

Revisiting the Definition and Concept of Filipino Family: A Psychological Perspective

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This paper reviews the current definition of Filipino families, starting from a sociological perspective to the challenge to Filipino psychologists. More recent research of sociologists on families recognize the changing structure and composition of Filipino families brought about by various issues, urban and global migration, changing role of women, and other societal issues. Whereas many psychologists have done research on Filipino families, few have looked into non-traditional families. Important psychological variables and processes such as family relationships, emotional connection, and communication need to be integrated in the definition of Filipino families aside from family structure and composition. The challenges for the Filipino psychologists are to do more research on different types of families, and to take an active role in the reconstruction of the definition of Filipino families that will be more inclusive of different types of family and more responsive to the changing societal needs.

Keywords: Filipino families, non-traditional families, non-normative families, nuclear family, family relationships, family functioning, adoptive families, same-sex families

Filipinos have been described as family-centered, and families have been observed to be closely-knit. Many therefore ask the question what defines a Filipino family then. Through the years, sociologists have studied the composition, structure, values, and definition of Filipino families (Go, 1993; Medina, 1995; Mendez & Jocano, 1974; Miralao, 1997). Recent studies of Go (1993), Medina (2001), and Miralao (1997) on Filipino families indicated the changing family composition and structure brought about by the changes in the society, such as the global and urban migration, and the changing role of women. Medina (2001), recognized the increasing number of non-traditional families. However, not as many psychologists have looked into the conceptualization of the Filipino families from a psychological

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perspective given the societal changes. Aside from Carandang and colleagues (Carandang & Lee-Chua, 2008; Carandang, Sison, & Carandang, 2007), psychologists have looked into the context of Filipino families or how the family has been affected by the different environmental factors.

Through a review of literature, I looked into how psychologists define Filipino families as implied in their problem statements, methodology, or findings. Many of the studies seemed to define Filipino families in a traditional way: a family is composed of a father, a mother and their biological children, and extends to some paternal and maternal relatives. Perhaps the challenge for psychologists was to do their own conceptualization of Filipino families beyond its current definition and from a psychological perspective. In this way, the definition of Filipino families could be expanded to be more inclusive of non-traditional families (e.g., single-parent households, childless couples, cohabiting couples, same-sex parents, reversed role families), and responsive to the demands of the changing Philippine society brought about by many factors such as economic, social, and political issues, technological advancement, and migration, among other issues.

DEFINING THE FILIPINO FAMILY

The Perspective of the State

Before looking into the way psychologists view Filipino families, a review of the legal definition of the family is presented. Article II, Section 12 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution asserted that the “State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution”. Article XV, Section 1 of the Constitution pointed out that “the state recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation ... it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development”. Further, marriage as an inviolable social institution and the foundation of the family was emphasized in Article XV. Moreover, Article 149 of the Family Code of the Philippines (2010) stated that:

The family, being the foundation of the nation, is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects. Consequently, family relations are governed by law, and no custom, practice or agreement destructive of the family shall be recognized or given effect (p. 45).

Article 150 identifies family relations “(1) between husband and wife; (2) between parents and children; and (3) among brothers and sisters, whether

of the full or half-blood” (p. 45). Both the Constitution and the Family Code clearly emphasizes the important role of marriage in creating a family.

More recently, the National Statistics Office (NSO) survey questions listed down several types of Filipino families (National Statistics Office, 2009). A single family is described as a single nuclear family (composed of a father and mother with unmarried children or a parent with children). Single family also refers to a single person household, and unmarried sisters and brothers who are living together as one household. Extended family, on the other hand, is a nuclear family with relatives. Interestingly, NSO had another category called two or more unrelated family members referring to household with two or more non-related families or two or more persons not related to each other by blood, marriage or adoption. The NSO listing of the different types of the family appeared to be a recognition of the State that indeed there are Filipino families that do not belong to the traditional definition.

The Sociological Perspective

Filipino families, as described by Mendez and Jocano (1974), value blood and marriage relationships. They also pointed out that biological ties are important and extend even up to distant relatives. Go (1993) described the Filipino family as nuclear in structure but functionally extended. She further noted that a Filipino family is a bilaterally extended kinship system that highly values reciprocity. Parents provided for their children’s basic needs and later on the children took care of their elderly parents. When members of the family are separated, members worked to keep the ties alive. There was a hierarchical structure of authority in the family. The extended family (which could include non relatives at times) was a source of support for the family. The extended family nature of most Filipino families could be a strength and a weakness at the same time. Go likewise described the hierarchical structure of authority in the family by which obedience, nurturance of one another, and avoidance of conflict are emphasized, thereby, contributing to the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Filipino family.

Other family issues pointed out by Go (1993) in her book included the increasing number of overseas contract workers resulting to separation of many families, the phenomenon of working children, marital infidelity, and teenage pregnancies. Miralao (1997), on the other hand, reported that although modernization has affected Philippine society, the Filipino families generally remained closely knit and traditional. Strong relationships continued to exist even when family members lived apart from one another.

In 2001, Medina reported in her book the results of the 1996 Philippine Values Survey by the Social Weather Station indicating that 98.86% of the Filipino respondents believe that the family was very important to their lives, 95% believe that a child needed a home with both a mother and father to be happy, 80.64% disapprove of a woman having a child as a single parent without having a stable relationship with a man, and 87.58% disagree that marriage was an outdated institution. However, Medina (2001) reported in the same book the results of the 1995 Philippine Census, indicating that 3.86% of respondents were widowed, .66% separated or divorced, and 1.76% were living in. Nonetheless, she pointed out that the nuclear family is still the basic building block of most Filipino families. A person can belong to one's family orientation and family of procreation. Medina described as well compound or composite families which are formed when nuclear families are combined. For the extended family, there is recognition of kin relations beyond that of husband, wife and unmarried children, shared responsibilities, and maintenance of expressive and emotional relations beyond the nuclear family.

Medina (2001) already acknowledged that non-traditional families were increasing. The family members were not necessarily bound to each other by legal marriage, blood or adoption. Examples of non-traditional families included cohabiting couples, single parent households, childless unions, dual career and reversed role families.

The Psychological Perspective

In her book, *Filipino Children under Stress: Family Dynamics and Therapy*, Carandang (1987) mentioned how the socio-political issues in the country have affected family cohesiveness. She then described how one family member rises to the occasion of difficulty, usually referred to as the "tagasalo", the one who takes care of the family or comes to rescue of the family or another family member. Carandang's work emphasized not so much the family type and structure, but rather psychological variables and functioning that makes a family adjust to the different situations. In 2004, Carandang and Sison described a Filipino family as a system and highlighted the resiliency of Filipino children stemming from their early experiences of being nurtured. Another work of Carandang in 2001, together with Sison and Carandang, focused on the experiences of Filipino families left by women OFWs. Among their findings included feelings of sadness in family, the need for fathers to be helped in accepting their new roles, and children becoming the "tagasalo" of their fathers.

In 2008, Carandang together with Lee-Chua published a book titled *The Filipino Family Surviving the World*, acknowledging that the Filipino family is facing many changes and challenges both from within itself and from the society in general. They cited how societal changes such as global and urban migration, changing role of women, political instability, violence, and power of media impact the Filipino family. More than defining the structure, they present important psychological issues such as inculcating family values, communicating within the family and with the world, strategies of developing children's potentials and dealing with tough times. The work of Carandang and colleagues (2004, 2007, 2008) indicated that the family situations and structure of Filipino families change as time passes by. What may be true years ago may not necessarily apply to current situations.

The following section was a review of other psychologists' published and unpublished articles on Filipino family issues and concepts, looking into their explicit and implicit view of Filipino families. Key variables deemed important by Filipino families were likewise looked into. The section was subdivided into studies on parent-related issues, children-related issues, family context, and societal issues.

Parent-related issues. Studies on Filipino parents mostly dealt with parenthood and parenting skills, parent-child and marital relations, and parent experiences and traits. A few dealt with the impact of work to the parents. Many of these studies also compared different groups of parents, rural and urban, mothers and fathers, among other things.

Jurilla (1986) explored the motivations for parenthood of rural married couples. She basically found out six covert dimensions for parenthood, namely, (1) adequacy, (2) positive (3) self-gratification, (4) nurturance/affiliation as motives for having children, (4) anxiety, (5) negative self-gratification, and (6) disruptive influences of children as deterrents to having children. Tan, in 1989, studied four father types among Filipino families according to activity and affective aspects of fathering. He concluded that the ideal father, given the emerging issues of global and modern age, was someone who was involved with his children but at the same time not too controlling. He further concluded a need for "a generative father as representing the ideal combination of concern and commitment" (p. 189).

Studies on various child-rearing practices (Domingo, 1977; Liwag, Dela Cruz, & Macapagal, 1998; Umali-Razon, 1981) emphasized the important role of parents in training their children to be responsible and independent individuals.

A growing phenomenon in the 80s was the number of women, wives in particular, who work. Santiago-dela Cruz (1986) examined the effects of

maternal employment on family members' perceptions of the mother sex-role concepts of the children, and the attitudes towards working women. Findings of the study generally revealed that employed women had the most favorable attitudes towards working women, followed by the unemployed women, and by the men regardless of whether their wives were employed or not employed. The case studies showed that maternal employment did not affect mother-child variables of nurturance and punitiveness, discipline, and independence training. This was explained in terms of the greater effect of cultural factors and the fact that children are the priority of both groups of mothers. The other set of factors that mitigate the effect of maternal employment were family variables such as the quality of mother-child interaction, quality of substitute care for children, and the wife's efficiency in home management. Apparently, maternal employment was not seen as negative as long as the mothers were able to fulfil their responsibilities as a mother.

Another parent issue that was studied by Gonzales, Greer, Scheers, Oakes, and Buckley (2004) was the resilience of Filipino wives to spousal infidelity. Gonzales and colleagues found that problem-solving skills combine with self-care, shopping, travel, becoming economically independent, stopping complaints or blame, reaching out to others, and perhaps even filing for civil and/or church annulment.

Hechanova-Alampay (1997), on the other hand, looked into the demographic, personality, family and work variables which moderate the experience of stressors and their consequences for Filipino working parents. Both work and non-work stressors were positively and significantly related to total, physiological and psychological strains. In the same study of Hechanova-Alampay (1997), solo parents were found to be the most vulnerable to stress due to the absence of a spouse to buffer and share the burden of parenting and household responsibilities. Furthermore, working parents, whose spouse does not work, reported more stressors and strains.

The previous studies still implicitly defined Filipino family as composed of parents and their biological children although there were studies that recognized emerging phenomena among Filipino families, such as the increasing number of working mothers (Santiago-dela Cruz, 1986) and solo parents (Hechanova-Alampay, 1997).

Child-related issues. Studies on Filipino children varied from the impact of family structure, composition, functioning, parenting styles, parent personality on various child-related variables, such as achievement, socialization, adjustment, and perception parents. Many of these studies also attempted to compare children belonging to different types of families.

A study on Filipino children's perception of their parents in terms of nurturance, punitiveness and power was done by Carunungan-Robles (1986). Results revealed that children perceive mothers to be more nurturing than fathers. It was reported in that study that Filipino mothers are expected to take charge of raising their children. Her nurturing role starts soon after the baby's birth. The same study revealed that mothers and fathers were seen equally as agents of punishment toward their children.

Manalastas and Mondragon (2006), in a recent study on Filipino college students, found that in heterosexual dual-parent household, mothers may know more about their adolescent children's lives than do fathers. Furthermore, overall estimation showed that both fathers and mothers have biases in their observer ratings, judging their children to be happier than they actually are. Bias in judgments was found to be related to life satisfaction, with happier students having less biased mothers and fathers. Apparently, parents were motivated to believe that their child is happier than he or she actually is, thereby enhancing their view of their family as a whole.

Looking into the influence on the lifestyle of the Filipino youth, Cruz, Laguna and Raymundo (2001) pointed out that the Filipino family is characterized more often now than before in terms of absentee parenting and unstable marital unions. This is largely the result of options taken by parents as they deal with the pressure of a changing environment such as migration as pointed out also by Go (1993), Medina (2001) and Carandang and Lee-Chua (2008). These changes have resulted to new forms of living arrangements which makes adolescents vulnerable to risk behaviors. The impact of mass media was also seen as a threat to traditional values. Nonetheless, Cruz and colleagues claimed that family values and parental guidance continue to show significant influence on neutralizing the effects of media and peers. They particularly cited having a strong, stable and intact family environment as an important factor in influencing the lifestyle of adolescents.

In the study of Garo-Santiago, Resurreccion, and Tan-Mansukhani (2009), the Filipino youth defined family not only in terms of structure (i.e., nuclear or extended) but rather in terms of other factors, particularly living arrangement, emotional and financial support, and close friendships. Garo-Santiago and colleagues found how Filipino adolescents valued connection, intimacy, care, and support. Given their findings, they recommended that perhaps there is a need now to reconstruct the definition of family.

Family context. What each Filipino family experiences could not be simply taken out of context. Whether we are studying parents or their

children, the experiences, behaviors, or cognitions were the results of the environmental context. Hence, in many studies, comparisons were done on environmental context, rural vs. urban, immigrants vs. non-immigrants, OFW vs. non-OFW households, among other things.

Parennas (2001) did a study on transnational families, defined as families with different members living in at least two countries. For example, a mother can be working abroad and all other members of her family are in the Philippines. To deal with these painful emotions (e.g., pain, feelings of anxiety, helplessness, loss, guilt, and loneliness), some parents living away from their family tried to compensate for maternal love and care with material goods. On the other hand, the children left behind often experienced loneliness, insecurity, vulnerability and the desire for more intimacy with their mother. For transnational families with the mother abroad, a better family life was often seen as a tradeoff. However, compared to the mothers, the children were less likely to think that the financial gains were worth the emotional costs. Parennas further concluded that the strain experienced is made worse by the conception of the traditional patriarchal nuclear family in the Philippines. In the Philippines, the fathers are seen as the breadwinner while the mothers are seen as the nurturers. The emotional effect on the children is thought to be less when it is the father who has gone abroad.

There were also some studies on Filipino immigrants. A study on second generation Filipino-Americans was done by Wolf (1997). Filipino-Americans had high levels of academic achievement and there was much pressure to succeed. Gender played a role in the Filipino-American experience with females found in a more restrictive and difficult position. Filipino-American students scored lower on self-esteem and higher on depression, with the females having higher scores than males. There were difficulties in child-parent communication wherein the children did not feel understood or were expected to be something they were not.

After Mexico, the Philippines is the second largest source of immigrants in the United States. Filipinos are the largest Asian group in the United States. However, Filipinos have two key characteristics that differentiate them from other Asian groups. They are mostly Catholic and tend to be egalitarian rather than patriarchal. In Filipino-American families, members depended on one another for emotional, psychological, and financial support. Individualism was not emphasized. Relationships were maintained. The same values held by Filipinos living in the Philippines were also the values esteemed by Filipino immigrants wherever they are. Respect was given to the elderly although authority does not necessarily come with age. Children felt the

duty to care for their elderly parents. Compared to other groups, Filipinos tended to have more extended family members living with them. Filipinos had bilateral system for relatives, and compadres became part of the family Catholic religious rites.

For Filipinos, children were seen as precious gifts from God and were thought to bring family happiness, companionship, love and comfort in old age. Children were expected to be obedient and dependent. Children acculturated faster than their parents and this was a source of conflict. American middle-class values of individualism, independence, and assertiveness clashed with traditional values but these values were adopted by Filipino-American youth so that they can be accepted. Filipino American couples had fewer children than people do in the Philippines due to the lack of available child care by family members and others. At times, problematic children were sent to the Philippines to stay with extended family members. Filipino-American children experienced both a generational and cultural gap with their parents. (Agbayani-Stewart, 1994).

For Cimmarusti (1996), the Filipino-American family went beyond the nuclear family and included the extended family. Relatives from both the mother's sides and father's side were regarded as part of the extended family. Typically, there was a delineation between outsiders and family/extended family. The clan was the locus of identity formation, social learning, support, and role development and is the first line in problem solving. Elders of the clan were given unquestionable respect. However, blind authoritarianism was not typical in the family. Kinship terms were used to recognize the special rank of family members. Godparents may become part of the clan though the ties were not as strong as that with distant relatives. First-generation Filipino-Americans tried to recreate the extended family clan in America. They sought the support of members in the United States and worked to bring other members to the US.

For Chao and Aque (2009), strictness was associated with higher externalizing for Filipinos than for European Americans. Psychological control was related to higher externalizing symptoms and drug use more for European Americans than Asian immigrants. For Filipino immigrants, structure was positively related to internalizing and externalizing behaviors, regardless of how angry they felt. All in all, Asian immigrants experienced greater parental control and lesser anger than European Americans. Filipino youth immigrants experienced higher levels of depression, suicidal thoughts, and lower self-esteem than other groups with higher rates of depression and suicide for the females.

THE NON TRADITIONAL FAMILIES

Most research findings validated the common observation that Filipino families are extended. Some attempts have been done to look at other types of Filipino families, single parent families, disruptive families, and adoptive families. However, there was a dearth of psychological research on non-traditional families as focus is still on the traditional families.

Single working mothers were found to have moderate adversity quotients due to finances, lack of support from the father of their children, parenting concerns, and work-family conflicts (Santos, 2004). Among the coping strategies employed by single working mothers were spirituality, support from family and friends, and leisure activities. Du-Lagrosa (1986) and Salvosa (1992) also looked into the impact of having a single parent on children. Salvosa (1992) found that psychological security level was significantly greater for students with their fathers present than for those with their fathers abroad. Grades for both groups were average but students with present fathers had significantly better grades than students with absent fathers. Similarly, results of Du-Lagrosa's study (1986) showed that a father's availability only influenced the social adjustment of adolescents with the father-absent adolescents being significantly less submissive than those who are father-present. Furthermore, results also showed that in general, the adolescent respondents were rather poor in their emotional adjustment, with father-present girls seemingly having the greatest emotional problems.

In his research on plight of single parents, Johnson (1981) reviewed the effects of the father-absent family on the child and on the mother. Both negative and positive effects were pointed out. An attempt was made to relate such findings to the Philippine situation wherein more and more fathers and husbands are leaving for the Middle East, thus leaving behind them a growing number of single-parent families. Factors which may help in reducing the effect of the father's absence were identified, and suggestions were made regarding how psychologists and health providers could take a more active role in weaving these factors into more concrete programs to help those who are left behind.

Several family studies compared intact and disrupted families (Adalia, 1995; Fallarme, 1988). Adalia (1995) looked into self-acceptance and security level of adolescents coming from intact families and disrupted families in the rural setting. Disruption, as defined in this research, was due to abandonment, separation, work abroad, and death. Adolescents coming from intact families were found to have greater self-acceptance than those

from disrupted families. No significant difference in terms of their security level was observed between the two groups of adolescents.

Similar findings were seen in the study of Fallarme (1988) comparing the security level and evaluation of parents of adolescents coming from intact and disrupted families. However, there were no significant differences in these variables when adolescents from disrupted families were grouped based on length of family disruption. Type of support (full support, no support, financial support only, and emotional support only), however, from non-custodial parents had a significant impact on the adolescents' evaluation of their mothers' perception of their fathers.

In the studies done by Tarroja (2007), Borja (1996) and Delos Reyes (2002) on adoptive families, adjustment of adopted children did not depend so much on their being adopted but more so on the acceptance and support of the adoptive families.

The studies on non-normative families were still anchored on the traditional conceptualization of families, focusing on the marital or parental relationships of family members. What about the other types of non-traditional families? For example, there are couples, married or cohabiting, same sex or opposite sex, that choose not to have children for different reasons. They are, therefore, not parents. Likewise, there are single individuals who choose to have a child (either through biological means, adoption or foster) but not a spouse or partner. These individuals are parents but not a spouse. What about those who prefer to be single and be without a child? There is also what Eugene Litwak (1960) as cited by Gelles (1995) described as modified extended family to describe families with a nuclear structure but lived far apart from each other while maintaining close bonds.

WHAT MATTERS MOST AMONG FILIPINO FAMILIES

According to Gelles (1995), the variations in family structure depended on the forms of marriage, types of household structures, rules of descent and inheritance and rules of residence and authority patterns. From the points of view of Filipino psychologists, studies on Filipino families, whether traditional or non-traditional families, indicated that physical togetherness/ physical connection, emotional connection, parental involvement, communication, family resiliency, care and support, intimacy as important factors that keep a family together. Survey results showed that a Filipino family is described in terms of family members' closeness, sense of support, care, warmth, and intimacy, and shared values and beliefs. These values were the elements that make a Filipino family amidst all the issues like

global and urban migration, changing role of women, technological advancement, and even the threats of disaster. More than family structure and composition, the elements previously discussed were found to be more critical factors that differentiate family. Hence, it was important to look at these psychological variables and processes in defining the current Filipino families. One such definition that can perhaps be modelled was the one of Lamana and Riedmann (1985) who defined family as:

any group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, or any sexually expressive relationship, in which (1) the people are committed to one another in an intimate, interpersonal relationship, (2) the members see their identity as importantly attached to the group, and (3) the group has an identity of its own (p. 19).

Whereas the previous definition attempts to integrate non-traditional families, it still did not still capture the experiences of Filipino families. Indeed, new types of families were emerging globally and in the Philippines. Filipino sociologists have early on identified the changing family structure and composition brought about by the changes in our society. Still, very few psychologists were taking on the challenge to look into the current conceptualization of Filipino families.

This paper reviewed only the leading books on families and published papers in a national psychology journal. Unpublished theses and dissertations of students from the different schools have not been looked into extensively. It was possible that graduate students from the different parts of the country have researched on non-normative families in their respective place. It was also possible that other psychologists have talked about the experiences and struggles of non-traditional families in various fora, e.g., conferences, lectures, and media. In the literature review, most of the studies were on Filipino families in urban settings, particularly Metro Manila.

IMPLICATIONS

Indeed, there have been a lot of changes in the society (e.g., modernization, urbanization, and technological advancement) that impact Filipino families. Whereas Filipino families are still nuclear in nature, most are extended families, supporting earlier findings of Medina (1995, 2001) and Go (1993). One important question to address, however, is the composition of nuclear and extended families. Does nuclear family refer only to biological parents and biological children? What about adoptive and blended families? Go (1993) further notes that the members of both the

nuclear and extended family are no longer limited to members who are related by blood, marriage or adoption. Extended family includes one or two partners, their children, and a variety of involved relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. Relationships can either be biological, legal, or emotional. Hence, friends and other non-relative are at times considered part of the family. Living together under one roof or the physical togetherness is not as important as the emotional attachment. Does nuclear family also mean being complete, i.e., with one set of parents and with at least one biological child? In many societies today, families with at least one parent and one child are viewed as a normative definition of the family. These include married couples with at least one child, non-married, separated or divorced couples with children and single parents with children. The child in these cases is not necessarily biologically related to parental figures. He/she may, for example, be adopted, grandchildren, a product of other relationships, or perhaps conceived through artificial insemination or a surrogate mother.

Likewise, marriage is not the only path to forming a family. In fact, family union may vary among and within various cultures, based on the law of the society, religious orientation, and cultural norms, as well as informal expectations of family, friends. Members of the extended family vary a great deal as well. Changing marital forms include single-parent families, gay and lesbian couples, cohabitation, and never-been married single parents.

There is an increase in dual-earner and dual-career marriages. The emergence of absentee parents due to deployment abroad is a result of the need for both parents to work. The number of solo-parent families is also increasing due to marital separation, migration, illegitimacy, and adoption. Types of solo parent families include widow or widower and child/children, single man/woman and his/her adopted child/children, separated parent and child/children, and unwed woman and her child/children.

According to Medina (2001), other non traditional family forms that are becoming more evident are step or blended families, siblings who have been orphaned or whose parents are abroad, and childless couples. Medina (2001) notes that living together is not needed to make a family. A household consists of people living together but they may not necessarily be a family. Non-traditional families are increasing. The members are not necessarily bound to each other by legal marriage, blood, or adoption.

From this paper, I conclude that there indeed is a need to reconstruct the definition of Filipino families to be more inclusive of the different existing types of families. Filipino psychologists need to play an active role in this reconstruction as important psychological variables such as family

functioning, family relationships, and emotional connection play a key role in defining Filipino families, perhaps more than family structure and composition. This reconstruction needs to be based on empirical evidence. Hence, the challenge now is for psychologists to continue what Carandang and colleagues (2004; 2007; 2008) have started and to do more research on the non-traditional or non-normative families. It is highly recommended that we psychologists need to do more research on Filipino families today given all the changes and challenges.

Recognizing the different types of family, including those that are considered non-normative and non-traditional, practicing psychologists perhaps need to integrate the family differences in their practice of assessment and interventions. For example, psychologists may need to be aware of their biases against certain family types just because they are not included in the usual definition of families. Psychologists working in the school settings may need to consider looking into programs that will respond to the varying needs of the different types of families.

Indeed, it is important to look into key variables that promote functional families beyond the structure or composition of the family. Research has already shown that what defines a Filipino family is not so much its structure but the emotional connections among family members, how they relate and support one another, and how they care for one another.

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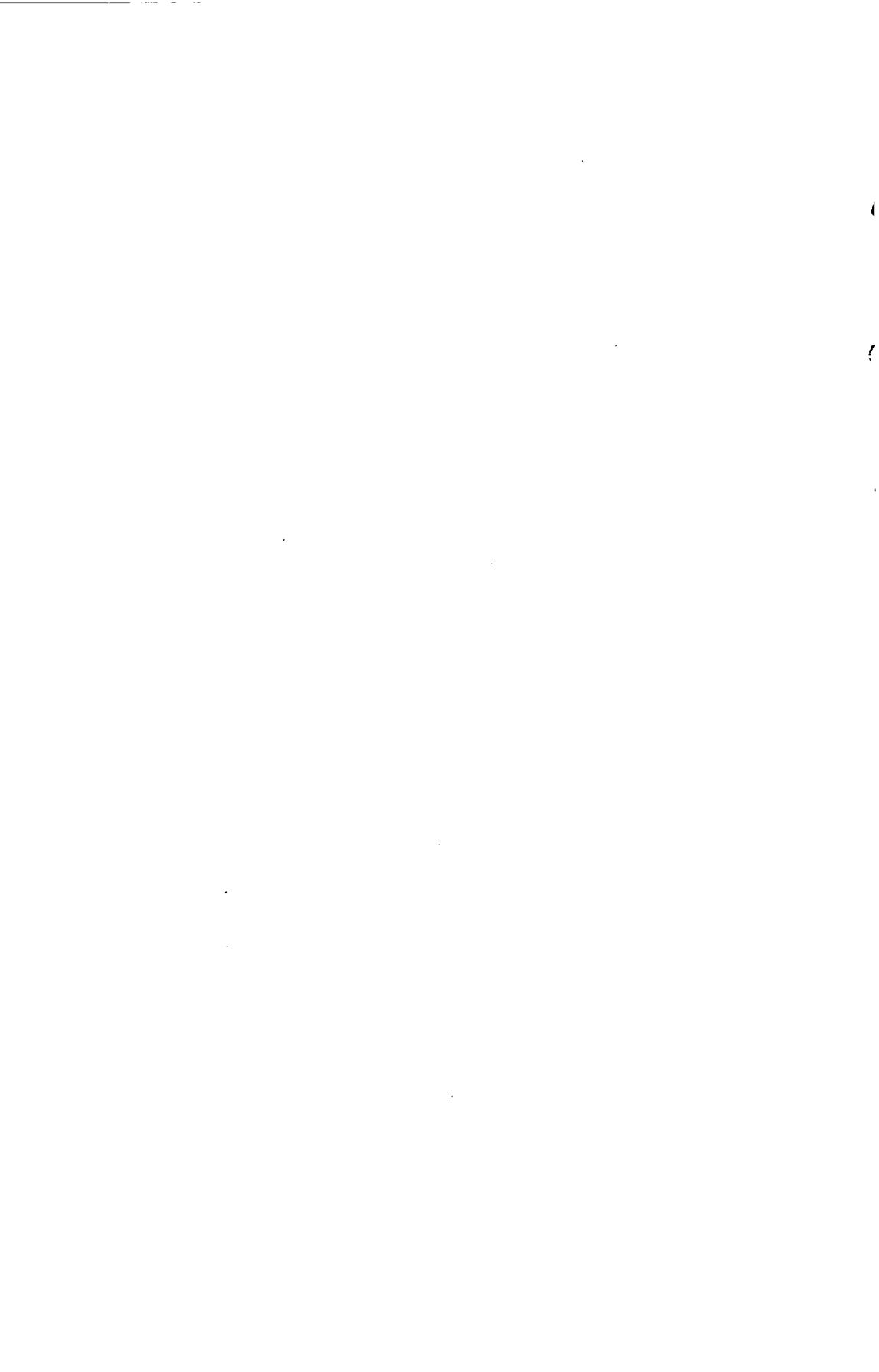
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AUTHOR NOTES

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Coping: Definitions and Main Theories. Applying the study of the mind and behavior to a concept such as stress and coping has led to an evolving definition of stress, more research on its physical, psychological and social effects, and the development of comprehensive ways in which individuals cope with stress. Our understanding of how individuals cope with stress has advanced to include perception of one's ability to cope, approach to coping, assessment and utilization of coping resources available, and enacting of strategies. The definition of stress has evolved in accordance with research and theory development.