Variation in Growth Over Time of Minority Religious Groups in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

VARIATION IN GROWTH OVER TIME OF MINORITY CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Northern Illinois University, 2023
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The Philippines has historically been predominantly Catholic due to Spanish colonial rule, but since the early 1900s, there has been an increase in the number of small Christian churches, denominations, and sects. Traditional theories like modernization, religious economy, or ideology fail to explain the varying growth patterns of these minority Christian religions because they do not account for sub-national variation nor fluctuations in adherents over time. The objective of this thesis is to investigate the emergence of minority Christian religions in the Philippines and develop a framework to study their growth trends over time. For the dependent variable, a typology was created to demonstrate growth patterns within religious groups, considering short and long-term periods. Additionally, several explanatory factors (independent variables) that can influence growth in the short or long-term are proposed, which are classified into four categories: ideational, organizational, institutional, and structural. Factors in the ideational and organizational categories have immediate effects on a religious group's growth or decline, driven by the motivations and actions of actors involved. On the other hand, factors within institutional or structural categories may take a longer period to manifest their impact on growth. This thesis argues that examining both short and long-term effects are important for a comprehensive understanding of these factors' influence on growth over time.
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VARIATION IN GROWTH OVER TIME OF MINORITY CHRISTIAN
RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN THE PHILIPPINES

BY

JANET VALLEJO
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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Thesis Co-Directors:
Kikue Hamayotsu
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I. INTRODUCTION

Catholic hegemony in the Philippines is the consequence of over 300 years of colonial rule by Spain. Catholicism is still the majority religious community in the Philippines, with 80% of the population identifying as Roman Catholic; however, the percentage of followers from Protestant, Evangelical, Charismatic and/or independent church movements has been steadily rising. While in 1900, less than 1% of the population was from a non-Roman Catholic Christian religion, these groups account for roughly 11% of the population today (Laubach 1925; Johnson et al. 2020). What are the factors that explain the rise of these religious groups, and the variations in their growth trajectories? The prevailing theories such as modernization (secularization), religious economy, or ideology do not adequately explain these trajectories, because they cannot explain sub-national variation nor the surges or decline of adherents over short or long spans of time.

I investigate the variation of the emergence of minority Christian religions in the Philippines and draw upon Pierson’s (2003) idea of slow-moving macro-social processes, to re-conceptualize the growth of religious adherents over time. I develop a typology to demonstrate the patterns of growth, both short-term and long-term, within a religious group. Additionally, I propose various explanatory factors that can influence growth in either the short-term or long-term. These potential factors can be grouped into four categories: ideational, organizational, institutional, and structural. Factors falling under the ideational and organizational categories are likely to have an immediate impact on the growth or decline of a religious group, because they
are primarily driven by the motivations and actions of actors involved. On the other hand, factors falling under institutional or structural categories may take a longer period to manifest their effects on the growth or decline of a religion. I argue that to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of these factors on growth over time, it is important to examine both short-term and long-term effects.

The first part of this research analyzes the growth of minority religions at a subnational level using Philippine census data and Christian religion scholarly sources (Barrett 1982; Johnson et al. 2020; Tuggy and Toliver 1972; and Anderson 1969). Aggregate data from the province level in the Philippines was evaluated to create a geospatial profile of religious groups across the Philippines and to trace the spread of these groups over time. The second part of this study is a case study that examines a typology that exhibits rapid short-term growth and sustained long-term growth, spreading nationwide in the Philippines. I apply my approach to explain the influence of various factors on the short- or long-term religious growth of the religion under the case study.

This thesis consists of nine sections. Section I provides an overview of the thesis topic: variation in growth of minority Christian religions in the Philippines. Section II describes the research question and puzzle. Section III covers the research strategy and elaborates on the methodology used for the two parts of the study. Section IV provides a brief historical background of the growth of Christian religions in the Philippines. Section V reviews existing theoretical explanations for religious group growth. Section VI presents the dependent variable and outlines my proposed typology for evaluating growth over different timeframes, specifically short-term and long-term growth. This section delves into the six typologies and provides examples of relevant cases in the Philippines. Section VII presents potential explanatory factors
or independent variables that can influence growth, either in the short or long term. It describes how these factors are categorized into four groups: ideational, organizational, institutional, and structural. It also provides the rationale for studying factors based on their short and long term impact. Section VIII describes the application of my proposed typology and methodology in a detailed case study of the Iglesia ni Cristo. Finally, Section IX serves as the conclusion of the thesis and encompasses an overview of the results, limitations, suggestions for further research, and contributions to the field.

In the comparative politics literature, most scholarship has focused on the influence of Islam and its effects in conservative societies. This research complements the literature by providing insight into the growth of small Christian minority religions in similarly conservative, yet predominantly Catholic-based, societies. This research makes original contributions to the field in three ways: 1) by proposing a typology for studying religious growth trends over both a short and long-time frame; 2) by introducing a framework of factors that explain short or long-term impact on growth outcomes; and 3) by creating and leveraging original data sets for analysis. While this research is focused on the Philippines, there may be possible generalizability to other similar Catholic dominant countries. Additionally, there may be further potential application of this concept to other fields involving the formation and growth of similar social groups.
II. RESEARCH QUESTION AND PUZZLE

While the Philippines has been a majority Catholic country since the advent of Spanish colonial rule and Catholicism has traditionally dominated the religious market, it has seen the expansion of small Christian churches, denominations, and sects since the early 1900s. What factors explain the variation in growth patterns for the various minority Christian religions in this country? One pivotal event in Philippine history was the start of U.S. colonial rule in 1898 when the United States implemented separation of church and state. Prior to this, under Spanish colonial rule, Catholicism was the state religion. After this critical juncture, there was a rise of Protestant movements in the early 1900s led by American missionaries attempting to spread Protestant evangelism throughout the Philippines. As a result, there was an influx of Episcopal, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and other Protestant missionaries in the Philippines in competition with each other (Clymer 1986). At the same time, a number of indigenous or independent Christian religious movements have emerged and contributed to the further religious pluralization of the Christian community. Two of the largest independent Philippine church movements founded in the 1900’s were the Aglipayan church and the Iglesia ni Cristo (Anderson 1969).

While there was opportunity for evangelization and the potential growth of Christian alternatives to Catholicism, due to the advent of broader religious freedoms during the American colonial period, there was also a wide variation in the growth trajectories of the early missionary
religions. Even though some religious groups experienced moderate growth, others grew rapidly, while others barely grew. Additionally, some groups enjoyed significant growth spurts, and then either hit a plateau or experienced significant attrition. For example, the Methodist church and Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries arrived and established missions in the Philippines in 1900 and 1905 respectively (Tuggy and Toliver 1972). Both mission groups experienced slow but steady growth in the early part of the 20th century. However, post-World War II, the Seventh-Day Adventist membership surged, while the Methodist membership experienced significant fluctuations. According the 2010 Philippine census, the Seventh-Day Adventist church claims over 681,000 members, which is over 3.5 times the size of the United Methodist Church membership. What explains the variation in growth trajectories over time among the religious groups? The focus of this thesis project is to understand this variation and propose a framework to study growth trends over time. I argue that examining both short-term and long-term effects is important for a comprehensive understanding of these factors' influence on growth over time. My proposed typology and methodology were demonstrated through a detailed case study of the Iglesia ni Cristo, a religion that showed rapid short-term growth and geographically dispersed national growth in the long term.
III. RESEARCH STRATEGY

To fill the gap in the literature, I developed a novel typology to investigate the growth trajectory of religions and created an original data set to use in my typology. Furthermore, I have applied my typology and temporal explanatory approach to a case study to advance my theoretical argument. The first part of this research analyzes the growth of minority religions at the province level using Philippine census data from 1960 to 2000 and Christian religion scholarly sources (Barrett 1982; Johnson et al. 2020; Tuggy and Toliver 1972; and Anderson 1969). Aggregate data from the province level in the Philippines was evaluated to create a geospatial profile of religious groups across the Philippines and to trace the spread of these groups over time. The second part of this study is a detailed case study that examines a typology that exhibits rapid short-term growth and sustained long-term growth, spreading nationwide in the Philippines. I apply my approach to explain the influence of various factors on the short- or long-term religious growth of the case religion. Factors that explain short-time horizons tend to be quick moving or frequent human actions explained by motivational factors or brute coercion (Kreuzer 2020). On the other hand, factors that explain long time horizons may include structural factors (societal structures) or formal institutions that encompass slow moving change.

Process tracing methods were applied to the case study to identify key agents, actions and causal mechanisms that link the proposed causes and outcomes of the process (Beach and Pederson 2019; Bennett and Checkel 2015). This analysis also utilized secondary sources from religious scholars and religious documents to identify the mechanisms in the cases being studied.
IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before reviewing existing explanations about the growth of minority religions, it may be helpful to briefly review the history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines and the emergence of some of the alternative Christian groups. The Philippines was colonized by Spain after gaining the “right” to do so by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 (Hanson 1987, 71). The Pope did not have actual control over the Southeast Asian country but mainly served as a mediator of disputes between the kings of Spain and Portugal on territorial expansion into states in Asia, Africa and the Americas (71). Spain established Catholicism as a state religion in the Philippines and ruled for over 300 years. The Spanish relied on missionaries; Spanish friars from the Augustinian, Franciscan, Jesuit, Dominican orders were dispatched to different parts of the archipelago to educate and “Christianize” the native population (Abinales and Amoroso 2017, 51). Lack of available Spanish priests hindered the spread of Catholicism. As a result, the Spanish relied on identifying local native ruling elites, the village “datu” or the “principales” (in Spanish terms), to enable the conversion to Catholicism (Rafael 2005, 161). These local leaders were exempted from paying tribute (mandatory tax to Spanish authorities) and forced labor (161). The principales also enjoyed certain privileges, such as public leadership positions within the village or barangay, the right to supervise land in the area, and right to collect tribute from others in the village (166). Additionally, the principales were the leaders of confradias or organized religious communities (163). Consequently, the Spanish use of confradias and principales, enabled the propagation of Catholicism throughout the Philippines.
The Philippines became a colony of the United States in 1898 after Spain was defeated in the Spanish-American War. After the war, the United States “purchased” the Philippines from Spain for $20 million under the Treaty of Paris (113). These events precipitated the Philippine-American war; however, Filipino forces were outmatched by the U.S. military and the rebellion was quickly ended. At this point, a critical juncture occurred at the start of U.S. colonial rule when the United States implemented separation of church and state. This was formalized in the Philippine constitution in Article 2, Section 6, under which “the separation of Church and State shall be inviolable” and Article 3, Section 5, which provides for religious freedom and prohibits both establishing a religion and religious tests for the exercise of civil or political rights (Fox 2008, 211).

The American government inherited the problems of the Catholic Church when they took over. Due to the abuses of the Spanish friars, there was significant anti-clerical sentiment among the Filipino people. There were also fears that the Spanish friars would continue their abuse under the American regime. Additionally, the friars held significant tracts of land in the Philippines. To resolve these issues, in 1902, the Governor of the Philippines, William Taft, visited Pope Leo XIII to address the friar unpopularity and their land ownership (Gowing 1967, 114). He proposed a potential solution in a letter to the Pope, in which he announced “on behalf of the Philippine government, it is proposed [the United States will] buy the lands of the religious orders with the hope that the funds furnished may lead to their withdrawal from the Islands and if necessary, a substitution therefore as parish priests, of other priests whose presence would not be dangerous to the public order…” (116). As a result, most of the Spanish friars withdrew from the Philippines (117). The United States government then purchased the friars’ land and put up for sale to the Filipino people (117). Within this backdrop, many Protestant
missionaries arrived and gained converts among the disaffected Catholic population (120). Additionally, there was a rise of Protestant movements in the 1900s. American missionaries perceived the Filipino population to be backward and attempted to spread Protestant evangelism throughout the Philippines. As a result, there was an influx of Protestant missionaries in the Philippines, and they all were in competition with each other to convert souls. (Clymer 1986).

Philippine Comity Agreement

In the 1880s the formal practice of comity agreements among foreign Protestant missions was initiated among religious missionaries (Beaver 1962, 15). Comity, with respect to religious groups is “the division of territory and assignment of spheres of occupation including delimitation of boundaries, on one hand, and the noninterference in one’s affairs, on the other” (15). The purpose of comity agreements was to increase cooperation and minimize competition among Protestant missionary agencies and ideally increase the evangelization of the gospel across a wide geographic distribution (16 -17). It also allowed for each missionary group to concentrate its scarce resources on specific regions as defined by the comity agreement.

Comity was negotiated by American missionary groups in the early twentieth century in regions such as Latin America and Asia. Advanced planning for comity, including division of territory, was also pursued in Puerto Rico and the Philippines during this time (136). In the Philippines, representatives from several missionary groups met in April 1901 to form the Evangelical Union (137). One of the initial acts of the Evangelical Union was to adopt an agreement that divided the Philippines into territories among the missions. Table 1 defines the final comity agreement among the missionary groups. While this agreement was formally in
place for three years, the participating groups honored the agreement for decades until after the end of the second world war (Laubach 1925; Beaver 1962).

Table 1: Final Comity Agreement of 1902 - Division of Territories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protestant Missionary Society</th>
<th>Provinces or Territories</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodists</td>
<td>Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Bataan, Zambales, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya and Cagayan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterians</td>
<td>Rizal, Laguna, Batangas, Cavite, Tayabas, North and South Camarines, and Albay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Brethren</td>
<td>La Union, Ilocos Sur, Bontoc and Lepanto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists and Presbyterians</td>
<td>Panay and Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte, Samar, Romblon and Masbate</td>
<td>Mutually decided on areas responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists and United Brethren</td>
<td>Benguet</td>
<td>Jointly owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregationalists</td>
<td>Mindanao, except western end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciples of Christ</td>
<td>Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur north of Vigan, Northern Mindoro, and designated areas near Manila by agreement with the Presbyterians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian and Missionary Alliance</td>
<td>Western Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Laubach 1925, 204; Beaver 1962, 139)

Two denominations stayed out of the agreement: Seventh-day Adventists and the Protestant Episcopalians (Deats 1964, 11). Additionally, the Aglipayans were not part of the Evangelical Union and thus were not part of the comity agreement (Deats 1964, 11). The comity agreement may have had an impact on the growth of participating religions, even after several of the participating religions formally exited the agreement.
Additionally, during the emergence of the minority religious groups in the Philippines, many Protestant, independent and evangelical churches provided basic public goods and services in competition with the Catholic Church. In the 1960s, the Catholic Church reacted to growing numbers leaving the church by initiating reforms to prevent the attrition of followers. The reforms of Vatican II called for more engagement with the poor and funding of socioeconomic developmental projects (Barry 2006, 165).
V. EXISTING THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

Linkage of State and Religion

One explanation for the growth or repression of minority religious groups is the strong linkage between state and religion. This involves fusion of state with religion in which a state adopts an official religion or when state institutions are controlled by religious institutions. Kuru (2009) examined how historical variables, such as the alliance between state and hegemonic religion, influenced state policies toward religion in the United States, France and Turkey. In France and Turkey, state policies were assertive in excluding religion from the public sphere, while in the United States, policy was more passive and permitted public visibility of religion (11).

Additionally, states may also place restrictions on minority religions that are not placed on the majority religion. The restrictions on minority religions include restrictions on religious practices, religious institutions, conversion, and proselytizing (Fox 2018). In his survey of religion and the state, Fox (2018) reports that in 25 Muslim majority countries, there are restrictions on conversion away from Islam (166), while in India, six of its 29 states have anti-conversion laws (166). States restrict religions for many reasons; some common ones include competing ideologies with majority religion, human rights and liberal values, nationalism and protection of culture, anti-cult polices, objectionable practices, conflict, and perceived security threats (158). In sum, state policy on minority religions can impact the ability of alternative groups to develop and grow.
In the Philippines, the Spanish colonial legacy had a significant impact on the suppression of other minority religions. Catholicism was a state religion under the period of Spanish colonization for over 300 years. Under American colonial rule, implementation of the separation of Church and State allowed an opening for the growth of alternative religions, albeit under a country with a hegemonic religion. While American imperialism contributed to the breakdown of an official state religion in the Philippines and propagation of numerous protestant religions, it does not explain the growth of some minority religions over others in the predominantly Catholic society of the Philippines.

In another view of the relationship between religion and state, churches may gain moral authority in a state by providing social welfare via goods and services. Grzymala-Busse and Slater (2018) describe this moral authority as a “fusion of state and nation” in their comparative study of Catholicism in Poland and the Philippines (545). The Philippines has often been characterized as a weak state (Hutchcroft 1998; Sidel 1999). Hutchcroft (1998) characterizes the Philippines as a “patrimonial oligarchic state” in which the primary social force has an economic base that is mostly separate from the government, yet the government still plays a central role in the accumulation of wealth (52). In general, weak states are less effective than strong states in generating a particular political or economic outcome due to lack of a strong bureaucracy to enforce rule of law, control social order, execute public works or collect tax revenue. Grzymala-Busse and Slater (2018) claim states that are consistently “weak in its governing infrastructure,” such as the Philippines, often yielded responsibilities such as education and healthcare to religious organizations like the Catholic Church (547). By providing basic public goods and services, the Church gained a position of strong moral authority that subsequently allowed it to gain substantial support and become a source of service, health, education and protection than
the state itself (547). Grzymala-Busse and Slater also point out that the ability to win this support is not unique to Catholicism but also contributes to growth of other religious groups such as “Islamist movements” and “strict fundamentalist religions” (547). Cammett and Luong (2014) make similar arguments when they assert that Islamists activists gained a reputation for good governance due to a combination of social welfare provision, organizational capacity and ideological hegemony, which in turn generated support for their movement (202).

While the theory of religions gaining moral authority by providing public goods and services helps to explain the appeal and growth of certain religious groups, by the 1960s, many religious bodies started to offer similar goods and services to enhance their moral reputation and to attract followers. This theory is not adequate for explaining the growth of some religions over others that both provide public goods.

**Religious Economy**

A second explanation for growth of religious groups is the religious economy approach. Religious economy is a rational choice approach to religion that gained popularity in the 1990s and has roots in the sociological approach known as the “supply-side theory of religion” (Fox 2018, 85). Proponents of the supply-side theory of religion claim that religions can grow and meet the religious consumer demand (of potential followers) if religion is not regulated or supported by the state (Finke 1990; Gill 1998; Iannaccone 1998). Even if there is no state repression of other religions, state support of a single religion can create an unfair playing field that makes it harder for other religions to enter the market. Because other religions have to privately fund their own churches as well as support the state church, they pay a higher price to
enter the religious market (Finke 1990, 615). Moreover, the presence of a religious hegemon can result in church apathy and indifference in servicing the needs of the greater congregation and the poor (Gill 1998; 2008). Gill (1998) argues that this was the case for the Catholic church in Latin America when “for most of its five-hundred year history, the [Catholic] Church operated as an elitist, pro-authoritarian institution” only concerned with the “rich and powerful” and ignored the concerns of the poor (174). As a monopoly, they were only concerned with “accommodating the political elite in return for patronage and legislative support for Church teachings” (71). Only when there was threat of competition by an influx of protestant churches in Latin America did the Catholic church adopt strategies to serve the poor. A similar case can be made for the Philippines, where the Catholic Church formed alliances with powerful, elite families. However, with the shift in ideology that occurred during the Vatican II era, the Catholic Church has shifted its strategy and began funding and providing public goods and services to the poor worldwide. While the religious economy can explain the increase in the number of minority religions and increase in religious plurality, it still does not explain why a particular religion would grow and spread more than other religions in competition with Catholicism.

**Secularization Theory**

A third explanation for the expansion of religion is secularization theory, which predicts the decline or demise of religion with the advances of modernization in society. Proponents of secularization theory assert that religion is becoming less relevant in society today and a growing number of people do not identify with any religion. One prominent revision of secularization theory is Norris and Inglehart’s (2004) claim that secularization is increasing in all advanced industrial societies due to higher levels of existential security (25). They argue that
“modernization (the process of industrialization, urbanization, and rising levels of education and wealth) greatly weakens the influence of religious institutions in affluent societies, bringing lower rates of attendance at religious services, and making religion subjectively less important in people’s lives” (25). Conversely, in poorer societies, there is an increasing trend toward religiosity. Norris and Inglehart contend that “rich societies are secularizing but they contain a dwindling share of the world’s population; while poor societies are not secularizing and they contain a rising share of the world’s population” (25). Other scholars, such as Fox (2015), counter Norris and Inglehart’s claims by arguing that religion is relevant for many in Western societies, as evidenced by the growth of conservative evangelical groups in some regions of the U.S (238). There are even situations where modernization theory helped promote religion, such as the rise of urban Pentecostal preachers in Latin America due to economic development or Islamist elites using technology to distribute their views (Buckley 2016, 17). Secularization theory does not adequately account for the growth and spread of minority religious groups in a developing country like the Philippines. With secularization theory, with rising levels of urbanization and education in some regions in the Philippines, we would expect the overall decline of religious growth. However, this does not explain the phenomenal growth of certain minority religions in the Philippines.
Church Ideology and Doctrines

A fourth theoretical explanation proposes the growth of minority religions is influenced by strict church ideology and aggressive proselytization. While there has been declining membership in mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches in Western countries, such as the United States, there has been significant growth in strict churches with aggressive recruitment tactics such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormon, or Southern Baptists (Iannacone 1998; Grzymala-Busse 2012; Kelley 1986). However, this explanation also does not explain why some religions with strict ideology, such as the Iglesia ni Christo, grew rapidly, while other strict religions, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, had slower growth in the Philippines.

Other explanations fall under ideational claims and can be related to the cultural appeal of religious features such as prosperity evangelicalism of Pentecostal and charismatic religions in Africa (Zalanga 2015), speaking in tongues or dynamic Pentecostal practices in Latin America and Korea (Martin 1990), or nationalistic or indigenous heritage claims of the Iglesia Ni Christo in the Philippines (Tuggy 1976; Harper 2014). In a comparative study among Pentecostal, Catholic and main-line Protestant churches in sub-Saharan Africa, McClendon and Riedl (2019) found that exposure to religious sermons influenced political participation (4). They suggest that “sermons are sources of metaphysical instruction informing people’s understanding of how the world works” (5). This effect was pronounced particularly for Pentecostal sermons by providing a “powerful, provocative, and appealing message about the possibility of individual transformation, the attainment of health, well-being, and security in the contemporary world (not just in heaven), and direct access to the Spirit” (13). However, these explanations are not adequate to fully characterize the growth trends of certain religious groups in the Philippines.
To fill these theoretical gaps, my research below provides a more sophisticated analysis of growth trends of certain religious groups. I propose evaluating key factors under the lens of their influence over short- and long- time periods. The effects of some factors will be evident within a short time period, while the effects of other factors take a long time to develop. My theory is further developed in Section VII under the discussion of explanatory factors.
VI. RELIGIOUS GROUP GROWTH TREND TYPOLOGY

The first part of this research analyzes the growth of minority religions in the Philippines at a subnational level using data from the Philippine census and Christian religion scholarly sources (Barrett 1982; Johnson et al. 2020; Tuggy and Toliver 1972; and Anderson 1969). The dependent variable of interest is the growth of minority Christian groups. This growth is assessed using the following indicators: number of adherents, percentage of total population, rate of growth relative to the general population and geographic spread across provinces.

I conceptualize the typology of the growth of religious groups along two temporal dimensions: short-term and long-term duration. Focusing on the duration a phenomenon occurs allows us to differentiate between outcomes that occur over a very short period of time versus outcomes that occur over a very extended period of time (Pierson 2003, 179). While much of the existing scholarship commonly focuses on outcomes that occur over a short period of time, this may potentially overlook factors that take a longer time to develop, such as demographic shifts (Pierson 2003) or societal or institutional structures (Kreuzer 2020; Katznelson 2003). This conceptual typology also allows us to potentially evaluate threshold effects in which “incremental or cumulative forces may not generate incremental changes in outcomes of interest”, but instead need to accumulate until they reach some critical level to achieve an observable effect (Pierson 2003, 182).

The duration of a short-term time period is defined as a range between one to five years. Long-term duration may range over a period of ten years to several decades. The tempo or rate at
which a religious group grows during a short-term period is characterized as fast, slow or flat. Fast growth is considered a spike significantly above overall average population growth. Slow rate growth is characterized by incremental growth at or slightly above average overall population growth. Flat growth is defined as no growth, below average population growth or a decline in adherents. A combination of multiple patterns may even be apparent during the life-cycle of the growth of a religious group, so intervals of time may be specified to define the time frame of interest.

Additionally, short-term duration is not limited to the time of inception for a religious group. Short-term growth spikes may occur throughout various periods during the growth cycle of a religious group. It may be catalyzed by contingent events, turning points or critical junctures (Pierson 2003; Kreuzer 2020). Thus, historical timing and event sequences may influence the trajectory of a religious growth for particular groups (Kreuzer 2020).

Furthermore, long-term growth can be subdivided into two levels: localized growth or geographically-dispersed national growth. While one religious group may have local success expanding in one region of the country, other groups may have a greater number of disciples and wider footprint across many provinces. This outcome may have different explanatory mechanisms than localized growth.

Table 2 illustrates the typology of the growth trend of minority Christian religious adherents over time for a defined period of time. The different combinations of short-term trends, long-term trends and geographical dispersion form six distinct categories. For the purposes of this study, I combine groups with flat or declining growth with those experiencing slow rate of growth due to the difficulty in obtaining data for religious groups with waning membership.
Short-term trends are described by short term growth at two levels: 1) flat or slow growth (no spike) and fast or rapid growth (spike). The long-term trends are defined by three levels: 1) Declining or flat growth, 2) Steady localized long-term growth and 3) Steady long-term dispersed nationalized growth.

The six conceptual typologies can be characterized as 1) Flat or slow short-term growth with flat or declining long-term growth, 2) Short-term rapid growth (spike) with flat or declining long-term growth, 3) Flat or slow short-term growth with steady long-term localized growth, 4) Short-term rapid growth (spike) with steady localized long-term growth, 5) Flat or slow short-term growth with steady long-term nationalized growth and 6) Short-term rapid growth (spike) with steady nationalized long-term growth.

Table 2: Typology Description of Christian Religious Groups Growth Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Term Trend</th>
<th>Long Term Trend</th>
<th>Long Term Growth (Localized)</th>
<th>Long Term Growth (Dispersed National)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat or Slow (No Spike)</td>
<td>Slow ST growth/ Flat or decreasing LT growth</td>
<td>Slow ST growth/ steady LT localized growth</td>
<td>Slow ST growth/ steady LT nationalized growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast (Spike)</td>
<td>Rapid ST / Flat or decreasing LT growth</td>
<td>Rapid ST/ steady localized LT growth</td>
<td>Rapid ST/ steady nationalized LT growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By conceptualizing the religion growth trends this way, the diversity of the outcome categories potentially captures the variation in processes that may occur over a longer period of time as well as relevant historical timing effects.

Table 3 illustrates examples of the Philippine religious groups that exemplify the typologies in Table 1. Further elaboration of the typologies and selected religious groups in the Philippines that embody the typologies are detailed in the next section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Term Trend</th>
<th>Long Term Trend</th>
<th>Long Term Growth (Localized)</th>
<th>Long Term Growth (Dispersed National)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat or Slow (No Spike)</td>
<td>Declining or Flat Long-Term Growth</td>
<td>Small Christian movements (Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi)</td>
<td>United Methodist Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat or Slow (No Spike)</td>
<td>Long Term Growth (Localized)</td>
<td>United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast (Spike)</td>
<td>Long Term Growth (Dispersed National)</td>
<td>Philippine Independent Church - Aglipayan</td>
<td>Iglesia ni Cristo (INC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Flat or Slow Short-term Growth with Flat or Declining Long-term Growth**

This group typology can be understood conceptually and may be empirically possible. However, this religious typology by definition may not have many members initially and may experience slow growth over a long period of time. Finding detailed and accurate data about these groups is challenging; thus making it difficult to evaluate empirically. Some examples of small sects in the Philippines are the Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi (Rizalist movement), Iglesia
Mapagpayapa ni Jesukristo (Peace movement), or Sambahan sa Nayon (Independent Evangelical) (Elwood 1968).

**Short-term Rapid Growth Spike with Flat or Declining Long-term Growth**

The Philippine Independent Church, also known as the Aglipayan church, characterizes the typology in which we observe a short-term spike with flat or declining long-term growth. Formed in 1902 by excommunicated Filipino Catholic priest, Gregorio Aglipay, and nationalist leader, Isabela de los Reyes, the Philippine Independent Church splintered from the Roman Catholic church and claimed between 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 followers (Rodell 1992). The rise in the numbers of followers during its early inception is dramatic. Most of this growth is due to splinters from the Catholic church. Most of the Aglipayan members directly followed Aglipay to form an indigenous version of the Catholic church within the first few years of foundation. While the church claimed a significant portion of the Christian population in the early 20th century, the number of adherents has either remained flat or steadily decreased relative to the average population. From 1960 to 2010, the Philippine Independent Church lost 34% of its members. Despite its decline, the church still claims a significant number of adherents at around 920,000 members in 2010.
Figure 1: Philippine Independent Church membership over time.

**Short-term Slow Growth with Steady Long-term Localized Growth**

The United Methodist Church of the Philippines (UMCP) characterizes the typology in which we observe short-term slow or mixed growth with steady long-term localized growth. The Methodist church was established in the Philippines during the American colonial period in the early 1900s. There has been significant variation in the membership during the history of the Methodist church due to schisms and the formation of offshoot independent indigenous Methodist versions of the church. While Methodist membership more than doubled between 1990 and 2000, most of the growth came from localized areas in northern and central Luzon (see Figure 2). Most of the United Methodist church membership is concentrated within the Northern Luzon provinces of Bataan, Cagayan, Ilocos Sur, Nueva Ecija, Nueva Vizcaya, Tarlac and Zambales.
One explanation for the lack of national presence for the Methodist Church is that in the early 1900s there was an influx of Protestant missionaries during the American colonial period. In 1901, several of the Protestant missionary churches formed an Evangelical Union and agreed to divide the Philippines into distinct territories and assign regions among members of the Union. This arrangement eventually became the Comity agreement of 1902 (Laubach 1925; Deats 1964). The Methodists were assigned the provinces of Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Bataan, Zambales, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, and Cagayan (Laubach 1925). While the comity agreement was respected by the members of the Evangelical Union for decades, the Methodist church officially declared the agreement no longer in operation and binding in 1950 after some incursions into their territory by other religions groups (Deats 1964; Aragon 2002). After this, the Methodist Church started organizing churches in other regions of the country including Mindanao (Aragon 2002). Further investigation may need to be done to account for the difference in census data between 1990 and 2000 due to measurement error. 2010 data is based on report from the World Methodist Council (World Methodist Council 2013).
Figure 2: United Methodist Church adherents per 100,000 province population in 1990.

Figure 3: United Methodist Church membership (1900 - 2010).
The Seventh-Day Adventist Church characterizes the typology in which we observe a short-term spike with steady localized long-term growth. Between 1961 to 1964, the Seventh-Day Adventists grew at an annual rate of over 7% per year, more than double the annual population growth (Tuggy and Toliver 1972). While Seventh-day Adventists do not have congregations within every province of the Philippines, they do have strong growth in the many regions of the Philippines. However, most of their growth is within the following provinces: Bukidnon, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan, South Cotabato, Zamboanga Del Norte, and Zamboanga Del Sur (See Figure 4). The Seventh-Day Adventists arrived in the Philippines in 1905 as part of the influx of Protestant missionaries during the American colonial period. During 1901, they declined to take part in the Comity Agreement arranged by the Evangelical Union, opting instead to establish churches in all parts of the Philippines (Laubach 1925; Tuggy and Toliver 1972). Figure 5 illustrates the rapid and continuous growth of Seventh-Day Adventists starting in the 1960s, resulting in its inclusion among the top ten religions in terms of population in the Philippines.
Figure 4: Seventh-Day Adventist adherents per 100,000 province population in 2000.

Figure 5: Seventh-Day Adventist Church membership.
Slow Short-term Growth with Steady Long-term Nationalized Growth

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) characterizes the typology in which we observe short-term slow or mixed growth with long-term nationalized growth. The UCCP was formed in 1948 after a series of mergers by smaller religious denominations. Early history of the church growth can be traced from 1900 to 1966, with consolidation of the United Evangelical Church, the Evangelical Church and other smaller missionary groups (Tuggy and Toliver 1972). The UCCP experienced both surges in growth due to mergers and decreasing membership or flat-line growth throughout its history. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the growth trend of the UCCP. Once the largest Protestant group in the Philippines in the 1970s, other Christian religions, such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, have exceeded the UCCP in number of followers (Tuggy and Toliver 1972; National Statistics Office 2003).

Figure 6: UCCP adherents per 100,000 province population in 2000.
Short-term Rapid Growth Spike with Steady Nationalized Long-term Growth

The Iglesia ni Cristo, also known as INC, characterizes the typology in which we observe a short-term spike with steady nationalized long-term growth. Founded in 1914 by Felix Manalo, the Iglesia ni Cristo Church used aggressive proselyting to its expand membership throughout the Philippines. The INC established congregations in nearly every province in the Philippines since the 1950s (Tuggy 1976, 76). Growth was initially slow and steady during the early years of inception, with growth focused primarily in the northern region of Luzon between 1914 and 1918 (49). INC then expanded to the central regions of the Visayas between 1935 to 1950 (70). The INC also grew membership in the Southern region of Mindanao between 1941 to 1953 (70). Post- World War II, INC membership tripled between 1948 to 1960. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate the growth trend of the INC.
Figure 8: INC adherents per 100,000 province population in 2000.

Figure 9: Iglesia ni Cristo membership over time.
VII. DISCUSSION OF EXPLANATORY FACTORS

Short and Long-term Outcomes

It is useful to conceptualize the effects of religious growth in terms of the time horizons of both the causes and the resulting outcomes. Potential causes may affect short-term or long-term outcomes. Pierson (2003) illustrates this approach in Table 4, in which he describes the time horizons for different accounts and gives examples from the natural sciences (192). He contends that “much of contemporary research in the social science seems geared toward Quadrant I” in which “both causal processes and outcomes are depicted as unfolding entirely under a short period of time” (180). The effects of any given cause may not be immediately evident within a short period of time and sometimes social processes take a long time to develop. Pierson described these factors as “slow-moving causal processes” (181).

Table 4: Time Horizons of Causes and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Horizon of CAUSES</th>
<th>Time Horizon of OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>I Quick/Quick Case (Tornado)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>III Thresholds; Causal Chains (Earthquake)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pierson 2003, 179 and 192)
Applying Pierson’s conceptualization, this thesis attempts to identify factors that may contribute to outcomes that are observable in the short-term, long-term or both. Additionally, factors that influence spatial/geographical growth (i.e. localized versus nationalized) are identified.

Factors that explain short-time horizons tend to be quick moving or frequent human actions explained by motivational factors or brute coercion (Kreuzer 2020; forthcoming, 125). Motivational factors involve actors with a “high degree of decision-making authority” and driven by 1) material interests, 2) tactics (e.g. building coalitions, dividing enemies) or 3) ideology (126). Brute coercion includes use of force, such as violence or threats (126). Thus, short-term factors are fluid and are shaped by the present situation rather than the past.

On the other hand, factors that explain long time horizons may include structural factors (societal structures) or formal institutions that encompass slow moving change. Societal structures include collective identities, resources, or demographics (Kreuzer 2020; forthcoming, 125). Institutions include religious organizations and formal political institutions (124). Kreuzer (2020) also underscores the dynamic nature of structural factors by noting “institutions and social structures are themselves the result of earlier human choices that reproduce themselves and become durable constraints on subsequent human choices” (125). In sum, while structural and institutional factors are relatively stable and contribute to longer term outcomes, these factors are still subject to shifts in culture or reinterpretation of institutional rules.

While the existing traditional theoretical explanations cannot on their own explain the growth trends in the Philippines, they nevertheless point to important variables that with some reinterpretation can be applied to cases in the Philippines. Drawing on the concepts of time by Pierson (2003) and Kreuzer (2020), several potential factors may influence short or long-time
outcomes for religious group growth or decline. For these potential factors, the explanations fall in to the following four theoretical frameworks: ideational, organizational, institutional, and structural. Potential factors that fall under the ideational and organizational frameworks may have an immediate effect (observable over a shorter time frame) on the growth or decline of a religious group because they are primarily driven by actor motivation and action. Potential factors that fall under institutional or structural frameworks may take a longer time frame to manifest their eventual effects on the growth (or decline) of a religion.

Table 5 illustrates factors that may have short- or long-term impact on religious growth. These explanatory factors are grouped under the theoretical frameworks described above to create a more comprehensible schema and to link to earlier theoretical explanations.

Table 5: Potential Factors Influencing Religious Growth or Decline in the Philippines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Potential Explanatory Factors</th>
<th>Time Frame of Causes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideational</td>
<td>• Strict ideology</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Proselytizing approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>• Internal organizational dynamics</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cooperation or coordination among religious groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Religion structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>• State and religion linkage or cooperation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(State-based or formal)</td>
<td>• Institutional norms, rules, and compliance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>• Societal, social or economic structural factors</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors that Influence Short-Term Outcomes

In this section, we consider factors that may influence outcomes in a short-time frame. Short term factors tend be driven by actor-driven motivation. While the factors highlighted in Table 5 are mentioned, there is more attention to the factors relevant to the growth of specific minority Christian groups in the Philippines.

Ideational

Ideational explanations interpret human actions based on their ideas or beliefs (Parsons 2007, 96). In the context of the growth of religious movements, these factors are identified as relevant: 1) ideology and 2) proselytizing approaches and impact on conversion. The cultural context of the environment in which the ideational explanations operate should be considered. The Philippines is a collective culture that emphasize values such as deference to family and extended kinship (Lynch 1968) and social reciprocity (Hollnsteiner 1968). A key value is utang na loob (debt of gratitude) or social reciprocity. Utang na loob is a debt that always must be repaid by the recipient and this cultural perception fosters a sense of obligation and reciprocity in situations in which a person is offered material rewards in exchange for support (Hollnsteiner 1968).

Additionally, the cultural phenomenon of power and “men of prowess” in Southeast Asia is relevant, as described by Wolters (2008), in which “a leader with discernably superior prowess was associated with the capacity to attract followers, who were anxious to earn a meritorious reputation, personal advancement in the leader’s service, and a share of the leader’s wealth” (45). Wolters also notes that “the same followers would switch their allegiance when their leader
could no longer protect them” (45). Rafael (2005) also confirms this cultural practice is relevant in the Philippines and asserts that men of prowess “were able to attract followers and extend their network of dependents because others perceived them to have a surplus of spiritual energy, as evidenced by their ability to promote a series of beneficial reciprocal exchanges between the earth and the cosmos … as well as among that societies various members” (14). Rafael also notes that “the breakdown of such exchanges, leading to chaos and the disruption of social life, was attributed to the ebbing of the ruler’s spiritual energy, and the people then attached themselves to a new authority figure” (14).

Wolter’s (1999, 2008) cultural concept of power is manifested in the Philippine social system of patron-client relationships between landowners and tenants. Scott (1972) defines the patron-client relationship as a specific type of dyadic relationship that involves an instrumental friendship based on mutual benefits in which a person of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses their influence and resources to provide protection or benefits to a person of lower status (client)(92). In return, the client offers general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron. The social dynamics and relationships in these specific contexts can shape an individual’s experiences and identities within organizations and groups.

**Church Ideology and Proselytizing Approach**

Considering this context, these ideational factors may have varying effects in attracting members and contributing to the short-term growth of religious groups. Ideology has been linked to the short-term growth of religious movements, such as having a change-oriented ideology (Gerlach and Hine 1968) or strict ideology (Iannacone 1998; Kelley 1986). Iannaccone (1998) asserts that “throughout the world, fast growing religions tend to be strict, sectarian, and
theologically conservative” (1471). He argues that the reason for this is “strictness makes organizations stronger and more attractive because it reduces free riding. It screens out members who lack commitment and stimulates participation among those who remain” (1180). What this suggests is that strict religions are more appealing because, by enforcing strict rules and expectations, they discourage individuals from benefiting from the community without contributing or making a commitment. The strictness filters out individuals who lack commitment or dedication. At the same time, it stimulates active participation among those who remain, as the members who choose to stay are more likely to be fully committed and engaged in the religious activities and community.

In another view, Grzymala-Busse (2012) argues that the growth rate of strict churches may not be solely due to proselytizing and conversion. She also describes how religious strictness puts strong demands on behavior and belief that discourages the low-commitment members, while ensuring high commitment from the rest (5). This strictness allows the religion to provide “club goods: benefits whose payoff for an individual is a function of the behavior of others” (6). Grzymala-Busse claims the “pronatalist doctrines” of the Latter-Day Saints or the Amish is evidence of this (10). Pronatalist doctrines encourage creating large families while prohibiting contraception and abortion. This strict ideology correlates to higher fertility rates for those religions (11). Accordingly, these groups provide benefits, such as networks of community support for child-rearing, which helps lowers the investment cost of having large families and ensures group sustainability (30).

While there has been declining membership in mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches in Western countries, such as the United States, there has been significant growth in strict churches with aggressive recruitment tactics such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day
Adventist, Mormon, or Southern Baptists (Iannacone 1998; Grzymala-Busse 2012; Kelley 1986). Competition by zealous recruitment techniques of the evangelical churches with strong proselytizing outreach created competition to the Catholic Church and other main-stream religions.

Another perspective to consider is the influence of ideology within the cultural context, social dynamics and social networks of the individuals being recruited. Social networks play an influential role in understanding how individuals are recruited in new religious movements (Lofland and Stark 1965; Gerlach and Hine 1968; Snow and Machalek 1984; Snow and Phillips 1980; Gooren 2007). Studies have shown that a significant percentage of members in noncommunal groups like Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists were recruited through social networks (Snow and Machalek 1984, 182). However, while friendship and kinship networks commonly serve as pathways for people to join religious groups, it is unclear whether network recruitment dynamics alone are responsible for the transformation and conversion process (182).

In addition, another important aspect to consider is the nature of conversion, which is not usually a quick process involving a simple exchange of one's current religious beliefs for another perspective. Sociologists Lofland and Stark (1965) propose a model for conversion to new religious movements or cults. According to their model, several conditions must be met for conversion to occur. These conditions include 1) experiencing tension between desired state and current reality; 2) seeking a religious problem-solving approach; 3) turning to a new religion when conventional religious institutions are inadequate; 4) encountering the religious movement or cult during a turning point in life; 5) forming an “affective” or emotional bond with its members; 6) lacking close attachments with people outside the movement that may intervene;
and 7) engaging in frequent “intensive interaction” with other converts to become a “total convert”(874). While there is debate among scholars regarding the importance of these conditions, their model is widely cited (Snow and Philips 1980; Gooren 2007).

Snow and Philips (1980) tested Lofland and Stark’s (1965) claims in a different case and confirmed the significance of “affective bonds” and “intensive interaction” with members of new religious movements (444). Further research has also confirmed the significance of these factors (Snow and Machalek 1984, 183). When individuals have a positive, personal connection with group members, it serves to share information, make appeals more believable, and increase the pressure to conform to the group's practices (183). Therefore, it is not surprising that without these emotional ties, conversion is less likely. Religious scholar Hefner (1993) also argues that the most important aspect of religious conversion is not a complete restructuring of personal beliefs, but rather “an adjustment in self-identification [by accepting] religious actions or beliefs that are seen as more [appropriate], useful, or true” (17). In simpler terms, conversion involves adopting a new point of reference for one's identity, though it does not necessarily mean abandoning previous references (17).

Kessler and Ruland (2008) reported the significant growth of charismatic Christian religious groups in the Philippines since the 1970s. These Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Catholic Charismatic groups made inroads with attracting followers, particularly among the poor and less educated members of society. There is debate among scholars as to the differences in ideology of these groups but in general, Evangelical and Pentecostal groups have a doctrine of the literal belief in the Bible and an emphasis on personal conversion and “accepting Jesus as a personal savior” (7). Pentecostals tend to emphasize the spiritual experience which manifests in practices as speaking in tongues and emotional engagement during church services (7). Charismatic
groups may vary depending on the religion, but generally embody the spiritual and personal experience of the presence of God directly (4). Independent groups may have some or few of these characteristics. In the Philippines, the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC), a religion with strict biblical interpretation ideology, grew rapidly. The INC have historically had an “aggressive stance and combative relationship with other religions” (Barrett et al. 2001). In addition, the INC’s enforcement of bloc voting with its membership provides significant political influence for the group, with political candidates competing for official endorsements by the INC. Another religious sect, the Seventh Day Adventists, also have strict doctrinal interpretation and have seen rapid growth in the Philippines.

**Organizational**

Organizational explanations concern the aspects that shape the interactions within a group of people organized to work together for a purpose. Under the category of organizational explanations, three factors may relevant to a religious movement’s appeal or growth: 1) internal organizational dynamics, 2) coordination among other religions (external dynamics), and 3) religion structure. Like ideational explanations, organizational factors in the Philippines operate within the cultural context of Filipino society and values.

**Internal Organizational Dynamics**

Individual and group elements within Christian religions may foment complex internal organizational dynamics within the group. In general, religious groups are social systems concerned with managing group integration and conflict (Yinger 1970, 19). Under the broad category of internal organizational dynamics, two sources may be relevant to the growth or
decline of religious adherents. The first is schism in church membership in which members leave a religion to form another religious organization. The second is the merger of two or more religious groups. These factors are further discussed in the following sections.

**Schisms**

One factor that influences church membership growth or decline is schisms in church membership. In the literature, Greenslade (1953) suggests there are five sources of schism in the history of the early church, and they are “interactive and mutually reinforcing”: 1) Personal (e.g., pursuit of personal power, personal rancor, or other issues); 2) National, social, and economic influences; 3) Rivalry of Sees (i.e. separate ecclesiastical bureaucracies); 4) Liturgical disputes; and 5) Problems of discipline and the puritan idea of the Church (i.e. disputes on purity of ideology) (Yinger 1970, 230-231). Yinger (1970) also highlights the challenges to the legitimacy of the predominant “institutional and authoritarian elements in the church” and claims the highly institutionalized structure becomes adjusted to the needs and interests of the predominant elements of society. The ‘disinherited’ are not simply those who are cut off from the predominant religious institution by economic and political differences. They are also alienated by the differences in belief, in form of worship, and in moral emphasis that their different needs demand (231).

Schisms were the cause of initial growth for the Philippine Independent Church, popularly known as the Aglipayan Church. Schisms also contributed to periods of membership drop or plateaus for the United Methodist Church in the Philippines.

An example of a schism that influenced the growth of a religion is the case of the Philippine Independent Church (PIC). The PIC emerged from anti-clerical sentiment against the Spanish friar authority of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. Growing resentment against the
Spanish Catholic church in the late 1890s led to a nationalist movement for a Philippine national church in which native Filipinos would serve in leadership positions (Brand 1980; Clifford 1969). As a result, the Philippine Independent Church was formed in 1902, causing a schism in the Catholic population in the Philippines. Estimates of the size of the schismatic population varies from one and a half million (Stuntz 1904) to over two million (Rodell 1992). Brand (1980) describes the process of the PIC takeover of friar parish churches and assets: “Sometimes a vacated parish was taken over; in other instances, forcible seizure occurred with the approval of PIC members of municipal councils; and in still other cases, a Catholic priest -- now Aglipayan – claimed the parish for the PIC” (54).

On the other hand, an example in which schisms caused the decline of religious adherents is the case of the Methodist church. Schisms were a cause of the decline during certain periods in Methodist Philippine history. They experienced schisms in membership in 1905, 1909, and 1933. This was in part due to nationalistic influences and the desire for independence from American leadership. Church leadership also questioned the ethics of one of the churches most respected Filipino Methodist pastors, Nicolas Zamora. As a result, Zamora left the Methodist Church and formed the La Iglesia Evangelica Methodista en las Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF) in 1909. (Deats 1964).

*Merger of Religious Groups*

Another explanation for the rapid short-term growth of a religion is the merger with other religious groups. Yinger (1957) suggests that mergers of religious groups may occur when there is reduction of differentiating factors of a group that allow it to unify with other religious groups based on societal and cultural shifts (248). He also implies groups may be motivated by self-
preservation. When Protestant churches, sects and other ecclesiastical groups cannot recruit a “socially homogenous membership” they may purposely seek ecumenical unity (249).

An example of growth of a religious group by merger is the case of the United Church of Christ. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines emerged after a series of mergers by small religious denominations. In its history, one branch, the Evangelical Church was formed in 1943 after the merger of the Disciples of Christ and United Brethren (Barrett et al. 2001). Another branch, the United Evangelical Church, was formed in 1929 when the Presbyterian church and the Congregationalists merged. The United Church of Christ was formed post-World War II in 1948 when the United Evangelical Church, the Evangelical Church and the independent Methodist Church merged. Figure 10 depicts the merger and formation of the United Church of Christ (Tuggy and Toliver 1972; Montgomery and McGavran 1980).

Figure 10: Growth of the United Church of Christ (1900 – 1974) from the Presbyterian and United Evangelical Church.
While there was significant growth of the UCC during its formation in 1948, Tuggy and Toliver (1972) claim that growth was “not due to conversion or biological increase (that is, to the birth of member’s children), so much as it is the merger of constituent bodies into one homogeneous whole” (29). They also assert that “no other church” [in the Philippines] has grown this way” and that the “Presbyterians brought more members into the united body than all other churches combined” (29). In sum, some of the small religious missionary groups that sought to establish roots in the Philippines during the early twentieth century were eventually consolidated under the membership of the United Church of Christ.

**Coordination Among Religious Groups**

In addition to internal organizational dynamics, the external dynamics among religious groups may influence the potential for rapid growth of a religious group. Religious groups may choose to move toward ecumenism or promoting unity with other religious denominations. Yinger (1970) describes ecumenical activity as a variable that can range from tolerance at the low end to integration at the high end.

Religious groups can coordinate with one another in ventures such as missionary outreach. This was the case in the early 1900s under the 1902 comity agreement in which the missionaries from the Methodist, Presbyterian, United Brethren, Baptist, United Brethren, Congregationalists, Disciples of Christ, and Christian and Missionary Alliance churches mutually agreed to divide the Philippines into assigned geographical territories for outreach and conversion. Religious groups that were part of the comity agreement recognized and respected the jurisdiction that other missionary groups had for their assigned territory.
However, the implementation of the comity agreement may have introduced a path dependency that influenced not only the future growth of the participating parties but also the geographical reach of each group. Mahoney (2000) defines path dependence as “those historical sequences in which contingent events set in motion institutional patterns or even chains that have deterministic properties” (507). The effects on growth may not be evident short-term because of the opportunity for initial rapid growth of all religions in the untrodden areas. However, in the long-term, the comity agreement may have allowed a competitive advantage for religious groups that did not acknowledge or comply with the agreement. Did the agreement lower the barrier of competition for these groups? While the agreement allowed for initial rapid growth for some religions, the effect on growth for all participating groups in the comity was uneven. The Seventh-day Adventists, who did not sign the comity agreement, had rapid and steady growth throughout its history in the Philippines. The Seventh-day Adventists also had greater growth and geographic spread than the United Methodist Church (see Figures 2 through 5).

In another perspective of interfaith coordination, Elwood (1969) discusses the development of newer Protestant movements in the 1960s in the Philippines that operated independently from traditional Protestant religions established earlier at the turn of the 20th century. Some mainline churches joined interdenominational organizations like the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), while other fundamentalist and evangelical churches joined separate associations. The NCCP has ten churches and nine associate organizations, including mainline religions, such as the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church. The formation of a fundamentalist equivalent of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines was driven by concerns that the Council might become the “official voice of Protestantism and the accrediting
body for foreign missionaries” (376). Elwood (1969) also suggests that conservative evangelicals had suspicions about the denominations associated with the East Asia Christian Conference, fearing theological compromise and a potential union with Roman Catholics (376). Another reason for the formation of independent Protestant movements might have been the social conservatism of most independent Protestants in the Philippines. They believed that mainline denominations were socially compromising and instead preferred to take an unwavering stance on the principle of “spiritual separation from worldly influences” (376).

**Structure of a Religion**

The structure of a religion may also contribute to its potential growth outcomes. Religious structures vary in their institutional complexity, with the most complex ones having hierarchical or bureaucratic systems, integrated religious units, and religious professionals (Yinger 1970, 261). In contrast, less complex structures may lack these traits. Yinger (1970) proposed the following features for distinguishing among religious typologies: 1) inclusiveness of the structures; and 2) level of organization, complexity, and distinctiveness of the structures (260).

**Inclusiveness/Exclusiveness**

One feature that distinguishes among the different types of religions is the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the groups. The concepts of inclusiveness or exclusiveness in religious groups may have an impact on membership appeal and social identity. Inclusiveness refers to the extent to which a religious system includes members of society, while exclusiveness describes groups that are exclusionary and alienated from societal values (Yinger 1970, 259). The
inclusiveness or exclusiveness of a religious group can influence its attractiveness to potential members. All-inclusive, welcoming, and ecumenical groups may be more appealing to individuals seeking a sense of belonging and acceptance. On the other hand, exclusionary groups may attract individuals who are looking for a distinct identity separate from mainstream societal values.

Social identity plays a crucial role in individuals' decision to join or remain in a group based on how positively the group contributes to their sense of belonging and self-concept. Social identity, as defined by Tajfel (1981), refers to the part of an individual's self-concept that arises from their knowledge of belonging to a particular social group and the “value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (255). He proposed that individuals are likely to remain in a group or seek membership in new groups if those groups contribute positively to their social identity (256). However, if a group fails to satisfy this requirement, individuals may be inclined to leave the group unless they encounter objective barriers or conflicting values that prevent them from doing so. When leaving the group poses difficulties, individuals may employ two strategies: altering their interpretation of the group's attributes to justify unwelcome features (e.g. low status), or “accepting the situation” and “engaging in social action” to bring about desirable changes (256). Tajfel also highlights the relational aspect of social identity, emphasizing that groups exist in relation to and/or in comparison to other social groups. The comparison with other social groups affects the interpretation of attributes and the motivation for social action within a particular group (256).
Types of Religions and Complexity

Another feature that distinguishes among the different types of religions is the degree of organization and complexity of the structures. Becker (1940) suggests a religious typology specifically for Western-based religions, which includes four categories: ecclesia, sect, denomination, and cult. The ecclesia is a conservative and universal religious body not in conflict with secular society (35). The ecclesia typically has a high organizational structure, bureaucratic organization, and religious professionals. The Catholic church is an example of an international ecclesia. Sects, on the other hand, are smaller, exclusive, and elective groups that focus on moralistic concerns, religious experience, and separation from society (36). Sects may have a less complex organization with little bureaucratic structure. Sects can evolve into established sects or denominations. Denominations or established sects may have a moderately complex organization and bureaucratic structure. Established Cults are similar to sects but are often small movements in their early stages, frequently with charismatic leaders, and represent a departure from prevailing societal traditions (Yinger 1970, 279).

Denominations, according to Yinger (1970), may retain some sectarian qualities but are characterized by tolerance, inclusiveness, and participation in intergroup activities (256). They tend to be more “integrated, professionalized, and bureaucratized” (265). Mainline religions like the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church, or the United Church of Christ are typically considered denominations.
Table 6: Examples of Religious Group Typologies in the Philippines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Inclusive or Exclusive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Church</td>
<td>Ecclesia</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iglesia ni Christo</td>
<td>Established Sect</td>
<td>Exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aglipayan</td>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventist</td>
<td>Established Sect</td>
<td>Exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Church of Christ</td>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>Sect</td>
<td>Exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Church of Christ</td>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factors that Influence Long-term Outcomes**

In this section, we consider factors that may influence outcomes in a long-time frame. Long-term factors tend be institutional or structural (societal social or economic structures) factors that involve slow moving change. While the factors highlighted in Table 5 are mentioned, there is more attention to the factors relevant to growth of specific minority Christian groups in the Philippines.

**Institutional**

Institutional factors encompass slow-moving changes and their outcomes may not be immediately noticeable, requiring a longer time period for observation. Institutions may be economic, political, or formal organizations like churches. The institutional traits of religious groups can influence their ability to retain members in the long term. Institutions have a significant impact on individuals' thinking patterns and social identities, even though they “do not have minds of their own” (Katznelson 2003, 295). Regarding institutional durability,
Katzenelson (2003) argues that “the degree of security institutions acquire depends in part on their capacity to shape not just individual cognitions but social identities within which they are implanted” (296). As a result, the institutionalization of a religion can greatly affect its growth and durability. Furthermore, institutions can be seen as the constraints imposed by humans on human interaction, including formal rules (constitutions, laws and regulations) and informal constraints (conventions, norms and codes of conduct), and their enforcement mechanisms (North 1995, 15). Two institutional factors can influence the growth and stability of religions: 1) state and religion linkage and 2) institutionalization of religious norms, rules and compliance.

**State and Religion Linkage**

The relationship between state and religion may influence the rise of religious minorities, especially when there is an official state religion. A number of Asian states place restrictions on religious minorities to protect the dominant religious identity of the state. Muslim states tend to be the most supportive of state religions and on average, place the most restrictions on religious minorities (Fox 2008). The Spanish colonial legacy in the Philippines had a significant impact on suppressing minority religions, with Catholicism being the state religion for over 300 years during that period. However, the start of U.S. colonial rule in 1898 marked a crucial moment in Philippine history as the separation of church and state was implemented.

The newly acquired freedom of religious expression guaranteed by the Philippine constitution played a role in the growth of new Christian movements. Following this change, Protestant movements began to gain traction in the early 1900s, driven by American missionaries aiming to spread Protestant evangelism across the Philippines. Consequently, the country saw an influx of various Protestant denominations in competition with each other. Concurrently,
indigenous, or independent Christian religious movements also emerged. The breakdown of the Comity Agreement following World War II due to migration and an influx of new missionary agencies led to proliferation of Christian proselytizing across the country (Elwood 1969, 372). Overall, the post-war period saw a significant increase in growth in independent religious sects and separatist Protestant movements from abroad (375).

**Religious Institutionalization of Norms and Rules**

Another view of social institutions focuses on the stabilizing mechanisms of the religious institution themselves. Rueschemeyer (2009) describes this stabilizing system as where “economic resources and power as well as ideas and intellectual authority are joined to rules, norms and values” (146). Hefner (1993) contends that while religions try to differentiate themselves from the everyday world by “redefining it in relation to another spiritual world”, not all religions are successful in attracting followers (19). The real power of world religions, according to Hefner, lies in their ability to connect these “strict transcendental imperatives” to institutions that “propagate and control religious knowledge and identity across time and space” (19). In other words, what sets world religions apart, especially the ones that are institutionally successful, is a combination of “doctrinal and social-organizational” elements (19). These religions establish standardized roles for clergy, formalize rituals, define doctrines, and work towards creating a “authoritative culture and cohesive religious structure” (19).

Institutions play a role in shaping different forms of authority within a society. When considering power or authority within the institutional context, it may be useful to consider Weber’s framework of legitimate authority. According to Weber (1968), there are three types of authority: legal, traditional, and charismatic (215). Legal authority relies on rational grounds and
the belief in the legitimacy of established rules and the authority of those who enforce them, while traditional authority is based on long-standing traditions and legitimacy of authority (215). Charismatic authority on the other hand, is based on the exceptional qualities of an individual and the norms they establish. Charismatic leaders possess personal qualities that inspire people to follow them, which may include supernatural or divine origins (241).

Some religious groups may have charismatic leaders who drive short-term growth within their religion. However, Weber (1968) argues that “charismatic authority is naturally unstable” (1114). He asserts that “charismatic authority” needs to undergo a transformation known as “routinization of charisma” (246). This transformation is motivated by the 1) the “ideal and material interests of the followers” in staying and engaging in the community and 2) the “ideal and material interests” of the administrative staff, disciples, party workers or others in continuing their relationship” (246). Weber argues that is necessary because charismatic authority will eventually wane and turn into an institution. This institution is either “mechanized”, gradually displaced by other structures, or fused with other structures (1121).

The demise of a charismatic leader and the issue of succession highlight the challenges of routinization. One common way to address succession, according to Weber, is the leader's own designation of their successor through which legitimacy is obtained by virtue of this designation (247). Another aspect of the routinization process involves the administrative staff of the organization. This may involve followers or disciples “appropriating powers and economic advantages”, as well as “regulating recruitment” (247). Initially, recruitment is based on personal charisma, but as routinization progresses, followers or disciples may establish norms for recruitment, such as training or eligibility tests (249).
The Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) sect in the Philippines is an example of routinization of charismatic charisma. According to religious scholars, the founder, Felix Manalo, qualifies as a charismatic leader (Tuggy 1976; Sanders 1969). The Iglesia ni Cristo closely aligns with Weber's model, starting as a predominantly charismatic organization but gradually undergoing routinization to become a large, well-organized, financially supported, and disciplined institution (Tuggy 1976).

**Structural Explanations**

**Societal Structures**

In structural explanations, individuals base their actions directly from the materially and externally determined environment (Parsons 2007, 52). As a result, people's choices are influenced by what they perceive as material resources and constraints (54). Rueschemeyer (2009) suggests that the outcomes of past interactions and social processes become persistent structural conditions that impact subsequent developments (143). These structural conditions influence and shape future events. Societal, social, or economic structural factors can influence a religious group’s growth over a longer period of time. Structural factors can include resource distributions (education, economic development); social identities (race, nationalism) or demographic groups (class, ethnicity, language). Yinger (1970) suggests several potential ways through which religions can vary based on the structural factors of social class or ethnic groups. The three possibilities are 1) religious differences might closely align with those based on social class, ethnicity, language, or region; 2) religious differences may transcend social class boundaries but correspond to ethnic, linguistic, regional, or other divisions; or 3) “religious
differences may vary independently from the main lines of differentiation. Each religious group can be found across different social class levels and among various ethnic groups” (426).

Religious scholar, Elwood (1969) argues that nationalism has influenced the growth of independent religious movements in the Philippines, as Christianity is sometimes seen as a Western import conflicting with Philippine cultural patterns (371). He also claims the search for cultural identity and the feeling of being on the periphery of culture have also fostered the emergence of new religious movements. Additionally, regionalism, geographical barriers, and cultural differences have led to the development of churches in relative isolation, often resulting in the formation of independent groups (371). The largest indigenous groups formed in the Philippines are the Iglesia ni Cristo and the Philippine Independent Church. Both of these independent religions advocated for Filipino religious leadership and no foreign administration.

In another view, modernization theory is a prominent structural explanation. Norris and Inglehart (2004) argue that modernization weakens the influence of religious institutions in affluent societies, resulting in the decreased salience of religion. Conversely, poorer societies are witnessing a growing trend toward religiosity. However, Norris and Inglehart acknowledge that the United States is an exception among postindustrial societies, which they attribute to the significant immigration of individuals with traditional worldviews from Hispanic countries and relatively high levels of economic inequality (25).

In another study, Cragun and Lawson (2010) conducted a comparative analysis across multiple countries to examine the impact of supply and demand factors on the growth of three Christian religious groups known for their strict proselytizing practices: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-Day Adventists. According to Cragun and Lawson’s findings, the most influential factors in predicting growth were the country’s growth momentum, its level of
economic development, and various characteristics at the country level (349). They found that the primary driver of growth was growth momentum, meaning that once a religious group begins to grow in a country, it tends to continue growing (370). However, this growth eventually slows down due to various reasons such as reaching a saturation point and a decline in demand (370). The researchers also noted that these religious groups experience minimal to no growth once countries reach a moderately high level of growth (HDI of 0.8+). However, they could not definitively determine whether this lack of growth was attributable to modernization or the presence of social safety nets (370). Additionally, these groups have seen growth within the United States, which suggests that modernization theory is not adequate in explaining differences observed.

How does modernization apply to the case of the Philippines? In general, the Philippines is considered a developing country. According to the United Nations Development Program, the human development index (HDI) for the Philippines in 2022 was 0.699, which ranks it as a country with medium human development (UNDP 2022). While we would expect to see the decline in religious growth, with rising levels of education and urbanization, that is not observed with the growth of some groups, such as evangelicals or the Iglesia ni Cristo.
VIII. CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

The second part of this study is a case study that examines a typology that exhibits rapid short-term growth and sustained long-term growth, spreading nationwide in the Philippines. I apply my approach to explain the influence of various factors on the short- or long-term religious growth of the case religion. Specifically, I focus on the select case of the Iglesia ni Cristo Church as an example of a short-term spike with steady nationalized long-term growth. I chose this case because the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) is an independent indigenous church movement that originated in the 1900s and experienced rapid and sustained long-term growth, becoming one of the Philippines' top four religious affiliations with over 2,200,000 adherents. (National Statistics Office 2013).

Process tracing methods were applied to the case study to identify key agents, actions and causal mechanisms that link the proposed causes and outcomes of the process (Beach and Pederson 2019; Bennett and Checkel 2015). Process tracing involves examining the intermediate steps in a process to infer how it occurred and its impact on the outcome (Bennett and Checkel 2015). The causal mechanism is first unpacked into a series of parts with associated actors and actions for each part. This approach allows for a detailed understanding of how the mechanism works.
Iglesia ni Christo Case Study

*Only the Iglesia ni Cristo*

*That has the truth ...*

*We are the instruments,*

*The prophesied church.*

-Iglesia ni Cristo hymn, *Ang Bagaong Himnario, Hymn 55*

Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) is an example of a religious group that observed rapid short-term growth. INC has also experienced favorable long-term growth and spread throughout the Philippines. The Iglesia ni Cristo Church, founded in 1914 by Felix Manalo, has used aggressive proselyting to expand its membership throughout the Philippines. Since the 1950s, the church has established congregations in almost every province in the country. Initially, growth was slow and focused on the northern region of Luzon between 1914 and 1918 (Tuggy 1976, 49). Later, expansion occurred in the central regions of the Visayas between 1935 and 1950, as well as in the southern region of Mindanao between 1941 and 1953 (70). After World War II, the church experienced a significant increase in membership, tripling between 1948 and 1960.

What are the reasons for this pattern of growth? Scholars who study the INC cite some of the following reasons for membership appeal and growth: charismatic leadership, indigenous nature, strict enforcement of doctrine, aggressive outreach, and appearance of success as symbolized by proliferation of grandiose white chapels throughout the Philippines (Sander 1969; Harper 2014; Tuggy 1976). While all these reasons are point to the growth success of INC, they do not necessarily explain how these causes are linked to the growth outcome over time. To address this gap, I examine factors that impact short and long-term growth of the Iglesia ni Christo. I also use process tracing to unpack the mechanisms that link theoretical causes to the
eventual outcome. The framework of looking at short and long-term time horizons may also be applied to theorization of the mechanisms found in process tracing descriptions. As a result, I also develop process tracing maps for both short- and long-term growth.

**Process Theory for Short-term Growth of INC**

I propose the process theory that the short-term growth of INC was primarily due to effective execution of strategies for propagation of its doctrine in conjunction with its strict religious dogma. Together, these two factors enabled the INC to have strong organizational cohesion and rapid short-term growth post World War II.

**Church Ideology**

One explanation for INC's short-term growth can be attributed to its disciplined organizational approach in spreading an appealing ideology of an indigenous church led by a visionary Filipino leader. The INC church effectively instills in its members, a strong sense of religious and ethnic identity. Tajfel (1981), a psychologist noted for work on social identity, proposes that people are likely to seek membership in new groups if those groups contribute positively to their social identity (256). He also highlights the relational aspect of social identity, emphasizing that groups exist in relation to and in comparison with other social groups (256). The founder, Felix Manalo, was a charismatic leader who skillfully employed Biblical passages and proof-texting in his speeches and debates to justify the beliefs of the INC (Harper 2014). Felix Manalo also falls under Wolter’s (2008) definition of a “man of prowess”, in which he is a “leader with discernably superior prowess [and] associated with the capacity to attract followers” (14).

The INC strategically appeals to the social identity of Filipinos through its design. It is comprised of Filipino religious leaders who oversee evangelism, education, and administration
Tagalog, along with other local languages, is used in all sermons and hymns. The official INC publication, Pasugo, is predominantly written in Tagalog and often includes quotes from Rizal, the national hero. In sum, the INC's Filipino identity, communication strategies, and authoritative appeal effectively align with the social identity of potential members.

**Proselytizing Approach**

The proselytizing approach of the INC has been described by religious scholars as aggressive and combative with other religions. In their sermons, the main target of attack of INC ministers is the “doctrines, practices and beliefs of the Catholic Church” (Sta. Romana 1955, 6). Many Catholic Filipinos have a limited understanding of their faith's doctrines, and they become the target audience for an articulate Iglesia minister who skillfully justifies their faith using the Bible (6). The Pasugo, the official INC magazine, frequently attacks the legitimacy of the Catholic church. Evidence of this is given by the following declaration:

> This means that the Catholic Church that exists to date is not the Church established by our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, it is the product of great apostasy, or the turning away of the Church of Christ from her original teachings. We, therefore, could assert without fear or contradiction that the Catholic Church is the apostate church which no longer identifies with pristine Christianity or Christianity in her undefiled form” (Fuentes 1993, 4).

Religious scholar, Sta. Romana (1955) describes several ways in which the INC conduct proselytizing outreach. One way is by organizing open forums at a local chapel, where members invite friends, neighbors, and others to attend. Another way is through the organization of religious rallies, coinciding with local town fiestas. Sta. Romana claims that in areas where the government officials received support from the Iglesia, the Iglesia can always expect to secure
permits for their rallies (7). Additionally, Sta. Romana observes that most attendees at the INC events have “never seen nor read the Bible”, making it “easy for them to accept everything presented to them”, particularly when the minister uses Biblical verses as evidence. She further argues that the “lack of knowledge and teachings about the Bible and the Catholic church” is a significant weakness in the religious life of “uneducated Catholic Filipinos” (6).

Nevertheless, Sta. Romana (1955) asserts that even educated individuals from the middle class can be convinced to join the sect. She found herself fascinated by the ministers’ extensive understanding of their beliefs and doctrines, as they referenced parts of the Bible from memory (7). She even acknowledged that she found the speeches so compelling that “even [she] was tempted to join the sect” (7).

**Internal Organization**

The INC has a "highly centralized authority structure" in which the executive minister wields significant power over the sect's affairs (Ando 1969, 335). Founder Manalo served as executive minister of INC until his death in 1963. Members believe that the executive minister is divinely guided which grants him unquestionable authority (Tuggy 1976, 149). The executive minister holds exclusive powers such as ordaining new ministers, approving the establishment of new congregations, controlling publications, and overseeing sermon and hymn selections (149).

The ordained ministers, under the Division Ministers, have preaching responsibilities and actively propagate the Iglesia teachings within their assigned areas. They also conduct training classes for workers and carry out administrative duties (153).

The strength of the Iglesia ni Cristo lies in its hierarchical structure that extends to every individual member. The local congregation reflects the organization's overall hierarchy.
According to religious scholar Tuggy (1976), each local congregation is led by a Head Deacon who reports directly to the minister (154). The congregation is further divided into committees, with each committee having a President, Vice President, and Secretary (154). Every member belongs to a committee, ensuring close monitoring and engagement. The tight organizational structure is seen as a means for spiritual growth, mission mobilization, and discipline, differentiating it from other Protestant churches in the Philippines (154).

Tuggy (1976) further explains how the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) ensures the expansion of their congregations by recruiting and training ministers. Each INC minister forms a group of followers, who assist them in their propagandizing activities, ensuring a “steady stream of recruits into the ministry” (157). To become an INC minister, a candidate must request approval to become a ministerial student. Once approved, the candidate enrolls in a course taught by a local minister, with a curriculum that focuses on an intensive review of all INC doctrine, using lessons prepared in Manila (158). According to Tuggy, “After completing the initial course of study, male candidates may be approved to study at the School of Ministry in Manila. At the School of Ministry, classes are held [daily and primarily focus] on drilling INC doctrines and familiarizing students with administrative procedures within the organization” (159). If a ministerial candidate drops out, they may still become an evangelist or teacher in the church.

The functions of the INC administrative may vary but all staff is organized to promote growth within the church. The minister's main responsibilities lie in “church administration, indoctrination of members, and propagation or mission”, rather than pastoral care for the congregation (Tuggy 1976, 163). They engage in indoctrination through “worship service sermons, special church meetings, and home doctrine classes” (Tuggy 1976, 163). The repetitive messages serve as “effective instruments of indoctrination” (163). In addition, ministers actively
participate in various activities such as “open forum meetings, outdoor debates, home propaganda meetings, evangelistic meetings, and rallies” to spread “Iglesia teachings, gain new members, and plant new locals” (164). The evangelist or worker in the Iglesia ni Cristo also must develop debating and propagandizing skills by actively engaging in debates with leaders of other churches (Sta. Romana 1955; Tuggy 1976).

In sum, the INC ensure they have enough administrative staff for outreach and expansion. Comprehensive training in the doctrines is provided so ministers, evangelist and workers know how to proselytize the core ideology. Additionally, the INC seeks out opportunities to debate with other religious leaders. The organization has strong cohesion and there is little opportunity for schisms within the INC structure.

**Exclusiveness**

The INC has “nationalist, exclusivist, and anti-ecumenical tendencies” (Gardinier 2002, 20). Harper (2002) states that a key belief of the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) is that salvation can only be attained by being a member of the INC (437). To support this claim, biblical passages are emphasized, demonstrating that the *Iglesia ni Cristo*, which translated from Tagalog is "Church of Christ", is the only true church (439). It is also important to note that the INC's assertion of being the true "Church of Christ" should not be mistaken as part of the Church of Christ denomination associated with the restoration movement in America. The Iglesia ni Cristo believe they are the legitimate Church of Christ. A Pasugo article illustrates this core INC belief:

> It is commonly believed that the only thing a person needs to do to be saved is to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as Lord and personal Savior. The Bible does affirm faith is important; however, it also teaches that faith is not enough. Man needs to become a member of the true Church for Christ to save them (Celajes 1997, 9).
INC places immense importance on the significance of a name, particularly highlighting the numerous references to the importance of Christ's name in the issues of the Pasugo (Harper 2002, 439). Bible verses are often quoted, like this particular reference found in the INC doctrine: “The Apostles called it the Church of Christ (Acts 20:28; Lamsa Version). There are not many Churches of Christ, only one. Though there are many members, there is only one body or one Church (Romans 12:4-5; Colossians 1:13)” (Iglesia ni Cristo 1976, 31). The ministers frequently cite these verses as proof that one must be a member of the Iglesia ni Cristo for salvation. Religious scholar, Harper (2002) contends that according to the INC, a relationship with God is only possible by being a part of the church rather than through “direct communication with the divine Christ through reading the Bible and engaging in prayer” (442). Harper further asserts that in the INC doctrine, “outside of membership, man cannot render worship or service acceptable to God” (443).

Additionally, Ando (1969) contends that the Filipino masses can experience greater spiritual and material advantages through the INC compared to the Catholic Church because the INC has an “extensive socio-economic security system for its followers” (342). The INC provides “very informal but effective mutual aid system”, where poor members receive assistance during emergencies through contributions from other members during regular services (342). Additionally, the INC plays an influential role in helping its members secure job opportunities (342). In summary, the INC creates incentives to encourage members to remain in the church and use its internal network for assistance before seeking support from external organizations.
Coordination Among Religions

As mentioned earlier the INC is exclusionary and anti-ecumenical. (Gardinier 2002, 20). The INC, as a rule, does not generally cooperate with other religions. The INC actively attacks the legitimacy of most religions, especially the Roman Catholic Church. Additionally, when the 1902 Comity Agreement was in force, this restricted the geographical reach and future growth of the participating religious parties. As a result, the INC could have had a competitive advantage because they were not part of this agreement. The INC has expanded nationally throughout regions in the Philippines unencumbered, unlike other religions under the Comity Agreement.

Process Tracing Short-term Growth

Process tracing methods were applied to case studies to identify the agents, actions, and causal mechanisms that connect the proposed causes and outcomes (Beach and Pedersen 2019). See figure 11 for the process tracing map for short-term INC growth.

There are four parts of the mechanism that links the proposed cause (effective execution of strategies to propagate strict ideology) with the outcome of short-term INC growth. The first part of the mechanism involves preaching and enforcing strict doctrine of INC as the only “true” Church. Proselytization and sermons are delivered in either Tagalog or the local language of the regional congregation to connect with the local people. The second part of the growth mechanism is that potential members that hear INC message, either from their social or kinship network, or in an open forum, are receptive to the message and join the movement. The third part of the mechanism involves recruitment and training ministers in doctrine and aggressive outreach. The final part of the growth mechanism involves nationwide expansion. Churches expanded nationwide due to migration of followers and rapid deployment of ministers to areas untapped by other religious groups.
In summary, the INC influenced the growth trajectory short-term by effective execution of strategies for propagation of its doctrine together with strict religious dogma. Together, these two factors enabled the INC to have strong organizational cohesion and rapid short-term growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>Part 2</th>
<th>Part 3</th>
<th>Part 4</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Execution of strategies for propagation of doctrine together with strict religious dogma</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Preach/ enforce strict doctrine of INC as only “true” Church. Communication in Tagalog &amp; local language.</td>
<td>Join INC and persuade others in kinship network to attend.</td>
<td>Recruit and train ministers in doctrine and aggressive outreach</td>
<td>Expand churches nationwide due to migration of followers and rapid deployment of ministers to areas untapped by other religious groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>Manalo, INC ministers &amp; staff</td>
<td>Potential members that hear message</td>
<td>Felix Manalo, INC founder</td>
<td>Manalo &amp; INC centralized leadership org.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: Process theory for short-term growth of INC religious adherents.

**Process Theory for Long-term Growth of INC**

While Felix Manalo was a charismatic leader that was skilled in proselytizing the tenets of INC to would be followers, religious growth was initially slow during its initial formation. However, Manalo laid the foundation for rapid future growth by institutionalizing the aggressive recruitment methods and strict doctrine of the church. I argue that the long term-growth of the INC stems from early routinization of the INC church doctrine and consistent messaging communicated from a centralized bureaucracy of the INC. Additionally, the INC supported its efforts to spread its religious doctrine with sufficient trained personnel to support further growth. Using Weberian concepts, the INC effectively “routinized” the charismatic authority of INC founder Manalo, and built an efficient religious vehicle for growth.
Formal Institutions

The Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) sect in the Philippines is an example of the “routinization” of charismatic charisma. According to religious scholars, the founder, Felix Manalo, qualifies as a charismatic leader (Tuggy 1976; Sanders 1969). The Iglesia ni Cristo closely aligns with Weber's model, starting as a predominantly charismatic organization but gradually undergoing routinization to become a large, well-organized, financially supported, and disciplined institution (Tuggy 1976, 146). Weber (1979) notes that the routinization of charisma involves transforming the administrative staff from individuals with a charismatic mission to those holding offices or positions (249). The Iglesia ni Cristo developed bureaucratic structures early on, with clearly defined offices. The introduction of non-charismatic requirements for ministers and officers indicates the routinization process (Tuggy 1976, 145). In sum, by standardizing their assertive recruitment practices, centralizing their teachings, prioritizing training, and maintaining sufficient administrative staff, the INC was able to facilitate their continued growth, even beyond the death of their charismatic leader Manalo.

State and Religion Cooperation

The Philippine state neither supports nor restricts the activities of the INC. However, the political influence of the INC is demonstrated by the practice of the church voting as unified group. The INC requires its congregation to engage in bloc voting, which means that church leaders select politicians, ranging from local representatives to the Presidential level, whom members should collectively vote for. INC’s enforcement of bloc voting with its membership, provides powerful political influence for the group, because Philippine elections are frequently competitive with many candidates. As a result, political candidates strive to obtain official
endorsements from the INC as it can significantly influence the outcome of their elections. This political influence enhances the national prestige of the church in the eyes of its members.

**Process Tracing Long-term Growth**

There are three parts of the mechanism that links the proposed cause of execution strategies with the outcome of long-term INC growth. The first part of the mechanism involves INC centralized administration of all aspects of the church. This involves standardizing the proselytizing strategies and teaching of church doctrine. The INC maintain centralized control of the doctrine by circulating the same sermons to all churches from INC headquarters (Tuggy 1976; Reed 2001). The second part of the mechanism involves INC centralized leadership providing the necessary personnel to support propagation of church doctrine headquarters (Ando 1969; Tuggy 1976). It includes formal training of new ministers at the College of Evangelical Ministry in Quezon City (Tuggy 1976). INC also emphasized efforts to continue expansion nationwide with sufficient personnel support (Tuggy 1976; Reed 2001). The final part of the growth mechanism involves INC centralized leadership maintaining influence and legitimacy through unity and growth (e.g. bloc voting in elections, new churches, investment properties) (Ando 1969; Tuggy 1976; Harper 2014; Reed 2001).

In summary, the INC influenced the growth trajectory long-term by institutionalization of recruitment methods and doctrine and maintaining power and legitimacy through unified action as a sect. See figure 12 for the process tracing map for long-term INC growth.
## Process Theory for Long-term Growth of INC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization of recruitment methods and INC doctrine and maintaining power and legitimacy through unified action as a sect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standardize execution strategies and implantation of doctrine. Maintain centralized control with same sermons circulated to all churches from INC headquarters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal training of new ministers at College of Ministry. Continue expansion nationwide w/ personnel support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain influence and legitimacy through unity and growth (e.g. bloc voting in elections, new churches, investment properties)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INC central administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC centralized leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC centralized leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12: Process theory for long-term growth of INC religious adherents.
IX. CONCLUSION

The Philippines has historically been predominantly Catholic due to Spanish colonial rule, but since the early 1900s, there has been an increase in the number of small Christian churches, denominations, and sects. Traditional theories like modernization, religious economy, or ideology fail to explain the varying growth patterns of these minority Christian religions because they do not account for sub-national variation nor fluctuations in adherents over time. However, these theories provide insight into important variables that can be reinterpreted for the Philippine context.

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the emergence of minority Christian religions in the Philippines and develop a framework to study their growth trends over time. For the dependent variable, I create a typology to demonstrate growth patterns within religious groups, considering short and long-term periods. Long-term growth can further be categorized as localized or geographically dispersed national growth, resulting in six distinct typologies.

Additionally, I propose several explanatory factors (independent variables) that can influence growth in the short or long-term, which are classified into four categories: ideational, organizational, institutional, and structural. Factors in the ideational and organizational categories have immediate effects on a religious group's growth or decline, driven by the motivations and actions of actors involved. On the other hand, factors within institutional or structural categories may take a longer period to manifest their impact on growth. I argue that examining both short and long-term effects are important for a comprehensive understanding of these factors' influence on growth over time. My proposed methodology was demonstrated
through a detailed case study of the Iglesia ni Cristo, a religion that showed rapid short-term growth and geographically dispersed national growth in the long term.

There are several limitations in my work that should be acknowledged. One limitation was the unavailability of disaggregated data at the individual level for different religious groups, which would have enabled quantitative analysis of demographic information. Instead, I had to rely on a compilation of data from various sources, including census records, secondary sources, and existing church membership reports. The census data I obtained was aggregated and summarized at a broader level, such as the municipality or province level, making it impossible to trace back to specific individuals or households. Additionally, another limitation relates to the accuracy of membership records. Access to reliable and up-to-date information on memberships was challenging, leading to certain discrepancies in the data. These discrepancies raise concerns and suggest the need for further investigation. Another limitation was availability of accurate data for small sects and other Christian movements. Further field work would be required to obtain accurate information on smaller sects.

Future recommended work would be gaining access to the disaggregated data at the individual level of various regions and doing a more in-depth statistical analysis of variation cross-nationally. Other potential work could involve conducting surveys or interviewing members of various religions to test and validate theories on growth and appeal of some religious groups with positive growth.

My research makes original contributions to the field in three main ways. First, I propose a typology for studying religious growth trends over different time frames. Second, I introduce a framework of factors that explain growth outcomes, considering both short and long-term impacts. Lastly, I create and leverage original data sets for analysis of religious growth and
geographic spread in the Philippines. The typology and framework I have developed can be applied to future investigations of the growth trajectories of religions in other countries, to evaluate the generalizability of the results.
REFERENCES


Iglesia ni Cristo. 1976. This Is the Iglesia Ni Cristo. Quezon City, Philippines: Iglesia Ni Cristo.


