

# The Chamorro Adult Male Identity and Development<sup>1</sup>

Yukiko INOUE<sup>2</sup>, John SANCHEZ<sup>2</sup> and Olympia TERRAL<sup>2</sup>

*2: School of Education, University of Guam,  
UOG Station, Mangilao, Guam 96923 USA*

## 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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