

# FILIPINOS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARD SUBIC NAVAL BASE: Social Psychological Implications

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*The study investigated the attitudes and perceptions of Filipino residents of Olongapo and its neighboring towns toward Subic Naval Base in particular, and U.S. military bases in general. Also investigated were related psychological variables namely the residents' sense of well-being, self-respect, sense of national identity, and coping reactions to the social problems generated by the presence of the U.S. bases. A main questionnaire was administered to 421 respondents classified into five social groups: (1) blue collar, sales and service workers; (2) entertainers; (3) businessmen/entrepreneurs; (4) professional, technical and related workers; and (5) local government officials. Results gave empirical support to earlier studies and media reports enumerating the costs and benefits of U.S. military presence in the country. The respondents were well aware of the social costs of U.S. bases but favor their continued presence largely because of economic considerations. The findings also suggest that continued presence of U.S. bases may have seriously impaired the psychological growth and well-being as well as the sense of national identity and self-respect of the entertainers group. Results were discussed in the light of the quality of life of the Filipinos living in the base communities and what Filipinos can do to address the social psychological implications of the U.S. bases.*

The presence of the United States (US) military bases in the country is quite a controversial issue these days. Ranking government officials on both the Philippine and US panels in the review of the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) held in 1988 were at loggerheads with each other on several sensitive matters. At present, the Philippine government as well as other concerned groups are gearing towards continued discussions with the US on future relations, including the extension of the use of the US military facilities in the Philippines.

Over the years, many conflicting viewpoints have been raised about the presence of US military bases in the Philippines. Coming into sharp focus today are questions not only of sovereignty and security but also the moral and cultural degradation of our people as well. Descriptive reports and newspaper articles have been able to share with the public some of the positive as well as the negative outcomes of US military bases presence. But most of the studies done on the bases have been political and economic in nature. The heart of the matter,

that is, the people whose quality of life has been directly affected by the presence of these bases, have not been given as much attention. There are hardly any field studies that have systematically investigated the different dimensions of social impact these bases have made on the lives of people living around them.

This paper will present some of the findings of an empirical research done by the researcher in Olongapo and Subic during the period of January to May 1988.

What do residents of Olongapo and its nearby towns think of US military bases? What has been the effect of these bases in their lives?

## Brief Background on Olongapo

Olongapo City started out as a small fishing community in Zambales province. Upon the establishment of Subic Naval Base in the area, formerly non-existent rest and recreation facilities suddenly mushroomed all over the place (for example, clubs, bars, hotels, sauna baths, and massage clinics). The Rest and Recreation Industry very soon became the economic backbone of Olongapo, with commercialized prostitution (euphemistically called the "hospitality" trade) as one of its most popular

This study was made possible by a research grant from the Ateneo Center for Social Policy & Public Affairs (November 1987-May 1988.)

attractions. Nearby Subic town, unlike Olongapo, though popular also for its flesh trade, has more industries to fall back on such as fishing, agricultural crops and revenue from taxes paid by a major ship repair facility located within the municipality. Reports about Olongapo show that there are 16,000 hospitality girls in the city registered under the Office of Social Hygiene. This is roughly 8% of the city's total population of about 200,000.

### Methodology

This research explored the attitudes and perceptions of Filipino residents of Olongapo and its neighboring towns towards Subic Naval Base in particular and US military bases, in general. Also investigated were related psychological variables, namely, the residents' sense of well-being, self-respect, sense of national identity, and coping reactions to the social problems generated by the presence of US bases.

With the help of locally-based interviewers, a main questionnaire was administered to a total of 421 respondents on a stratified random sampling basis. Five categories of social groups were included in the study: 189 blue collar, sales and service workers (which included tricycle/jeepney drivers, domestic helpers, policemen, ship repair technicians); 135 entertainers (which included hospitality girls, agogo dancers, waitresses, bartenders, musicians); 46 businessmen/entrepreneurs; 44 professional, technical and related workers (which included teachers, engineers, lawyers, librarians); and 7 local government officials (included in the study were councilors, ex-councilors and a barangay captain). In depth interviews with key informants representative of the five social groups were also conducted.

### Attitudes Toward US Bases

In the study, attitudes toward US military bases refer to one's affective, cognitive, and behavioral predispositions toward the stimulus object which is Subic Naval Base, in particular, and US military bases, in general. This variable also included perceived benefits and costs of the US bases; general attitudes toward the renewal of the

Military Bases Agreement; alternatives to US bases; things that cause worry if the US bases go; knowledge and attitudes toward the 1987 Philippine Constitutional provisions on foreign military troops; and a 12-item Likert-type questionnaire measuring attitudes toward US bases along the following dimensions: security; economic concerns; dignity; sovereignty; and social, moral, and health problems.

### *Perceived Benefits*

To residents of Olongapo and its neighboring towns, having Subic Naval Base around assures them mainly of employment plus extra and bigger income (59%). They also perceive that US military bases provide material aid and financial support, and helps boost the national economy (20%). Moreover, they see the US bases serving as deterrents to internal and external aggression (15%). They perceive that economic benefits from the US bases help them send their children and relatives to school, improve their lifestyle in general, and should there be any calamities (such as floods, typhoons, and fires), the US Navy is usually the first to the rescue, with relief goods and advanced life-saving equipment.

### *Perceived Negative Costs*

On the other hand, what the residents perceive as costs or disadvantages of having the US bases around are mostly social in nature. Among the foremost negative costs of having US bases here, according to the study's respondents, are as follows: erosion of morality and values which goes hand in hand with increase in social problems like prostitution, "souvenir" babies, prohibited drugs, and other vices (28%); national security is threatened when nuclear weapons enter the country and are stored in US bases (16%); highly contagious sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, gonorrhoea, and herpes are widespread (14%); and Filipinos are exposed to racial discrimination, low regard, sexual and physical harrassments, unjust and crude behaviors of Americans—especially drunken ones (8%).

### Evaluation of US Bases Presence

Despite the perceived social costs of US military presence, a great number of the residents still evaluate them favorably. Sixty-nine percent (69%) find them beneficial to very beneficial while only 17% rated them as costly to very costly. As far as the renewal of the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) is concerned, a very great majority (83%) would want this to be renewed, 11% were "not sure," and only 5% outrightly said "no." Indeed, if the bases should go, they would be greatly worried about employment and poverty (59%); see themselves being economically unstable (14%); and as far as the country was concerned, national security would be threatened, that is, they believe that communist take-over is possible once US military bases are taken out of the country (14%). Probably quite disturbing is that about 21% of the respondents in the study did not even perceive any social costs or disadvantages at all.

### Perceived Alternatives to US Bases

Nearly half of the respondents did not see or were not able to mention any viable alternatives to the US bases (49%). For some, the idea of a free port (22%), which was probably popularized by Olongapo City's Mayor Richard Gordon, is favored. There are also those who seem to favor the idea of converting the US military facilities into industrial and commercial complexes (18%).

### Provisions of 1987 Philippine Constitution on US Military Bases

The 1987 Philippine Constitution states that after the bases lease expires, "foreign military bases, troops or facilities shall not be allowed" except under a Senate approved treaty. Moreover, the treaty, if Congress requires it, must be ratified by more than half of the Filipino people of voting age. But how aware are the respondents of these provisions in the 1986 Constitution?

Slightly less than half of the respondents (49%) had knowledge of the provisions in the 1987 Philippine Constitution regarding foreign military bases in the country. A substantial num-

ber were not aware of these provisions (34%) or were not sure of what they were (14%).

Comparing the responses of the social groups, the entertainers registered the lowest percentage of knowledge regarding the Constitutional provisions (24%); while the businessmen/entrepreneurs registered the highest percentage (74%), followed closely by local government officials (71%). Professional, technical, and related workers were not very far behind (68%) along with the blue collar, sales, and service workers (55%).

What were the reactions of the respondents toward the Constitutional provisions on foreign military bases after 1991?

After ascertaining the respondents' level of knowledge about the provisions, the interviewers stated what these were exactly and asked the respondents whether they agreed with these provisions or not. These results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Knowledge of Provisions in 1987 Philippine Constitution on US Military Bases after 1991

	Responses (%)			
	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total N
Businessmen and entrepreneurs	74	15	11	46
Local government officials	71	0	29	7
Professional, technical, and related workers	68	14	18	44
Blue collar, sales, and service workers	55	25	16	189
Entertainers	24	59	12	135
TOTAL	49	34	14	421

Note. Don't know or no response account for the difference between the sum of responses shown and 100%.

Almost two-thirds of them (64%) were agreeable to these provisions, while about 16% did not agree or strongly disagree. A good number, in addition, were not sure at all about their views on the matter (19%). Agreement with the provisions did not vary much among the social groups and percentages ranged from 55% (entertainers) to 72% (professional, technical, and related workers).

Table 2. Percentage of Agreement on Provisions of 1987 Philippine Constitution on US Military Bases after 1991

	Responses (%)			Total 1N
	Agree	Not Sure	Dis- agree	
Professional, technical, and related workers	72	18	7	44
Local government officials	71	14	14	7
Businessmen/Entrepreneurs	70	20	11	46
Blue collar, sales, and service workers	67	18	14	189
Entertainers	55	19	24	135
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>421</b>

Note. Don't know or no response account for the difference between the sum of responses shown and 100%.

A clear majority of the respondents apparently favored the provisions. But one wonders whether they were all fully aware of the implications of these provisions in their life. As one pro-base Olongapo businessman lamented, anti-base literature seem to dominate in the media and hardly any pro-base sentiments are heard—except, perhaps, in the likes of Mayor Richard Gordon and Senator John Osmena.

The above findings gave empirical support to earlier studies and media reports enumerating the costs and benefits of US military presence in the country (Gordon, 1987; Jenista, 1986; Magallona, 1985; Paez, 1985; & Simbulan, 1983; Moselina, 1981). But this time, from the viewpoint of Filipinos living in the base communities. Those interviewed were well aware of the social costs of the US bases (for example, erodes morality and values, increases social problems, increases health problems, lowers dignity of Filipinos) but favor their continued presence largely because of economic considerations (Jimenez & Javier, 1987).

### Coping Reactions

How do the people in the base communities deal with the social problems generated by the presence of US bases? The study revealed that their most common coping reactions, across all of the five social groups, are praying to God to solve these problems (94%), advising their children and relatives to avoid night clubs and other sleazy spots (87%), and approaching civic

and religious groups to do something about lessening these social and moral problems (82%). Among the coping behaviors they are least likely to employ are: joining rallies to denounce these problems (38%), living away from the place (33%), and cursing (25%). Coping reactions refer to behaviors one employs to enable one to deal with stress—in this case, stress produced by encountering negative social outcomes associated with the presence of US military bases.

### Other Related Psychological Variables

For the above-mentioned variables, the social groups responded mostly in a similar manner, hence general trends were pointed out. However, for the following variables, that is, sense of well-being, self respect, and sense of national identity, significant differences between social groups were noted in certain dimensions of these variables. In general, attitude statements were constructed to operationalize the variables of self respect and sense of national identity. A 5-point Likert-type scale with a strongly agree to strongly disagree continuum was used to measure responses to the attitude statements. The sense of well-being scale was devised from previously existing scales such as the quality of life ladder ratings of Mahar Mangahas (Ateneo-Social Weather Stations, 1986) and the feelings scale of Bradburn and Caplovitz (Robinson & Shaver, 1970).

#### *Sense of Well-Being*

*Sense of well-being* refers to one's general evaluation of affect and satisfaction with life. Conditions of life that are usually associated with sense of well-being are as follows: economic and educational status, family and friendships, work, place of residence, and health. A sense of well-being scale was constructed as part of the main questionnaire. It was composed of four parts measuring the following salient features of sense of well-being: satisfaction and happiness in life, level of anxiety, frequency of experiencing 12 types of positive and negative feelings during the past week; and an assessment of one's quality of life in the past (that is, 5 years ago), the present, and the future (that is, 5 years from now). Higher scores reflected higher levels of sense of well-

being. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Generally, the respondents reported relatively high levels of satisfaction and happiness in life. However, it is worth noting that the enter-

Table 3. Sense of Well-Being: Quality of Life (Highlights of Mean Responses of the Social Groups)

(11-point scale)						
	LG	BE	PT	ET	BS	
Past	7.3	5.9	5.2	4.8	4.1	
	LG	BE	PT	BS	ET	
Present	8.0	7.0	6.8	5.9	5.6	
	LG	BE	PT	BS	ET	
Future	9.3	8.3	8.2	7.6	7.2	
TOTAL GROUP						
Past				5.6		
Present				7.9		
Future				8.1		

Legend:

- LG - Local Government Officials
- BE - Businessmen/entrepreneurs
- PT - Professional, Technical, & Related Workers
- ET - Entertainers
- BS - Blue Collar, Sales, & Service Workers

tainers group consistently scored lower than the rest of the social groups in satisfaction and happiness in life, and in assessing their quality of life at present as well as in the future. Moreover, they reported significantly higher levels of anxiety (that is, that things might get worse for themselves and their family) compared to the other social groups. Local government officials and businessmen/entrepreneurs reported the lowest levels of anxiety.

Finally, the overall emotional profile of the total group was generally positive. "Pity for people you know," which can be seen as positive, reflecting satisfaction with one's circumstances, was the most frequently experienced feeling of the previous week (82% experienced it more than once); followed by pleasure about having accomplished something (80% experienced it more than once); "optimistic about the future" (79% experienced it more than once); and "a yearning for change" (77% experienced it more than once). The social groups when compared

followed the total group trends closely as regards to the emotional profile.

*Self-Respect*

Self-respect refers to one's sense of self-esteem, the extent to which one respects one's self, feels one's self a person of worth, one's good

Table 4. Sense of Well-Being: Satisfaction with Life, Happiness & Level of Anxiety (Highlights of Mean Responses of the Social Groups)

Satisfaction with Life (3-point scale)					
	LG	BE	PT	BS	ET
	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.2
Happiness In Life (5-point scale)					
	LG	PT	BE	BS	ET
	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.6
Level of Anxiety (10-point scale)					
	LG	BE	BS	PT	ET
	6.7	5.1	4.3	4.2	3.2

opinion of one's self. A 10-item Likert-type self-respect scale was constructed as part of the main questionnaire, with higher scores reflecting higher self-respect.

Dimensions of self-respect included in the scale wherein the entertainers group significantly scored lower than the rest of the social groups are as follows: the dimension of *competence and efficacy* (that is, having own principles; knowing what to do in most situations; feeling of worth as a person); the *morality* dimension operationalized by the statement "I can say that I am a person of good moral character"; the *parents' regard* dimension operationalized by the statement "I believe that my parents can be truly proud of me"; and the *community's regard* dimension operationalized and negatively phrased by the statement "I cannot be considered a model citizen in my community." It is interesting to note that on the item "I can say that I am a person of good moral character" the scores of local government officials were not significantly different from those of the entertainers' group. These responses are summarized in Table 5.

## Sense of National Identity

*Sense of national identity* refers to one's consciousness of one's national origins; one's affective, cognitive and behavioral interactions with the society in which one lives; one's patriotism; one's cultural context; and one's feeling of unity/solidarity with the people in this society. A 10-item Likert-type sense of national identity scale was constructed as part of the main questionnaire with higher scores reflecting higher

Table 5. Self Respect: Highlights of Mean Responses of the Social Groups

(5-point scale)

### Competence & Efficacy

1. I have my own principles.

LG	PT	BE	BS	ET
(4.9)	(4.7)	(4.6)	(4.6)	(4.1)

2. In most situations I know what I am capable of doing.

LG	BE	BS	PT	ET
(4.7)	(4.3)	(4.1)	(4.1)	(3.9)

3. I do not feel that I am a person of worth.

LG	PT	BS	BE	ET
(4.9)	(4.3)	(4.2)	(4.1)	(3.8)

### Morality

4. I can say I am a person of good moral character.

BS	PT	BE	LG	ET
(4.4)	(4.4)	(4.3)	(4.1)	(3.9)

### Parents' Regard

5. I believe that my parents can be truly proud of me.

LG	PT	BE	BS	ET
(4.9)	(4.6)	(4.5)	(4.5)	(3.8)

### Community's Regard

6. I cannot be considered a model citizen in my community.

LG	PT	BE	BS	ET
(4.7)	(4.5)	(4.1)	(4.0)	(3.6)

sense of national identity. The findings with regards to this variable are presented in Table 6.

It is worth pointing out that on the dimension of *patriotism*, the entertainers group again scored significantly lower than the other groups—they tended to prefer goods from other countries more and had a stronger preference for living in another country like the US. In addition, the entertainers group along with the businessmen and entrepreneurs found it more difficult to be proud of being Filipino to foreigners. On the other hand, local government officials along with

Table 6. Sense of National Identity: Highlights of Mean Responses of the Social Groups

(5-point scale)

### Patriotism

1. I prefer products of other countries.

LG	BS	BE	PT	ET
(3.7)	(3.2)	(3.1)	(3.0)	(2.3)

2. I prefer to live in another country like America than here in the Philippines.

LG	BE	BS	PT	ET
(3.4)	(3.4)	(3.1)	(3.0)	(2.4)

3. We must share our natural resources with foreigners so that the Philippines will develop.

BE	BS	PT	LG	ET
(4.0)	(3.8)	(3.6)	(3.6)	(3.1)

4. It is difficult to be proud that I am a Filipino to foreigners.

LG	PT	BS	BE	ET
(4.9)	(4.4)	(4.2)	(4.0)	(3.7)

### Solidarity

5. I need to go abroad for a better life.

LG	PT	BE	BS	ET
(3.3)	(3.1)	(3.1)	(2.9)	(2.4)

professional, technical, and related workers were not significantly different from entertainers in their view that sharing the country's natural resources with foreigners will help us develop. In terms of the dimension of *solidarity*, the entertainers again were significantly different from the rest of the other groups in expressing a greater need to go abroad for a better life. Thus, visions of Olongapo—the "great American dream ...."

## Discussion

These findings suggest that the continued presence of US bases probably have quite serious implications on the psychological growth and well-being of the entertainers group—which compose a substantial number of those residing in base communities such as Olongapo and its nearby towns. The continued presence of US bases would certainly perpetuate their condition unless radical changes are made to wean them away from dependence on an economy molded by the needs of the bases and US servicemen (Moselina, 1981; Go & Bansuelo, 1987; Stoltzfus, 1988). It seems ironic to think that those who actually provide US servicemen the most sought after "services" would themselves feel very much deprived not only economically, but apparently, psychologically and morally as well.

*Sense of well-being.* An entertainer's life, particularly the women, is replete with stressful work and living conditions. Amidst all the fun and excitement of their workplace, the entertainer has to put up a happy, carefree front for the benefit of their customers out for a good time. They are hardly themselves. Moreover, given the health hazards which entertainers are exposed to along with fatigue from late nights out, their physical health is sure to suffer if not their mental health as well.

It is no wonder then that the entertainer's sense of well-being is consistently lower than the rest of the social groups. Real satisfaction and lasting happiness remains elusive to them. Due to their unstable income, it is understandable that they are highly anxious about their own future and their family's as well.

What then enables entertainers to survive in such deplorable conditions? How do the other social groups such as the local government officials, professionals, blue collar sales and service workers and businessmen face the social costs of the US bases presence right in their own communities?

Family and kinship ties as support systems might well be one of the keys to an entertainer's survival in the fast paced merciless world of the rest and recreation industry in Olongapo and other similar places. Faith in a just and forgiving God and the assistance of religious and civic organizations are probably the next most valuable support systems available to them.

*Coping reactions.* As revealed by the results of the study, praying to God to solve the social problems is a favorite coping reaction not only among entertainers but also the other social groups as well. Avoidance of establishments where social problems proliferate is another commonly utilized coping behavior among the different social groups. Another usual coping behavior is approaching a third party for help. In this case, local, civic and religious groups known to handle or minister to these social concerns are approached to take action.

All the above coping behaviors appear to present a rather "passive" way of dealing with

so-called stressful situations. This observation is further substantiated when one looks at the three coping behaviors least likely to be employed by the respondents (i.e. joining rallies, leaving the place, and cursing). This passive manner of dealing with situations seems to be characteristic of the Filipino in general. What appears to be very evident is the Filipino's faith and religiosity which relies on an Almighty God who will make things right. A deep faith in God seems to be an inherent part of the Filipino's make-up. This innate religiosity makes it possible for the Filipino to fully understand reality in the context of God's will and plan. (Licuanan et al., 1988). Therefore, optimism can be found even in the most miserable and oppressive conditions. Prostitutes exploited by their employers or swindled by their sailor paramours can thus accept their tragedy and misfortune. Prayer, which is an important part of their lives see them through.

*Sense of national identity.* The results of the study further revealed that the sense of national identity of the entertainers group may have been seriously impaired. Their over exposure to western culture and "values" (flashy nightclubs and bars; free spending US servicemen out for fun, booze and sex; and PX goods galore) may have fostered in them a colonial mentality that is manifested to a greater extent compared to the other social groups. Their colonial mentality is expressed in such areas as preference for imported goods and preference for living in other countries such as the US. They also expressed a greater need to go abroad for a better life probably because their own country offers them so little economic alternatives. Indeed, marrying an American serviceman seems to be a common aspiration not only among the women entertainers but also among women of the other social groups as well.

The crux of the sense of national identity issue lies in the predominantly western culture fostered by the presence of US military bases. US military presence has brought American culture and values to the Philippines and has evidently affected residents of base communities in quite

On the whole, American presence in Olongapo has really created some kind of mentality, some kind of culture *na di mo matatagpuan* in other communities, e.g., in the manner of dressing, food habits, T-shirts with very American inscriptions ....

It seems that American presence has promoted a city life that is un-Filipino in character particularly in base communities like Olongapo. Mental disorientation is prevalent because of Western influence and the sex-for-sale economy which violate traditional Filipino values. Young people are especially susceptible to confusion. It seems that they undergo identity crisis and in some cases come to look down upon Filipino culture and desire to become Americans and join the US Navy (Go and Bansuelo, 1987). One government employee interviewed in-depth in Olongapo expressed her concern for the youth residing in the city:

*Masama talaga ang conditioning ng residents of Olongapo ... especially the youth population, with the base here, ang lifestyle nila parang money is so easy. Between male and female teen-agers, mas susceptible ang males. Usually, hindi yan nakakatapos ng pag-aaral. Life is so easy for them. In their thinking, there is always the base as a last resort—where you can be hired even if you are not a college graduate ...*

Quite a number of those interviewed in-depth which included professionals, blue collar workers, and entertainers alike with families, have voiced dissatisfaction over the prevailing moral and cultural environment in Olongapo. Those who can afford it would rather send their children to school in Manila or somewhere else. Relatives are usually entrusted with the care of the children while they themselves stay on in Olongapo to earn their living.

The following are some apprehensions ventilated by local residents about the effects of the base presence on their children's upbringing:

I myself am not comfortable about raising my family here. I am afraid about its effects on my child, that is the kind of environment in a base community. *Hindi ma-kontrol*. And this kind of culture, *papasok sa bata, ma-a-absorb niya ...* (a professional)

*Kung sa sarili kong disposisyon, paglaki ng anak ko, hindi ko patitigilin dito sa Olongapo. Kasi malaking impluwensiya yan sa mga bata. Pagpasok ng eskwelahan, puro nightclub ang nakikita. Nakahubad kahit anong sabihin mo. Hindi masasabing hindi sila matutukso ... Maliliit pa ang mga bata, mga estudyante nakokondisyon na ang isip nila ...* (a jeepney driver)

It's so difficult to raise children in an environment like Olongapo. There are so many influences that run counter to the ideas you would like to teach them ... (a professional)

*Gusto nila (ang aking mga anak) na kasama nila ako doon sa Bulacan. Ang sama-sama ng environment sa Olongapo. Napapa-away ang mga bata kasi akala ng iba dito sila lumaki. Hindi nila talaga alam ang Olongapo ...* (a dressmaker and ex-entertainer)

Despite the unsavory aspects of the western culture brought about by the presence of U.S. bases, residents in the base communities have come to considerably depend upon the money and other material benefits that the bases provide. They oftentimes even put more trust in the ability of the Americans to deal with calamities such as fires. As one interviewee cited:

For example, during incidences like fire, *sasabihin nila pag hindi dumating ang fire trucks ng base, mas malaki ang sunog na yan*. This is an indication that they put more trust in the American's capacity to fight fire ...

Residents in base communities are so pro-base that those aspiring for a local government seat must be careful on his or stand about the bases. Deplored one local government official who was interviewed in-depth:

*Dito, once na tumayo ka sa entablado at against ka sa bases, hindi ka mananalo ...*

On the pragmatic side, another local government official remarked:

As a Filipino, of course, we would like to be nationalistic. We would like to stand on our own two feet. But we are not yet ready. Let's accept it. *Siguro* it's a challenge to the government ...

Thus, we find local residents apparently much influenced by U.S. military presence that self-reliance seems implausible at this point in time. The bases presence, it seems, not only

self-reliance seems implausible at this point in time. The bases presence, it seems, not only fostered pro-American attitudes but also an attitude of dependence upon them as well. The local residents may still be very Filipino in their most of their behaviors and attitudes but there is no denying the strong and pervasive influence of American culture in their lives. To some extent, especially as regards to the generally young impressionable entertainers group, their sense of national identity has been undermined by the enduring social, economic, cultural, and affective interactions between the US and the Philippines.

*Self-respect.* Another negative impact of US military bases appears to be on the self-respect of the entertainers group in particular. Aspects of the entertainers' self-respect which apparently have been affected negatively included their competence and efficacy, how they view themselves morally, and how they feel their parents and their community regard them. Without doubt, their attitudes toward themselves have been influenced markedly by their sordid experiences in the business which Moselina (1981) and Go and Bansuelo (1987) have so amply explored in their respective studies of prostitution in Olongapo.

In the rest and recreation industry, entertainers are taught to be consumer-oriented, what they think or feel is only secondary. It is the customer's happiness that matters and not theirs. Often, they have to swallow their self-respect. Moreover, their lives are virtually beholden to their employers (Roque, 1972). Their indebtedness to these club owners arise precisely because of the instability of a military economy. U.S. servicemen, out for a good time, provide only temporary economic relief and short-lived happiness.

As Vander Zanden (1977) elaborated, central to much theory and research within social psychology is this postulate: "Our self-conceptions (identities) arise from social interaction with other people, and in turn, our self-conceptions guide and influence our subsequent behavior." In short, we discover ourselves in the

actions of others toward us. Vander Zanden further points out that our self-conceptions tend to be reflected appraisal. That is, if we are accepted, approved, or liked for what we are, we tend to acquire attitudes of self-acceptance and self-respect. If others belittle, blame, and reject us, we are likely to develop unfavorable attitudes toward ourselves.

Thus, in the case of entertainers, more than a majority of whom are prostitutes, one can expect their sense of self-respect to be rather low. Azarcon-de la Cruz (1985) related that most girls in the profession conceal the true nature of their job from their families, knowing that ostracism results from being flagrant about it. Her study on "Filipinas for Sale" revealed that a majority of the prostitutes interviewed feel looked down by society while others feel their occupation is approved by others. Some rationalized that others look at them as good earners who know how to make a living. Most of them, however, judge themselves to be sinners, victims, and bad. At the same time, many of them think they are okay.

One ex-entertainer interviewed in-depth explains her attitude towards neighbors who knew about her job:

*Naku! Hindi ko binibigyan nang pansin ang mga kapitbahay dahil masisira lang ang tuktok ko. Mawawala ba ang tsismis sa probinsiya? Ang katwiran ko pare-pareho lang naman kaming kumakain ng kanin... Kung pakikinggan ko ang tsismis, walang mangyayari sa buhay ko*

....

Thus, one can see that entertainers who wish to survive in the business really have to harden their hearts and their minds and just turn a deaf ear to those in society who look down at the kind of work they do.

A comment of a local government official from Subic interviewed in-depth probably best captures the entertainer's plea for understanding:

*Ang pakiusap nila ay intindihin sila. Hindi naman nila kagustuhan na ganoon ang maging trabaho nila. Napasubo lamang sila doon dahil sa maraming pangangailangan, may mga pakakainin ... kaya nag-kukunwaring nag-enjoy. Nasaan na ang kanilang dignidad?*

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Oftentimes, in the persistent heated debates over the bases issue, the individuals who get directly affected by their continued existence in the country, are overlooked. These are the people who comprise the "flesh and blood" of the statistics mentioned in socioeconomic or political reports on the US bases. The human side must be viewed as an important aspect of any deliberations regarding the future of the US bases in the Philippines. **The upliftment of the quality of life of our people is really the heart of the matter.**

Obviously, American military presence in the Philippines has exerted a major influence in the lives of Filipinos particularly those who live in the base communities. The study confirms what earlier reports have shown—that the people in the base communities clearly equate socioeconomic survival with the presence of the US bases. On the whole, they have mixed reactions to the social costs of the bases but pragmatic reasons overwhelm their desire to have a better quality of life and a more socially and developmentally uplifting source of income other than a highly unstable military economy. As far as coping reactions are concerned, they are apparently content with praying to God to solve the social problems; avoiding the nightclubs and bars and other havens of prostitution; and letting religious, civic, and nongovernmental organizations take care of souvenir babies and entertainers seeking rehabilitation.

It is not surprising that they cling to the U.S. bases as an economic prop since up to the present, viable economic alternatives have not been implemented at all. It is quite understandable and expected of them to desire the retention of US military bases considering the great economic crisis the country is now facing. Economic survival is so important that they disregard or avoid facing the reality of dangers posed by nuclear weapons in the bases; sex for sale, drug abuse, and other vices right at one's doorstep; and being treated rudely by Americans from the U.S. bases.

However, the economic bonanza enjoyed by most people residing in the base communities is

very unstable in nature because of its reliance on a military economy. Most of them, too, have not been spared from the subtle negative psychological consequences of life based on a rest and recreation industry. US military bases, moreover, are the stark reminders of how the Philippines is still so much dependent upon its "special relationship" with the US on crucial issues of economy, politics, and national defense. It seems that the vicious cycle of dependence on the bases can only be broken by radical changes in the government's policies and programs.

For how long can we ignore the social costs of the US bases? How long can we allow this assault on human dignity? Do we let injustices continue because we cannot adequately provide economic alternatives to our fellow Filipinos?

The very least we could do is to pressure policy-makers to look seriously into the conditions of the people residing in the base communities and support moves to formulate viable conversion plans for the US bases. It would be useful to find out from the people in the base communities themselves what changes can be done to improve their economic as well as their psychological well-being. Even the desire of many of them to hold a national referendum on the bases issue must be taken into consideration. Consultation with the people directly affected by the US bases is a must.

As David Korten (Korten & Klaus, 1984) proposed in his people-centered development paradigm, people in government as well as the in the base communities themselves must not be absorbed in crisis management attempts to forestall the collapse of an artificial economy created by the presence of US military bases. In this present day and age, we have the capacity, the potentials to enhance human growth and well-being, equity, and sustainability. And the time to act decisively is now.

The quality of life of our fellow Filipinos is at stake. These are times of change and we, especially our public officials, must seize the moment to act in unity for the Filipino people's common good. As Filipinos, we must be ready

and tell them with full confidence that social justice, genuine peace and democracy, and sustainable national development is possible

in the Philippines even without the US military bases.

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