry a Korean man and I believe Rev. Moon. Also, I wanted to know him more and see him personally, see his homeland, what is Unification in Korea all about, what is Korea all about. It was really interesting to me at that time. So for me, my greatest desire is American and Korean. I believe in UC, the founder is Rev. Moon, and I want to know more about Rev. Moon. How can I know him if I don’t meet him, right? So that is why I decided to come to Korea (Joy, 35).

Coming to Korea for these women is a kind of ‘pilgrimage’ where their migration takes on a spiritual dimension, to the land of their ‘Father’ (Kim, HM 2012). In fact, based on the family-oriented worldview of Unification Church, Korea is considered the ‘Father’ country, Japan the ‘mother’ country, and
the Philippines as one ‘daughter’ country. Thus, migration for marriage to Korea in this sense, is justified for leaving the country as the ‘woman coming home to the land of her Father’. However, in terms of their ‘Father’s matching,’ as his will for them, it should be noted that they do not just accept whoever is presented to them. They emphasized that they were given a choice to accept him or reject him. They strongly pointed out that the Church does not force them to get married with whoever the minister would present and that they always have a choice.

Although the leader would say, “Oh, Joy, do you want to get married?” It’s up to me if I want or not. Maybe others who really do not have money, in other agency, but in the Unification Church, you are not forced, you have a choice. If you don’t want to get married with the one she presents, then no (Joy, 35).

Based on her story, she emphasized that the Church doesn’t coerce them to follow and they have the freedom to either refuse or accept. But prior to such proposal, however, they had already been oriented towards the ‘good’ sides of the chosen Korean men’, not to mention that it is the ‘will’ of the ‘Father’ and would be ‘painful’ to disobey his choice. Such strategy is seen a subtle way of persuasion, a way to show that the church does not impose itself on her. This is well reflected in the story of Janeler, who is a Roman Catholic- turned- Unificationist-turned- Roman
There is an interpreter beside you. She would interview, “So, do you already like him?” He is rich. He has business. He has a good life in Korea. He earns much every month. He can help your family. Now, do you like him?” That’s the question (Janeler 43).

In achieving the ‘ideal family,’ it should be noted that the persuasion of creating a family as the will of God is not really the attraction here. Rather, the subtle way of convincing and the bait of ‘economic capability’ of the husband as a good economic provider contribute to convincing these women to marry Korean men, not to mention the economic support the husband can extend to her family which is one of the main reasons why many of my Filipina respondents came to Korea. What is emphasized and reinforced here is a husband who economically provides for his family and a wife who performs reproductive and domestic services at home (Kim, MJ 2009).

B. Roman Catholics

Unlike the Unificationists, the primary motive of the Catholic respondents in getting married with Korean men through marriage agencies is to help their family back home. Their primary consideration when they decided to get married was to help their aging parents and other family members. It is not much different to say that theirs is also a form of filial piety
Towards their parents. Contrary to the Unificationists’ migration for marriage, theirs, I argue, is a marriage for migration.

To help our parents, right? And when you saw that your neighbor has a beautiful house because she got married with a foreigner, how could you not marry one? So when he was introduced to me and proposed marriage after about a year, I said ‘yes’ (Jane 40).

Like her and her fellow Catholic respondents, they blindly think that marriage to foreigners especially those from Western countries would give them and their families back home a better economic advantage. They consider marriage to a foreigner one way to leave the country and a fast solution to get rid of poverty. As one respondent puts it, 

Why I got married with a Korean? The money is imported (foreign), not the Korean man (laughs). Actually, (with a serious expression on her face), the reason why I came here is because of my father who was sick. Actually, he did not attend my wedding, he was angry. But I just wanted to help him and my family (Lovely, 37).

Marrying for the sake of oneself is always out of the question for these women. Like most Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), they also cited helping family as one of the main reasons for leaving the country. Interestingly, in a poll conducted by Yahoo Philippines on the question of “What characteristics should a modern-day hero possess?” in its search for seven modern
heroes (or heroines) for 2012, results as of 1st July 2012 showed that selflessness got the most votes of 56% compared to bravery and perseverance which garnered 19% and 26% respectively. Just like the Filipino workers abroad, my Catholic respondents considered the welfare of their own family especially their parents first when they decided to get married. It can be implied that what they are doing here for them is a kind of ‘sacrifice’ for the sake of others first, where their needs come second. Their motives can be seen as congruent with that of being ‘heroines’ of the country, the ones who go abroad for the sake of one’s family. They are ‘heroines’ no matter what they do, and no matter what humiliations or marginalization they would experience, they will always be heroines because they were brave enough to venture in the unknown place, ‘sacrifice’ their feelings even if they do not love their husbands for the greater good of others and persevere the loneliness and difficulties abroad just to extend help in any kind back home. theirs however, is in the form of marriage migration through marriage agencies, and not labor migration through employment agencies.

Migration to Korea

A. Mode of Marriage

Marriage brokerages under the Philippine law (Republic Act 9655 which was enacted on 13 June 1990) are explicitly and
officially illegal in the Philippines. Yet, through the collaborations with the locals, their illegal activities continue to operate in the country. Four out of my six Catholic respondents got married through marriage agencies in the Philippines.

**Group Interview**

Con: How much did he pay for you?
Helen: Me? It was much, 10 million won.
Sweet: He paid 8.5 million for me.
Helen: In my case, he paid twice. He paid to our marriage agency in the Philippines and the marriage agency here as well. He said he paid the most for me. The first time we met, there were many of us. I was the oldest, my companions were very young, at least 15 years old. I was 30 years old then. They really looked young. As for me, I was old but my face did not look old my age. The first person he liked was me, but I was old. He was 40 plus then. The recruiters were in doubt and told me that maybe I had a child already. I said none but I was not a virgin anymore (everybody laughs). I am really single. They asked me, “Really?” You know what they did to me? The Filipina and Korean recruiters?

Con: If you are a virgin, you are quite expensive. If you are not, you are somehow cheap.
Helen: I don't know but they examined your skin and your belly.
Con: If you have a child, you have a scar on your stomach.
Sweet: To hell with them! They look, as if they are normal.
Helen: They did not look at the upper part of your torso, only the lower part (raising her shirt and showing her tummy). “Really?” “Prove it!” they said. They looked at my tummy and examined my skin and then exclaimed, ”You are really a single woman.” I just learned from the agency that he paid such amount. The recruiters even fought among each other. The first one to recruit was my friend, then she gave me
to her acquaintance who was looking for someone to recruit to such agency. Three people recruited me. They fought among each other on the amount of money they received for bringing me to that agency.

Con: And you did not even get a centavo of it!
Sweet: You know, her husband's present wife is also a Filipina.

As marriage brokerage is recognized by the global economic market and worked on well by those with vested interests for profits, it continues to operate despite being prohibited in the country. In this manner therefore, women like the respondents above have now become commodities. Specifically, the commodity being exchanged is ‘young, healthy women.’ It should be noted that the Korean law situates marriage brokerage agencies under the Consumer Law wherein the ‘consumers’ (the Korean men) are protected, and the conditions of the ‘commodity’ (Filipinas) are not taken care of (Kim 2012). Women are treated exactly like the common products exchanged in the market as they are accorded value depending on their qualities such as age and virginity and they can even be replaced. They are left without choices and no power to express their own feelings, choices, and will, exactly like speechless and lifeless commodities devoid of feelings. As such, when they started to live in Korea, they were expected to perform their functions just like expected from any bought commodity. Such law can be construed as a mechanism that further works to the disadvantage of these women. Rather than the normative role of the law as ensuring justice and
fairness, the rights of these women as human beings are ignored primarily because they are perceived as ‘commodities. More than identifying which one is the consumer and which one is the product, both can be seen as ‘victims’ of the capitalist system. In the Marxian point of view, the value of both the Korean men and the Filipinas as human beings has been degraded into commodities.

Nevertheless, rather than viewing these women as absolutely hapless, if not entirely helpless, within this context of economic constraint, these women strategize to survive, where Kandiyoti (1998) terms as patriarchal bargain. Their perceived ‘passive resistance’ here can be viewed as already “claiming their half of this particular bargain—protection in exchange for submissiveness and propriety.” (Kandiyoti 1998: 283).

Filipinas who got married through Unification Church in the 1990s, on the other hand, were at first introduced to their Korean partner through pictures. However, personal introductions were made in the 1990s wherein the Korean man came to the Philippines in person and was introduced to the Filipina in person by the Korean pastor and Filipino pastor. They were given a chance to go out and spend time with each other. Once they agreed to live as husband and wife, they could get married. Then, they processed the necessary documents and the Korean man paid the expenses like processing fees, airfares, and many others.
So since they come in group from Korea all those documents are required to fill up by brothers and process together in one. And since this is a marrying status, brothers are required to pay whatever expenses, airplane tickets, documents processing fees (Joy, 35).

It can be seen that from the very start, Filipinas who are matched with Koreans through this system are financially dependent on their husbands. They do not have any expenses to shoulder and do not have anything to offer to alleviate the financial burdens their husbands except their bodies. This is not much different from the Catholic respondents who predominantly got married through marriage agencies. The Korean men paid the marriage agencies for these women including the airfares and other expenses. In the case of the above Unificationist respondent, ‘brothers’ in church who have the responsibility to shoulder everything is merely a disguise or a justification of an outright buying of a wife.

From 2002 in the case of the Unification Church, the Korean man does not need to go to the Philippines to get married legally. Filipinas in the Philippines who wish to marry Koreans through the church are invited to Korea on a missionary visa. Once they made up their minds on marrying a Korean, they can get married in Korea. The Church then applies for the document for legal capacity to marry at the Philippine embassy in Itaewon. Once it is approved by the Philippine embassy, they can get married and report it to the Philippine embassy. The Philippine
embassy then would forward it to the National Statistics Office (NSO). Their marriage would then automatically register both in the Philippine and Korean government Statistics offices respectively. (Personal Interview, Faith, 41, February 2012).

B. Preparations

Complete Trust in the Collectivity

The Unificationist interviewees here believed that the church, the leader, and their elder sisters in church would welcome and take care of them upon their arrival in Korea. As one interviewee, Joy remarked: “I’m not afraid totally because I have the list or contact of our Korean Unification leaders in Korea.” Thus, it can be seen that religion provides her ‘spiritual resources’ and later ‘social resources’ in her decision to migrate and endure the hardships she might be facing in the new country (Hagan and Ebaugh 2003). Filipina Unificationists interviewed in this study seriously prepared their minds and hearts prior to their coming to Korea. They attended seminars and prayed a lot to God for their future husband and family in Korea. Besides, that is the only hope they had for “migrants make more use of, or rely more strongly on, religion when they feel little control over the situations they confront; when risks are extremely high” (Hagan and Ebaugh 2003). Religion is their only pillar of support and living in the homeland of their faith can alleviate the difficulties they would be experiencing.
Besides engendering these women’s journey to another land, it can also be seen here that the Unification Church acts as their facilitator in integrating them into the Korean society which is cited as one role of the church to its migrant believers (Mol 1971). This is evidenced by the pre-socializing efforts the church members in the Philippines conducted to Filipinas prior to their coming to Korea. As the following respondent recalls,

We live in one center in Quiapo in the Philippines. While staying there, we did fund raising and food raising activities. We did not receive any allowance then. Maybe, the budget was insufficient, so we did food raising activities so we had something to eat. We went to Divisoria (a big market district in Manila) at dawn, asked for some fish or vegetables, those were the only things we asked for. Then, we cooked them at the Center and ate them together. There were many of us who lived there. In there, we had seminars about Korean culture but we did not learn Korean language then. We just learned Korean language when we already came here. We also learned how to make kimchi, and then we prayed to Rev. Moon often (laughs), and how to build a family (Janeler, 43).

Unificationists are taught about Korean culture even in the Philippines as one way to understand the country of their future husbands. They are trained to lessen the culture shock they might experience in their new country. This is indeed useful for them as “studying and reviewing written material and notes about the culture leads to a cognitive mastery that is the cure for cultural shock” (Winkleman 1994: 124) and to be
integrated into the Korean society. However, such activities of the Church are geared towards their assimilation into the Korean society (Pagaduan 2009).

Before even coming to Korea, their schedule is already prepared for them by the Church. The leader of the church nearest the residence of their husbands picks them up at the airport and brings them to his/her house where they would be taught Korean language and Korean culture. This can be seen as one function of their religion in their lives as migrants in Korea, that is, to maintain the cultural norms and traditions of their new society. They have to stay there for a specific period of time depending entirely on the decision of the leader. As one respondent recalls,

We were not led directly to the house of our husband. We had to undergo seminars in groups and after that, we were distributed to the houses of our husband. We were brought to the Unification church nearest the place of your husband. I met the Korean leader. We just visited the house of our husbands, learned basic Korean language for 2 hours, made kimchi. You have to stay there for 2-3 months (Inday, 59).

From the house of the leader, they are taught how to be integrated into the society through language and making kimchi, the Korean traditional food that must always be on the table every meal. Learning Korean language can facilitate not just their integration into the host society but can influence their
acquisition for Korean citizenship which requires language proficiency. In fact, all the Unificationist respondents are good at, if not completely fluent in, Korean language and possess Korean citizenship. Their long years of residence enable them to be familiar with the Korean language, learn it, and use it to the best they could. Unificationists are perceived to be the most adjusted among the marriage migrants (Pagaduan 2009). Indeed, women here are taught to assimilate in their new society. It should be noted, however, that ‘housing’ these women in the residence of their leader can be observed as the Church exercising what Foucault calls ‘governmentality’, a concept which is likened to the “modus operandi of the disciplinary actions” (Tadros 1998: 78). Such ‘housing’ as mentioned previously, has even started way back in the Philippines prior to their coming to Korea. The Church has merely continued such ‘discipline’ merely in a different setting.

Though they are absolutely prohibited to live with their husband right away, they are allowed to visit their husbands or are allowed to ‘date’ so as to know each other in order to have a glimpse of what their marriage life with their husbands would be. As Janeler recalls,

> Our husband could take us out from the Center. We would go somewhere else, but only for a day. He has to ask permission from our leader. For example, we would leave around noon in the afternoon and come back around evening (Janeler 43).
They are given a ‘dating period’ in a way to know each other. During such period, they can decide if they want to go living with their husbands or not as they are still given the choice. However, the stay of these women at the house of the leader is not fixed but can be shortened depending on some conditions.

Because when we came here, we could not stay at our husbands’ house right away. We had to wait for 40 days to 3 months. In my case, only 40 days. Originally, it should be three months, but why only 40 days in my case? Because my husband is an old member of the church, and me too, I joined when I was 18. There are cases that are considered (Faith, 41).

One of the other ‘cases that are considered’ she is referring to is the age for procreation. Since Unification Church emphasizes that woman has to produce children, their age is seriously taken into consideration. As Joy explains,

And then there, it depends on your husband’s age. That time, I had a companion who was 35 years old and her husband was already 40 or something, so why do they have to wait months more or a year to start a family? Our purpose is to start a family, right? So how can you establish a family when you can’t get pregnant? (Joy, 35)

The woman does not have a choice but to produce a child or children (if possible) which is one purpose of being born a woman and an important element in realizing the ‘ideal family.’ It can be surmised therefore, that older women have shorter
period of stay than those who are younger. Interestingly however, in the pursuit of the Unification Church to achieve the ‘ideal family’ and to assist these women settle smoothly in Korea, the Church has paradoxically exercised its control over the lives of these women. The Church exercises what Foucault calls the new disciplinary microtactics and practices (Foucault 1994). In gathering these women in the Church’s Center in the Philippines to ‘housing’ them in the house of their leader upon their arrival in Korea, the Unification Church wants to make sure that its believers are within its range of visibility and that it can keep its ‘gaze’ on them where they can be seen, known, observed and controlled. As Foucault puts it, “by making the individual constantly observable to itself, discipline exercises power with the minimum of violence and is, as a result, more difficult to resist; disciplinary power is less apparently present in its exercise” (Tadros 1998: 90). Through it and other means, religion has produced ‘docile’ and ‘disciplined’ bodies, homogenizing them to act in accordance with the norms and traditions practiced by the host members. By doing so, it has facilitated their integration into the society, thus maintaining the existing social, political and cultural status quo of the society.

Learning about Korea from CFO

Meanwhile, the Catholic respondents in this study merely learned about Korean culture and language through the
seminars conducted by the CFO (Commission of Filipinos Overseas).

When we had the seminar in the Philippines, the lecturer gave us the contact number of places we would go in case we need help. Hyehwadong Church was there (Lovely, 37).

It was not recently that the Filipina has to undergo an additional seminar called Korea Cultural Orientation Seminar. These seminars are conducted for three consecutive days and introduce Korean culture to them (Personal Interview, CFO officers, June 2012).

C. Problems and Difficulties

It is interesting to see these women speak in three different languages and eat spicy Korean foods. It is as if natural to them to switch their conversations in Filipino, then suddenly to Korean, and then to English, or sometimes in their own native dialects back home in the Philippines anytime they feel comfortable doing so. However, prior to being ‘comfortable’ in doing so, how these women struggled to live by upon their arrival in Korea was a puzzle that I was determined to find answers to.

It is inevitable that problems and challenges arise, given the fact that all of them had not been to Korea prior to their marriage or were not completely familiar with the Korean
culture, traditions, language, and especially to the man they barely know and live with. The most common problem is language. Even for the Unificationists who were taught Korean language in the Philippines and during their ‘Separation Period, language still poses one of the biggest challenges not only for them, but to the numerous marriage migrants in Korea except the Korean-Chinese (조선족) who are fluent in Korean. As one respondent recalls,

I struggled a lot especially in communicating especially being a Filipina. Since you are from the Philippines, they treat me as very low type kind of person which hurts my feeling. And one thing I can’t understand in every situation. Since I was starting to adapt ...then my husband did not have any education about the church, so that’s one. ...communication, misunderstanding...and then for them, once you are inside the family, you are already a Korean, that is in their heart, that is their realization. Although you are a foreigner, you have to adapt what is Korean right away. That is their mistake, so until now (Joy, 35).

Besides language barrier, another challenge for the above respondent is the perceived or experienced racial discrimination. She was aware that she came from a less developed country, and that for her, one reason for her being treated lowly. Furthermore, in the process of settling into her new society, the pressure to adjust right away was demanded from her by her husband’s family. It was another challenge she was unprepared to meet. It should be noted that marriage migrants like her
specifically form less developing countries, are portrayed as ‘problems’, ‘objects’, ‘others’ by the media and the public (Oh 2007) and are perceived as individuals who need to be assimilated into the patriarchal and nationalist Korean society by the Korean multicultural policy (Belanger, et. al 2010). These negative perceptions and racial discrimination have greatly contributed to the sense of alienation of these women. In the case of my respondents, these are sufficient reasons to go to church, just like the respondent above. Furthermore, for her as devout Unificationist, the greatest problem was learning that her husband had insufficient knowledge of, and lack of commitment to, the teachings of the Church. Coming to Korea was a fulfillment of her desired ‘ideal family’ but upon realizing that her husband did not have interest in the Church at all, and her long-awaited ‘ideal partner’ was a big frustration, her life was almost shattered. Though realizing that her husband turned out not to be ‘ideal’ at all, she still stayed with him to keep the family together for as long as she could, just like the following Unificationist respondent.

My husband physically abused me. My mouth used to bleed as he would hit me using his knees. I bled, and blood just kept on flowing while I am running away from him. Then I would go round a small store at the back and when I came there and nobody would see me, my Korean neighbors would help me and let me in into their house. Also, you know the ladle, the one you used when cooking, he would hit me with it on the head. Blood just suddenly gushed out from it. I thought it was soup (laughs). Blood just
gushed out, because of course, it’s the head. I carried my baby at my back then, and luckily, my baby was not hit. I already experienced a lot. The minister did not want me to run away, he kept on returning me back to my husband (Janeler 43).

This is a classic example of a body that is controlled coercively. In this sense, religion has imposed itself on her. “Make no mistakes,” says Lease, “religions are about power, about the power to be given you and about the power which controls you” (Strenski, 1998: 346) which indeed is obvious in this case. And if religion is an opium that dulls people to their senses, as Marx puts it, then perhaps she had had enough of it, for religion did not have a positive effect on her anymore. She was not anymore responding to it for the realities of domestic violence she experienced from her supposedly ‘ideal partner’ made her realize the futility of such belief. She already wanted out from such marriage and from the Church she used to think can help her become happy and live a better life, only to be disillusioned in the end. She left the Church and decided to find refuge to the religious institution she was originally a part of. This time went to the Filipino Pastoral Center of the Hyehwadong Filipino Catholic Church.

What made these women keep their marriage for as long as they could? Despite the problems and difficulties they are facing, why do many of them still want to keep their marriage?
The number one teaching that the Divine Principle taught which I learned is to make an ideal family though it looks very impossible. You have to make yourself ideal first before you can establish an ideal family. How can you make yourself ideal? First, you have to sacrifice. Sacrifice in the sense that you do not have to think about yourself; you have to think of your family, for your husband, for your family. Even if you are having a hard time, you will survive; you have to survive for them. According to Rev. Moon in his lecture to Unification Church international wives, No matter how bad your husband is, still you have to serve him, love him, and sacrifice for him. What he meant is like there is no bad man who would not change if you love, serve, and sacrifice for him. The secret is to love and serve him. It is not really easy. That is the deepest meaning of the ‘Blessing’ of the Unification Church. That is how we keep our marriage no matter how hard it was that we experienced (Faith, 41).

Her words explain it well. Women have to stay and endure because sooner or later, their ‘not ideal husband’ would turn out to be ‘ideal’. Foreign wives particularly are instructed to sacrifice and serve their husbands. It can be implied that they are the ones who should make adjustments for the sake of achieving the ‘ideal family.’ Clearly, the unreasonable and unfair patriarchal traditional role of wives as serving the husband is emphasized, reinforced and imposed. Interestingly however, the women believers justify the emotional and physical abuses they experience in the hands of their husbands. In the pursuit of being a good believer, religion in this sense, paradoxically “reinforces and consolidates discourses that produce docile and disciplined bodies” (Johnson et. al, 2010: 5). And so far, the
Church has been successful as many still stay in marriages despite the violence.

Like the Unificationists, the Catholic respondents pointed out that language is also one big challenge to them. However, as most of them originally lived in the farm villages of Korea unlike the Unificationists who went to live in Seoul right after they arrived in Korea, they had their own different sets of problems. First of which is the disappointment over the financial condition of the husband as can be seen in the stories of the following respondents.

**Shattered Expectations**

**Helen:** We arrived late at night and stayed at his relative’s house in Seoul. The following day, he told me we would go home to the province. I was excited, I would go to… (giggles). Well…(sighs deeply) that’s why. You rest for one day, then start work (farm work) the following day. I said to myself, “I did not do farm work at home, how come I would be doing this?” I was surprised. What I expected was that he had workers/men to work in his land. I was wrong, it was only me and a few of his friends.

**Sweet:** My husband, too. He brought a lot of T shirts in the same color. I thought, ‘maybe, he works at the office, he is wearing uniforms there.’ When I came here, there! I went straight to the farm.

The two women above imagined a life where their husbands were economically well-off and who were economically capable to support their needs. Little did they know they would be manual laborers in the country of their destination. Imagine their shock
when they realized that they would be doing farm work, just like the following respondent.

**Group Interview**

Bong: You carried (a sack of rice?)
Con: Of course, I was able to carry a sack of rice on my back which I thought I couldn’t. One sack of rice. I was pregnant and carrying a sack of rice, Oh my God!

Jane: Pregnant? Terrible.
Con: Yes, I even had pain on my chest.
Jane: In the Philippines, you had manicured nails. Then, in the mountains and you are pregnant. Oh my God!
Con: Not just pregnant, I was plowing the fields. I cried and my tears and mucus just kept flowing I could not understand.

Jane: I know one person, she was plowing the field, she was driving (the tractor). Terrible, only men in the Philippines do that.

The Catholic respondents were disappointed with the true nature of the financial and employment status of their husbands. They were surprised to see that the husbands they thought were rich were actually farmers who expected them to work in the farm with them. Meanwhile, the husbands were also disappointed when their wives could not embrace farm life. As their wives, they also expected them to help them in farm work. Thus, ‘mismatched expectations’ that were unmet caused marital conflicts, which were further aggravated by the following factors.
Cultural Conflicts

Another problem they point out is the angry tone of voice of their husbands. It should be noted however, that in the Philippines, if one speaks in a high-toned voice with you, it means that either he/she is indeed angry at you or he/she was not well educated in proper manners or he/she is rude. To this, most Filipinos are sensitive and are hurt once someone does it to them. As one respondent demonstrates,

In Korea, when they speak, it seems harsh like ‘Ya! Ya!’ they would like that to you. For us, it means or that you are already angry, right? Of course, we would be hurt, right? It is bad to us, right? But to them, it’s nothing. Because when you say, Ya!’ (in high-toned voice) like the way they say it, but in our case, ‘Ya.’ (in low-toned voice), of course, you will get angry (Jane, 43).

Care work extended to the parents-in-law is obviously another problem. It is in contrast with the practice in the Philippines where daughters-in-law are not obliged to take care of the parents of the husband. Married women think that once they are married, their primary concerns are their husband and children. Taking care of one’s parents-in-law is merely a choice and not an obligation on their part.

The number one thing for us is when we get married, we don’t really need to get up early but if you have a husband, you wake up early to take care of the needs of your husband. Here, it’s different. The whole family, your
husband would not wake you up, your mother-in-law would wake you up (interviewee’s emphasis) She would bang the door, “Wake up! Cook, do this, do that!” Then your husband is just listening and then he would say, “Didn’t you just hear what my mother said? She told you to cook, wash the clothes, and others.” And if you are ‘war shock, you would argue with your husband. “Just wait! If I have... I will leave you (Jane, 40).

The meddling of the in-laws specifically the parents- in-law in the affairs of the couple is also a problem. Moreover, they were surprised to learn that their husbands did not even oppose the instructions/decisions of their parents even if they are already married. They viewed men like this as ‘mama’s boy’. This is a character most of my respondents could not understand. As one respondent strongly points out,

The one thing I could not endure anymore is the interference of his parents, family, all of them! They did not want my husband to work, that’s the thing I dislike about them. When I tell my husband, “Let’s do this.” He would say, ‘My father does not want.. my mother does not want.. my sister does not want.. my older brother does not want..” (Joy, 48).

She desperately wanted her husband to be with her, she used her religious faith to influence her husband into following her.

Sweet: I told him, if you are not baptized in Catholicism, we will get separated.” He said, “Okay.” So I urged him to be baptized. We even have our godfather. He is a policeman in the province.
Interviewer: Why did you do that?
Sweet: (exclaimed loudly) So, he would follow me! My mother – in-law got
angry with me. They are Buddhists. But when we go to the church, say it was summer, we were preparing to leave for church, my mother-in-law would call and tell my husband, “Water the fields first.” Can you believe it? We were already dressed up that time. When Sunday comes, I tell him, “당신 (Honey/Darling), Let’s go to church, don’t go to the farm.” “Yes,” he would say... But my mother-in-law would knock loudly on our door and say, “아, 야, (ya, ya.)” 왜 어머니?! (Why mother?!) (in an angry tone of voice). I am surprised by you, I am still sleeping. “No, 야, you cook now because you and your husband would go to the farm” I started to be stressed. And my husband, when his mother said so, “어쩔 수 없어” (Nothing can be done). Let’s not go to church, let’s go to the farm. I was really stressed.

When this woman urged her husband be converted to Catholicism, she was able to take him away from the ‘hands’ and ‘power’ of her mother-in-law. The husband was caught in between two women who are both trying to negotiate their way from the prevailing patriarchal society. Both of them were involved in the power struggle over the control of the ‘asset’ of patriarchal family, that is, the son. Her mother in law maintained her authority by imposing her will over their lives. She on the other hand, tried to get away from her through, not by physical force or loud arguments, but by the subtle manner of persuasion through religion. By convincing her husband to be baptized to Catholicism and go to church with her on Sundays, though not often, she was able to enjoy her Sunday with her husband alone, away from farm work, and more importantly,
away from the sight of her mother-in-law. Though it would only be a day, somehow, she was able to weave her way out from the jungle of patriarchy. She was able to make her own patriarchal bargain, a concept that refers to the strategies employed by women “within a set of concrete constraints” (Kandiyoti 1988: 264).

The most serious problem and the main reason why they ran to the Filipino Pastoral Center is the physical violence many of them experienced in the hands of their husbands. This I argue, language barrier nor cultural differences cannot justify.

D. Strategies of Survival

Citing the above struggles they had, how they survived and dealt with them was something of an amazing feat for me. Their stories revealed varying ways, yet in some ways common, in dealing with such problems. For the Catholic respondents, the Filipino Pastoral Center unites them together. As one respondent recalls,

I had a hard life with my husband for five years. He hammered my feet four times. I had had enough. The one who helped me to go to Seoul was my Korean teacher in our class. She was related to the church. She brought us to Daegu. In Daegu, they knew Father Glen and brought us to Seoul. We didn’t bring anything not even clothes because if we brought clothes, my husband would know we would run away. In Daegu, the priest bought clothes for my daughters and only two for me. I told my mother in the Philippines that we ran away from my husband to Hyehwadong three months
later. My mother cried a lot.

What drove her finally to leave her husband was not the farm work but the physical violence she experienced in the hands of her husband. Through the help of her Korean teacher whom she confided her problems with, she was able to find her way to Hyehwadong, bringing along her two children. In there, she was able to find refuge with other Filipinas who also left their husbands.

Marriage migrants like Con left their children at the Center for quite some time while working. Leaving their children safely under the care of the nuns gave them relief and an opportunity to support their children without the help of their husbands. In this sense, the church indeed has functioned to “provide ethnic communities with refuge from the hostility and discrimination from the broader society as well as opportunities for economic mobility and social recognition” (Hirschman 2004: 1206). The church has not only given these women physical refuge from their husbands but also social refuge from the negative perception of the public towards them as ‘run away brides,’ ‘abused wives’ and ‘single mothers.’ And by being ‘surrogate parents’ to their children which is cited as one role of religion (Hirschman 2004), the church has provided them opportunities for employment and social recognition as women who are economically capable to support their own children without the
help of their husbands. Surviving their children alone undermines the classic Confucian traditional role of men as the sole economic providers of the family.

The thought that marriage with a foreigner would give them a good life was shattered. Their husbands still belong to poor, rural farming families in Korea and that they had to work in order to earn money for themselves and be able to send some home. Marriage migration as a way to eradicate poverty is merely a myth to these women. Rather, they are both wrestling with poverty both back home and in Korea (Park and Lee 2010). Their experiences opened their eyes to the reality that not all Koreans are economically well off capable to give them financial comforts, not to mention capable to provide child support. As a result, they have to be brave to survive and feed the young ones whose only hope is them.

But when I meet other Filipinos, we all just say the same things. I told myself, “It is not only me who is struggling.” I just thought, “That is life.” We had each other. Also, we studied Korean language at the church then, so instead of being lonely, of course, it is natural to feel lonely. ••Besides, I was not the only one having a hard time, other sisters were the same. That was what in my heart then. After attending the seminar, we chatted. We shared foods, shared conversations about what kind of husbands we have, about who is living with us, and negative and good experiences. Of course, loneliness is there. Sometimes, crying or struggling while crying, it was mixed. There were many Filipinas before. Every month, we had gathering. It was held in every house. We had this family type (relations) then. If someone had a problem, we helped each other. That was before. If I did not
have training in the church, I did not learn anything from the Church, I cannot handle these kinds of problems. (Joy, 35).

Church attendance is not the only reason for going to church. More importantly, they went to church because they wanted to meet their fellow Filipinas there. It was their social support in dealing with the stress they were facing as new migrants in Korea. Social support networks, Winkelman (1994: 124) says, can ameliorate a variety of stressors and have direct application to the resolution of cultural shock and cross-cultural adaptation through provision of tangible assistance; validation of self-worth through affirmation, acceptance, and assurance; and opportunities for venting emotions leading to understanding of stressful situations.

Seeing other Filipinas and sharing their stories and problems made them feel better. By learning that others suffer, was ironically a consolation to them. They realized that they were not alone in wrestling with the difficulties they were dealing with in Korea. By speaking in their own language and sharing Filipino foods, they created a sense of ‘home’ at the church. The church in this sense acts as the center of Filipinos’ collective identity. It is “like an extension of their country of origin, a social space that allows them to affirm their national belonging” (Fresnoza-Flot 2010: 9).

Though religion has made them ‘docile’, it has ironically facilitated their “social networks and mobilization against
exploitation by enabling new forms of sociality” (Johnson et. al. 2010: 6), just like their gathering at each other’s houses. Furthermore, this social network and sociality materialize itself in the creation of the Filipinas’ social collectivity, the so-called Philippine Blessed Missionaries in Korea (PBMK) for the Unificationist respondents while an affiliation with the HFCC in the case of the Catholic respondents. By being a part of the Filipino community, they have expressed what it means to be a Filipino. In other words, they have openly expressed their ethnicity in the public and are proud to do so.

Though belonging to different religious affiliations have created divisions in the Filipino community in Korea, this does not stop them from associating with other Filipino communities, even with other religious groups. Both the PBMK and HFCC actively participate in the meetings of Filipino organizations in Korea. The Leader’s Forum in May 2012 and the participation at the Independence Day every year are just a few examples of these. By being active members of such organizations, they have pronounced publicly what it means to be a Filipino, different from their host society. Doing so, they have emphasized their membership and exclusivity to the body of Filipino community in Korea. Such membership keeps them connected with the Philippine government who offers them assistance in whatever ways it can do. In fact, they are considered as the ‘extension of the Filipino community as the leaders report to us should
problems arise and if they need assistance” (Personal Interview, Ambassador Luis Cruz 24 June 2012). In other words, Filipina marriage migrants in Korea are not merely passive individuals. Rather, they are women who negotiate their own ethnicity and identity, exercise their own cultural rights, and thereby challenging the so-called ‘homogenous cultural landscape’ of the Korean society. They have been doing this not individually but as a group through their membership in the religious organization of their own choosing which happens to be a part of the big Filipino community in Korea.

The above-mentioned mechanisms helped them deal with problems they faced upon settling in Korea during their first few months and years. It has been many years for many of them now, and the interviews revealed that they have been unceasingly focusing on bettering their lives for their children and their future. And particularly for the Unificationists, they are continuously pursuing the ‘ideal family’ they are trying to achieve, even for some who are pursuing it alone.

**Conclusion**

Globalization has not only contributed to the increase of capital and labor flight abroad; it has also facilitated the growth of intermarriages across borders. Filipino-Korean intermarriages are merely a part of the already existing global marriage
migration since the 1980s. Unfavorably however, Filipina marriage migrants have been portrayed negatively and primarily as ‘commodities’ of the global capitalist system. Specifically, they are portrayed as spouses of socially alienated Koreans whose legal and economic statuses depend greatly on them and as women who are answers to the social problems of the Korean society specific of which are aging population and low fertility rate. Their ‘commodification’, cultural and ethnic discrimination and physical abuses posed as great challenges to their life as new migrants in their new society. It is within these myriad of quagmires that religious institutions play a significant role in their lives.

The Unification Church primarily facilitates the assimilation of Filipina Unificationists in this study. It aims at integrating them into the Korean society without a doubt by teaching them Korean language and culture even prior to the coming of these women to Korea. Specifically, it molds them to become the traditional Korean wives of Korean men-subservient and submissive ones. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church provides the Catholic respondents physical refuge against their abusive husband and social refuge against the prejudices of the society towards these women i.e., as abused wives and single mothers. Furthermore, it has become the surrogate parents to their children while they work.

Both these religious institutions have assisted their social and
cultural integration into the society. They have further provided these women a sense of belonging to a new community and a new religious identity. Religion in this sense, is still influential in their lives, contrary to Durkheim’s belief as religion losing its influence. However, these Churches have confined them into ‘family making’ by emphasizing their roles as wives and/or mothers in Korea. Nevertheless, this ‘constraining assistance’ has not stopped them from exercising their human agency capable to make use of religion itself as their source to migrate to, and settle in, Korea.

Finally, it should be noted that the views and opinions of my respondents here do not represent the views of the entire Filipino marriage migrants in Korea. Just as each migrant has different experiences with regards to her marriage with a Korean man; it is preposterous to claim that the stories of my respondents represent the stories of all migrants in Korea. I do claim that their views neither represent the views of all Filipina marriage migrants in Korea nor I claim that Unification and Catholic churches in this study influence the lives of marriage migrants in general.

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