

The Chamorro Adult Male Identity and Development¹

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Abstract

Based on the enormous influence of ERIKSON and LEVINSON in human growth, this study attempted to achieve a better understanding of Chamorro identity and male development from Early Adulthood through Middle Adulthood ending with Late Adulthood. Through the network sampling procedure, six (6) Chamorro males were recruited for in-depth, semi-structured personal interviews. Using a historical-sociological-psychological mode of analysis, this qualitative research was summarized and interpreted within the context of life in Guam. Chamorro men of the sample (ages 21 to 62), regardless of age and occupation, had strong cultural and ethnic identities, advocated gender equality, and valued the extended family system. Personal dreams, although not clearly articulated by the participants, seemed to be dominated by concerns with their marriages and families. The findings confirm the results of previous studies as to the great influence and power of women exert over many aspects of life in the matrilineal structure of Chamorros.

Key words: adult development, ethnic identity, extended family, gender equality, male development

Introduction

In his eight stages of psychological development of the life cycle, Erik ERIKSON (1959) postulated that development emerges out of the interaction of both psychological and social events. ERIKSON's first five stages deal with childhood and adolescence, but his latter three stages all concerned with adulthood. Specifically, Stage Six (ages 20 to 40; Early Adulthood), Stage Seven (40 to 60, Middle Adulthood) and Stage Eight (60 to 80, Late Adulthood). These three stages reflect ERIKSON's view that adult development and identity is a continuing process that extends beyond childhood and adolescence throughout the life cycle. These last stages were the focus of our study reported in this paper.

ERIKSON's pioneering work influenced Daniel LEVINSON's (1978) book, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. Early adulthood, according to the book, begins at about the age of 17, which is the end of the 'springtime' of a human life. The 'summertime' period is from 18 to 32, 'autumn' comes at around 40 and reaches its peak at 55, and the dreaded season of 'winter' comes at around 60. As a metaphor for the unfolding life cycle, the idea of 'seasons' is significant—in that one stage is not intrinsically superior to another. Generally, in their mid-30s people reach a crossroads in life. According to LEVINSON (1978), a man's goal at the age of 40 is to 'Become One's Own Man,' whereby a man is motivated towards independence, the development of his full potential, and the realization of his dreams. In LEVINSON's (1978) words: "A man yearns for a life in which his actual desires, values, talents, and aspirations can be expressed" (p. 60). As

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noted by LEVINSON's (1997) later work, by the age of 35 or 36 a woman also "needs to attain the satisfactions and accomplishments available within the life structure and to start *Becoming One's Own Woman*" (p. 336); thus women go through a similar sequence of stages as men.

Human life is a journey from birth to old age that follows an underlying, universal pattern to which there are endless cultural and individual variations. LEVINSON's idea of four seasons, a series of periods or stages within the life cycle, is one of those patterns. Contemporary eminent psychologists ERIKSON and LEVINSON were thus concerned with the concept of 'age' in the human life cycle. Their observations and theories of adult growth, in which they postulated that adults develop according to specific steps at a definite rate and sequence, help us to understand how the various stages of adult life can be conceptualized.

Context

With an area of 209 square miles, Guam is "the largest island in the north Pacific between the Philippines and Hawaii and between Japan and New Guinea" (THOMPSON 1969, P. 18). Guam's relationship with America dates back to 1898 when Guam became a protectorate of the U.S. after the Spanish-American War and economic and political institutions have undergone many modifications hastening the development of American attitudes and ideas. English is spoken as an official language in Guam and people live, on the surface, in much the same manner as Americans in the U.S. mainland. With a population of 155,000 (US Census, 2000), Guam draws its strength from the indigenous people of Guam, the Chamorros, as well as the immigrants from Asia, Europe, America, and throughout the Pacific. It is an island society comprised of diverse ethnic and cultural elements, although Chamorros still constitute the largest group and still control the political structures of Guam.

Who are the Chamorro people of Guam? According to Laura THOMPSON (1969), a leading authority on the Chamorros and known for her book, *Guam and its People*, "Although no systematic study and classification of the ancient Chamorro physical type has yet been made, it is clear from the early accounts that the ancient Chamorros resembled so-called Polynesians" (p. 31). In the 2,000-year history of the Chamorros, Chamorro women have exercised great influence in all matters related to family life and property management, and women have enjoyed the independence and authority to which they were accustomed prior to colonization by the Spanish (SOUDER 1977). SOUDER's (1992) recent book, *Daughters of the Island*, greatly influenced the understanding and interpretation of the lives of contemporary Chamorro women. Her book focused on the roles women played in keeping the historical Catholic Church alive in Guam to protect their cultural identity. A woman SOUDER (1992) interviewed in her study stated that:

Chamorro men very often tip their hats and take the bows, but it's always the women that do the organizing. They are fantastic organizers. Civic minded, very community minded.... I don't feel that there are women anywhere in the United States or in the world that take this kind of pride as do Chamorro women (p. 214).

Reciprocity plays an important role in the cultures of the Pacific. IYECAD's (2001) study focused on traditional forms of reciprocity among Micronesian Pacific islanders and examined changes in these practices that have occurred as a consequence of rapid westernization. Her study highlights the Chamorro tradition of reciprocal aid witnessed during events surrounding the life cycle (i.e., birth, marriage, death) when network relations are activated and reciprocity ensues. SCHWAB (1998) explored how social constructions of ethnicity, gender, and class have changed over time and how they are currently interwoven in the Guam context. SCHWAB emphasizes that analyzing and theorizing about differences among Chamorro males are important because societies are, not only gendered systems, but also gendered 'class' systems that privilege some men and victimize others in places such as Guam.

How might learning about the Chamorros be significant in social sciences, psychology or education? Most literature concerning adult development in the life cycle is generally written based on American and European cultural and social contexts and interpretations. THOMPSON (1991), an anthropologist, hoped that her readers would find an understanding regarding her work: "This search for patterns of behavior, ways of thought, and moral standards relevant to present global realities from the gist of my tale" (pp. 4-5). Similarly, we hope that our study of contemporary Chamorro men will become an addition to culturally relevant material in adult male development in the global context of our time. Our research had two principle objectives:

1. To achieve a better understanding of the Chamorro adult male identity and development in the seasons of a human life: in early adulthood (summertime), in middle adulthood (autumn), and in late adulthood (winter).
2. To achieve a better understanding of the Chamorro adult male identity and development in the contexts of a human life: at home and in the family, at work and occupationally, and socially and in the community.

Methodology

Participants

A qualitative approach is viewed as a comprehensive and an appropriate strategy for inquiring into the thoughts, and aspirations of people. In the qualitative research design of our study, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Network sampling is perhaps the most common form of purposeful sampling (MERRIAM 1998), and this sampling was used for the study; as cited by MERRIAM, network sampling involves identifying participants or "cases of interest from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects" (PATTON 1990, p. 182). First, government agencies and the hospitality industry were selected as sites because these are the two major employment sectors in Guam (tourism and military expenditures are the major sources of revenues in Guam). Then, within each of the two sectors, three participants at different stages in the life cycle (early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood), totaling six (6) males (between ages of 21 and 62), were identified and recruited for personal interviews. We intended to interview males of similar educational attainment but it was necessary to broaden our selection criteria (for detailed background information of the participants, see Appendix A).

Data collection and analysis

Before the formal interview, we spoke with each participant over the phone to clarify the purpose of our study and to arrange an agreeable date and time for the interview. In LEVINSON's (1978) words, "A biographical interview combines aspects of a research interview, a clinical interview, and a conversation between friends" (p. 5). The interview questions were developed and examined by colleagues and then approved by our university's Committee on Human Research Subjects. The interview questions were pilot tested to ascertain the clarity of the questions and to estimate how long the interview would take. Actual interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the participants. Because of the exploratory nature of our study, we did not establish any specific hypotheses. Using a historical-sociological-psychological mode of analysis, the transcripts of the tapes were employed to analyze the data. When all the recorded conversations were transcribed, the conversations were carefully reviewed and interpreted. We conducted all the interviews during the spring of 2003. Two to three hours were spent for each interview, and follow-up interviews were conducted as needed.

Findings and Discussion

Our six Chamorro men

Alfredo (the name, like those of all the others in this study, is not real name) was a 21-year old housekeeping manager of a major hotel in Guam, taking evening college management courses. He was single with no children and had lived in Guam all his life. Benny (age 24), a graduate from a four-year university, was a marketing representative of a Government agency. He was unmarried and had lived in Guam since he was born. Carlos (42) was the general manager of a large restaurant. He had several years of college experience in the U.S. He had been married for 21 years and had seven children. David (42), a high school graduate, was a school aide in the Guam public system. He had been married for fifteen years and had four children. He spent time in the military and traveled to Korea, Germany, and the U.S. Eduardo (56) did not finish high school but later passed the general educational development (GED) test. He retired from the military after having lived in Panama and the U.S. mainland. He was a hotel safety manager and had been married for 33 years with four children. Francisco (62) was a college teacher with a Ph.D. degree. He attended universities in the U.S. to pursue both undergraduate and graduate studies. He had been married for 35 years with 2 children. All the participants identified themselves as Chamorros, yet the three men from government agencies considered 'English' to be their native language, but the three from the hospitality industry considered 'Chamorro' to be their native language. One implication of their responses may be that if they grew up in an English-speaking household, they considered their first language was English, and if they grew up in a Chamorro-speaking household, they identified Chamorro as their mother tongue. All except Carlos were Catholic. Educational experiences varied from a GED diploma to a doctoral degree.

Extended kinship system

Guam has mirrored the governmental and institutional models of the U.S. and has become quite Americanized. Nevertheless, the family concept of the Chamorros is quite different from that of typical North Americans. When our participants talked about

family, they included not only immediate family but also uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and even third cousins. "I have a gathering with all my uncles and aunties on Fridays and with all my cousins on Saturdays," said Alfredo. Sometimes, our participants considered their close friends, colleagues, and neighbors as part of their extended family, as in Benny's response: "the extended family means friends, as in non-blood relations." Eduardo described as follows:

I myself think our extended family system is pretty unique. We welcome people from different cultures, languages, and religions as part of our family people. We all get along well together, and we do not fight about politics or religions. It is a very good thing to see and I believe in other countries the families are not as closely bonded as we are in Guam.

In IYCHAD's (2001) study, a participant spoke about the extended family system in a similar way: "I like it because when you're in need, people will help you out. And when they're in need, you'll help them out. It's like we all look out for each other" (p. 197). Chamorro's extended family system and reciprocity remains strong and respected. BALLENDORF (1993) has observed the close-knit, family-oriented society of the Chamorros as follows:

If there is one aspect of Chamorro life that impresses an observer from the mainland, it is the role of the family in the life of the individual... The extended kinship system is a distinct human culture of Guam... a strong sense of family loyalty, which spreads beyond the nuclear family of parents and children. Each Chamorro has many people to whom he can look for help and support. (p. 52)

According to Carlos and David, however, this extended kinship sometimes clashes with professional obligations, especially in the private sector. Due to the notion of reciprocity, the extended family obligates a person to give time and money when called upon. "Chamorro friends and relatives usually present *Chenchuli* (money, donation, or gift), or food at the time of wedding, birth, funeral, graduation, school accomplishment, or promotion" (CUNNINGHAM, 1997). As Eduardo mentioned, "If we have 16 cousins, we have 16 obligations. We have to engage in the matters of these cousins and take off from work. Too many obligations are the problem of our modern society."

Family is everything

Chamorros emphasize maintaining family harmony and solidarity. The family gets together to celebrate each member's accomplishments and to strengthen family unity. As THOMPSON (1967) describes, nothing is more important to the Chamorros than fulfilling family obligations, and individuals live for their family and not for themselves. In THOMPSON's (1969) exact words:

Family was the most important socializing and nurturing force in a Chamorro's life. The family determined a person's identity, social status, and social obligations. The family was always more important than the individual. Young and old, people never questioned obedience to family authority. (p. 31)

Historically, as stated previously, the matrilineal system has given strong support to the Chamorro women's influence and power especially in matters of family and property. Even today, in the Chamorro society, the ownership of the land and property is oftentimes transferred to the eldest daughter not the eldest son. For Alfredo and Benny, their grandmothers not grandfathers were the ones who had given them guidance and moral orientation since their childhood. Alfredo considered his two grandmothers 'evangelists.' This confirms IYCHAD's (2001) study: "Older individuals

act as mentors to younger members in fulfilling social obligations” (p. 55).

When Alfredo was asked the question (how would you know you are successful in the family?), he responded: “Three things are important for me. If I get out of school well, which I have done; if I carry a good job; and if I have a good marriage and bring up kids the same way I have been brought up. These things will prove to me that I am successful or not.” To the same question, Benny said: “My ultimate goal in life is to be debt free. To have enough money to buy things for my family and my parents when I get married. Most important is to establish real relationships and to become a good member of my extended family.” David emphasized the importance of interactions with his neighbors: “Our next door neighbors, even though we are not relatives, we call them ‘uncles’ or ‘aunties’ and maintain a close relationship.” Francisco said: “Maintaining my family together is my main concern, not necessarily living together, but keeping in contact with, and having a good relationship.” Again Benny described his family goals:

A happy, healthy, and simple life.... My hope is to give back everything my parents gave us plus more. My parents are still taking care of us grown-up children, and they always will. Therefore, I want to make sure that my parents know that I am going to take care of them in the future. My hope is to continue to make them proud of me.

This distinct human bonding of the Chamorro extended family system is the one that makes the Chamorro society different from western cultures. Carlos, however, criticized one aspect of the current family practice of the Chamorros: “Chamorro parents allow a 50-year-old son to stay in their house, providing him with accommodation and food, thereby inhibiting his move toward independence.” This environment may encourage the son to suffer the Peter Pan syndrome, that is, he is “reluctant to make career decisions, to become economically independent, or even more to become emotionally independent and to accept responsibility for others” (LEFRANCOIS 1999, p. 382).

Workplace

The practice of employment and promotion of the Chamorros is also different from that of the typical North Americans. In the U.S mainland, even in Asia, it is generally difficult for young people to have management positions, but it is relatively easy for the Chamorros. In fact, young men and women are encouraged to move up, getting promoted relatively quickly in government agencies especially. This practice may be natural since the government of Guam is controlled by the Chamorros not any other ethnic group. Even private business sectors, except for hotel industries, tend to hire young people for administration or managing positions.

Alfredo’s dream is to become the first Chamorro chief executive officer (CEO) in the Guam hotel industry since Europeans or Americans historically have held and are currently holding all the CEO positions. He believes it is important to achieve his goal for his family, and for the Chamorro people. Benny talked about the importance of the people he worked with: “I like my work here because I like the people I work with. I can move to our Hawaii office but do not want to go there.” The workplace is something like an extension of extended family to the Chamorros, and they often ask their bosses or colleagues to be godfathers or godmothers of their children.

It also should be noted that women's modern day influence and power might be the result of the culture's matrilineal structure. In addition to the traditional female occupations of teaching and nursing, the Chamorro women engage in all types of work. A great number of women who work for the government, health and social work, and business hold high positions. Many of the school principals, government officers, and lawmakers are women. This reality explains the fact, as our participants reported, that men and women working together is something like an extension of extended family to the Chamorros. Regardless of age and occupation, our participants advocated gender equality and did not mind that their boss was woman. "If the woman is capable of the position, I have no problem. I don't categorize them in terms of being old or young, or being male or female," said Francisco, for instance.

Religion

Another point to consider is: "...after more than two and a half centuries, Catholicism has become deeply rooted in the folk culture of Guam" (THOMPSON 1963, p.193); and the majority of Chamorros are Catholic. Churches were the center of their lives. Being a member of the church is a way to be accepted into the Chamorro community. Churches take care of everything from birth to marriage to death. If people marry in the church, they have to invite all the relatives and villagers for their wedding, and this is an important social event to strengthen the unity of the family itself as well as to strengthen network relations among the Chamorros. IYECHAD (2001) described:

Unlike the western image of marriage depicting the union of two individuals, the Chamorro view of the occasion includes not only the union of two people but also the uniting of two extended families (p, 101)... Much like the purpose of a Bridal Shower, a Baby Shower is viewed as an occasion that solicits resources for the extended family. (p. 121)

To the Chamorros, churches are important for their social and personal development. Carlos said: "In my church, I am a home teacher. I am mandated to visit six families a month and share our religious message and keep an eye on them for any needs that they may have." The affiliation with the church extends even to death. With detailed information and photographs about the deceased, notifications of funeral announcements are published daily; thus "public notification is achieved with the placement of the Death Announcement in the local newspaper...the announcement specifies the individual's clan affiliation" (IYECHAD, p. 149). This is a formal and public invitation to attend the rosary that continues for nine consecutive nights. Usually 500 to 1,000 people attend each rosary, and food is always provided. However, this tradition of rosaries is too costly for the family of the deceased.

The Dream

"The dream is often found in mythology and literature, although rarely in academic research" (ROBERTS and NEWTON 1987, p.156). In LEVINSON's (1978) words:

...the Dream is a vague sense of self-in-adult-world. It has the quality of a vision, an imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality...it may contain concrete images such as winning the Nobel Prize.... It may take a dramatic form as in the myth of the hero: the great artist, business tycoon.... It may take mundane forms that are yet inspiring and sustaining: the excellent craftsman, the husband-father in a certain kind of family, the highly respected member of one's community (p.91).

According to LEFRANCOIS (1999), LEVINSON's Dream is "an idealized fantasy that includes the goals and aspirations of the dreamer...the dream is a tentative blueprint for the dreamer's life" (p. 473). LEVINSON's Dream is important, and the Dream can be connected to personal growth or spiritual goals. It is traditionally viewed that men's dreams have to do with work and occupation and women's dreams embrace marriage and family goals. Among our participants, Alfred was the only one who indicated his occupational dream to become the first Chamorro COE of the Guam hotel industry. When asked about his personal Dream, David laughingly said: "It's too late...keeping my family happy is all that matters. It doesn't matter what I'm doing." Eduardo said: "My dream is to retire comfortably. All my children are married now. Most important is to be happy, and enjoy life because we don't have another chance, we can only die once." Through the interviews, our participants frequently used the term 'happiness.' The distinction between happiness and satisfaction has been described by LEFRANCOIS (1999) in the following terms:

Satisfaction relates to the extent to which various objectives of our lives correspond with our goals and aspirations. Happiness is an emotional state, susceptible to fluctuations of mood. Married individuals report more happiness than those who are alone (single, widowed, or divorced)... But psychology does not yet have a complete recipe for happiness. (p. 448)

As theorized above, all of our married participants had been married only once and seemed happy about themselves and their families in their own ways, and none of them touched upon the issue of midlife crisis.

Just as LEVINSON found that the personal Dream was not clearly articulated in all men (DREBING and GOODEN 1991), the Dream was not clearly articulated in our participants. The concept of the Dream seems to be ambiguous for our participants, yet it is fair to say that their dreams involve marriage and family goals. LEVINSON's concept of the Dream "is still relatively unresearched and would benefit from further empirical exploration and theoretical explication" (DREBING and GOODEN 1991, p.285). There is a definite need for further studies to provide evidence as to how the Dream is an important element in adult male development.

Identity and language

The term 'identity,' in ERIKSON's (1980) words, "points to an individual's link with the unique values, fostered by a unique history, of his people" (p. 109). The indigenous Chamorro culture refers to the ways in which Chamorro men give meaning to their lives as a member of the Chamorro family and a member of the Chamorro community (TWADDLE et al. 1998). In forming one's self-identity, language is extremely influential. According to the weak version of the Sapir/Whorf hypothesis, language influences thought. That language may constrain or open up new ways of seeing the world is difficult to prove. There is no doubt, however, that culture and society influence how we speak and perceive. The Chamorro language is *dying* as a consequence of rapid westernization, but the essence of the Chamorro tradition remains: "*Nisisita-hao, nisisita-yo* (you need me, I need you)" (IYECHAD 2001, p. 171). Actually, IYECHAD (2001) "discovered the lack of the Chamorro language negatively affected attention given to details of traditional practices" (p. 181).

Will the Chamorro family structure perpetuate reciprocal helping practices? The survival of the Chamorro system of reciprocity is dependent upon the survival of a strong sense of family loyalty, that is, the extended family remains a vital element in the

continuation of helping practices. IYECHAD (2001) states that she expects the helping practices documented in her study will continue to undergo transformations as additional resources are introduced into the Chamorro culture and new roles develop as the lifestyle on Guam continues to change.

Summary and limitations

Our study is based on the enormous influence of ERIKSON (adult identity) and LEVINSON (personal Dream) in the humanities, psychology, and social sciences. “The developmental task of the 20s is to build an Entry Life Structure for Early adulthood” (ROBERTS and NEWTON 1987, p. 155) and “becoming independent of parents and forming an occupational dream are seen as two central issues during this period of life” (GOODEN and TOYE 1984, p. 945). Our study started with men in this stage that is the transition time from “pre-adulthood to adulthood and entails the challenges and risks of leaving childhood and becoming more fully adult” (GOODEN and TOYE 1984, p. 945). Alfred and Benny, who were in their twenties, are financially independent from their parents and expressed their wish to support their younger siblings to grow, including financial assistance for their education.

The task of middle adulthood, as defined by ERIKSON, is to be ready to care for and nurture the next generation. “Probably the most highly popularized of all adult developmental stages is the midlife transition “often referred to as the midlife crisis” (LEFRANCOIS 1999, p. 473). Our participants, as noted before, did not talk about this issue but our future study should include this concept and its impact on personal dreams in the midlife transition. Francisco, our oldest participant, stated that he did not feel his 62 years, and he seemed to be enjoying his acquired knowledge and wisdom as he aged. Eduardo also perceived: “age is just numbers. I do exercise regularly. I believe exercise makes us healthy and attractive.”

Regardless of the individual’s stage in the life cycle, our participants shared similar patterns of attitude toward the value of and belief about the kinship system and its impact on daily life. Their identity has taken root in the network of relations. Inherent in the family-oriented society, *family* is most important in Chamorro culture. Family is everything. Chamorro males of our sample had a strong cultural and ethnic identity, advocated gender equality at home and at work, and valued the extended family system. Chamorros are very religious people and the churches are the center of their lives, although the church community can, at times, become overwhelming.

The limitations of our study should be noted: 1) network sampling cannot get a representative sample of the population; 2) we were able to interview only six subjects and more data were needed to support our interpretations; 3) Eduardo was recruited as a Late Adulthood male in our study but he was actually too young for this category; and 4) our study did not explore the specific gender roles in the contemporary Chamorro culture. To fully investigate the Chamorro adult male identity and development, further study with more comprehensive instruments is definitely needed. It may be beneficial to use triangulation using multiple procedures for data gathering with a larger sample size.

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Appendix A

Demographic Information of Participants

	Early adulthood Alfredo	Early adulthood Benny	Middle adulthood Carlos	Middle adulthood David	Late adulthood Eduardo	Late adulthood Francisco
Workplace	Hotel	Private office	Restaurant	School	Hotel	College
Age (in years)	21	24	42	42	56	62
Ethnicity	Chamorro	Chamorro	Chamorro	Chamorro	Chamorro	Chamorro
Native language	Chamorro	English	Chamorro	English	Chamorro	English
Length of living in Guam (in years)	21	24	39	28	36	45
Birth place	Guam	Guam	Guam	Guam	Guam	Guam
Education	Pursing associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Some college education	High school diploma	GED (general educational development) diploma	Doctoral degree
Occupation	Housekeeping manager	Marketing officer	General manager	School aide	Safety manager	Professor
Marital status	Single	Single	Married	Married	Married	Married
Length of marriage (in years)	None	None	21	15	33	35
Number of children	None	None	7	4	4	2
Religion	Catholic	Catholic	Mormon	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic