Adolescent Identity in the context of the Filipino family

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Using focus group discussions conducted with rural and urban adolescents, this study describes the Filipino adolescents' identity by looking at their definition of the family, their roles in the family, parental expectations, values, and social concerns affecting the family. Results show that adolescents expand their definition of family to encompass both blood and non-blood relations, assume supportive roles in the family, fulfill parental expectations, and embody values concerning family relationships and academic achievement. The themes of the adolescents' identity in the family context emphasize connection, support, and autonomy. The implications of these findings on Filipino adolescents' positive development and the importance of family socialization are further discussed.

Keywords: adolescents, family, positive development, socialization, identity, family relationships

Adolescents begin to contemplate about who they are, what they want to be, what values should guide their lives, and how they relate to people. During this developmental period, they undertake the developmental task of identity formation in order to understand themselves and their relation to others. Erikson (1963, 1968) maintain that identity provides an individual with a sense of continuity, a framework for organizing and integrating diverse experiences and influences, and a sense of direction. Through commitments to particular directions and a system of values, identity achievement, as opposed to identity confusion, will allow the individual to explore and achieve intimacy with others in adulthood.

Adolescent identity development is traditionally studied and understood in terms of the process of resolving an identity crisis and achieving identity commitments to specific goals, values, and beliefs (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). However, it is also important to identify and understand the influences '

and the contexts of the adolescent's identity formation. Family relationships and processes have been studied in relation to identity exploration of adolescents (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). An emerging theme in the study of adolescent identity development has delved into person-context interactions, with an acknowledgement that parents continue to be a major source of socialization for adolescents (Beyers & Cook, 2008; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). This paper seeks to investigate the identity of Filipino adolescents in relation to their family.

Socialization of Adolescents

Among Filipino adolescents, the family is the major agent of socialization (Medina, 1991) as it shapes the adolescents' personality, values, and attitudes (Gastardo-Conaco, Jimenez, & Billedo, 2003; Natividad, Puyat, Page, & Castro, 2004). The socialization of gender roles and values remain traditional and family-oriented (Cruz, Laguna, & Raymundo, 2002; Liwag, de la Cruz, & Macapagal, 1998). Children are raised differently within the family; sons and daughters are assigned different roles and carry out different parental expectations. For example, daughters assist their mothers in household chores and in caring for their younger siblings whereas sons are expected to help out in tasks that require physical strength such as farming, or carrying heavy buckets of water into the house (Liwag, et al., 1998).

The most important values adolescents claim to have learned from the family are trust in God, obedience to parents, success, honesty and justice, and harmonious relationships (Porio, Lynch, & Hollnsteiner, 1975). These values are consistent over time, with a few variations such as education, achievement, spirituality, and other virtues (Gastardo-Conaco et al.,2003). Adolescents continue to value the family, and other family-oriented values such as family solidarity, warm relationships, and the willingness to make sacrifices for the good of the family (Go, 1994). Consistent with the value ascribed by the family on education, the youth aspires to attain a high level of education for financial security for themselves and their family (Gastardo-Conaco et al., 20031).

The family is also a source of positive feelings among adolescents. They enjoy spending time with the family (Go, 1994; Salesian Society of Don Bosco, 2002). Apart from friends, the family is cited as the adolescents' primary source of life satisfaction and well-being (Cristobal, Matibag, Ting, & Resurreccion, 2007; Ramos, 2005). Adolescents, who experience warm relationships and open communication with their parents, tend to show higher levels of both internal resources and well-being (Ben-Zur, 2003).

Changes in the Filipino Family Structure

Although the family remains central in the adolescent's life, the nuclear family structure may no longer be providing adequate socialization and guidance needed by adolescents (Gastardo-Conaco et al., 2003). Due to the changing family structure, the number of adolescents being raised in a single parent household is rising. Only 84% of adolescents have been raised under an intact family structure whereas 16% have been under alternative set-ups (Cruz et al., 2002). This phenomenon of changing family structure and relationships in the last few decades is due to single parenting, marital separation, and the increase in overseas employment of Filipinos (Gastardo-Conaco et al.,2003).

Generally, the absence of a parent in the household may adversely affect the development of adolescents (Barrameda, 1989). To validate their social and emotional needs and interests, the adolescents tend to rely too much on their peers (Fulgini & Eccles, 1993). They try to find answers and solutions from their friends in dealing with adolescent concerns as well as problems within the family, such as lack of knowledge and embarrassment over certain topics of discussion, physical absence, psychological distance, and strong needs of control (Gastardo-Conaco et al., 2003). This widening gap between parents and adolescents is also observed in non-Asian countries where the perceived quality of the parent-child relationship tends to decline by mid-adolescence (McGue, Elkins, Walden, & Iacano, 2005). Adolescents perceive greater parent-child conflict, less parental involvement in their lives, and less positive regard for their parents. Furthermore, their need for autonomy sometimes leads them to explore risky behaviors (Cruz et al., 2002).

Positive Development of Adolescents

Although the changing family structure is a bleak reality to contend with, there are positive aspects and capacities of the adolescents that can help them to respond adaptively to challenges within the family and the larger environment. Filipino adolescents are able to cope with a strong, adequate support of an adjusted single parent and surrogate parents (Barrameda, 1989). Those with absent fathers are able to develop their social skills (Du-Lagrosa, 1986). Their strength and resilience have been noted despite the social and emotional concerns they experience in the absence of a parent due to overseas labor migration (Carandang & Lee-Chua, 2008). Without trivializing the valid concerns and potential difficulties encountered

in adolescent development, this study adopts the lens of positive youth development to explore adolescent identity in the family context, with the backdrop of broader societal concerns that affect the family. The aim of positive psychology is to study "the positive features that make life worth living" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As such, the healthy and positive development of adolescents and the positive aspects of family relationships that contribute to identity formation are given emphasis here.

For positive youth development, Larson (2000) emphasizes the importance of the development of "initiative" because initiative is the "ability to be motivated from within to direct attention and effort towards a challenging goal" and that initiative is required for the development of other positive qualities such as "creativity, leadership, altruism, and civic engagement" (p. 170). Another aspect of positive youth development is the development of competence in specific contexts and various domains such as social, intellectual, and vocational competence (Huebner, 2003). Initiative and competence are important aspects of identity as these are related to concerns of autonomy, agency, and mastery in adolescent development.

In studying identity in adolescence, Waterman (1985) defines identity as "having a clearly delineated self-definition, a self-definition comprised of those goals, values, and beliefs which the person finds personally expressive, and to which he or she is unequivocally committed. Such commitments evolve over time and are made because the chosen goals, values, and beliefs are deemed worthy of giving direction, purpose, and meaning to life" (p. 6). In this paper, this definition will be expanded by embedding the self-definition of the adolescents within the context of the family. The Filipino adolescent's identity will be studied by looking at the perception of the adolescents about how they are defined by the family through roles, expectations and values, their definition of what family means to them, and their integration of these elements into their own self-definition.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was used to describe the perceptions, experiences, and self-definition of adolescents in the context of their families. The focus group discussions (FGD) conducted with adolescent participants allowed for in-depth sharing of information, thoughts and feelings about their families and themselves.

Participants

Respondents aged 12 to 20 were recruited by obtaining permission from school authorities (i.e., the school's principal or head teacher). For the out-of-school youth participants, they were invited to participate in discussions through community leaders.

Four FGDs were conducted with different sociodemographic groups. Two groups were composed of young and old adolescents from a rural area in Northern Luzon and who were studying from public schools and belonged to families who rely mainly on agriculture-business and wage employment while a few had parents working overseas. The other two groups were composed of respondents from an urban setting in a suburb in Manila. Out-of-school youths from indigent families made up one of the groups from the urban population. The other group was composed of young adolescents studying in a private parochial high school whose families rely on wage employment and a few on overseas work. Each FGD group was composed of male and female adolescents, with an average of 7 participants. A total of 31 adolescents (16 females; 15 males, five of whom were homosexuals) participated in the FGDs.

Procedure

Prior to the start of the discussion, participants were informed of the purpose and scope of the study, confidentiality procedures, and their rights as volunteers and respondents. All discussions, which lasted approximately an hour, were audio-taped, with the participants' knowledge and permission.

In each session, one member of the research team acted as moderator, asked questions from the FGD guide, directed the flow of the discussion, and made sure all participants had a chance to contribute to the discourse. Another member of the research team observed the interactions and took down notes regarding interjections and reactions of the participants.

The steps outlined by Flick (2002) in conducting FGDs were followed, namely: the discussion started with an introduction of the participants, including pertinent background information that they were willing to share, followed by an explanation of the process of turn-taking, listening and participation from all respondents. The moderator then eased into the topic by highlighting common ground for all the members of the group (i.e., everyone, including the researchers, grew up in and experienced the dynamics of a Filipino family) to promote the feeling of being a part of the

group. The discussion followed the FGD guide, which contained the following topics: family composition and structure; roles, duties and responsibilities in the family, parental expectations, areas of decision making, family relationships, and values. Towards the end of the discussion, participants were given the opportunity to deliberate on the issues raised during the FGD, as well as to react to and comment on any concerns they might have regarding the process. Finally, respondents were thanked and given tokens of appreciation for their participation.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the FGD data. Codes and categories were generated from the transcribed discussions, which were then used to identify larger sets of recurring themes and key points. Each FGD session was transcribed verbatim, with segments checked randomly for accuracy of the transcription. Coding was independently done by each member of the research team; after which, the coding was checked, refined and operationally defined by the whole group. Codes were then grouped into categories, which were then finalized into overarching themes. Validity was established through an auditing process, which involved checking data-gathering and analytical procedures, by the senior faculty researchers.

RESULTS

Adolescents' Definition of Family

The respondents' definition of the family included both traditional and non-traditional compositions of family members. Majority of the respondents lived with their nuclear family but most lived near extended kin in a compound. A number of them grew up with grandparents or aunts and uncles, especially when their parents were working overseas, separated, unemployed, or deceased. In defining the family, the participants included their nuclear family and extended kin who share a household, live in the same compound, or reside abroad but provide financial support as shown in the following response "*May isa pa akong* family *sa* Canada... *siya yung sumusuporta sa kin ngayon - lola ko*" (I have another family in Canada, my grandmother who gives me support). Other responses include "*Yung* father *ko namatay na, yung* mother *ko nag-*abroad *kaya pinalaki ako ng* grandparents *ko*" (My father is deceased, my mother is abroad so I was brought up by my grandparents), and "I prefer to stay at my grandparents'... they send me to

school because my parents cannot afford it...in turn I keep them company and help in household chores." Due to separation from parents, an out-of-school-youth participant regarded her grandparents as her "real parents" because *"ang loob ko talaga nandun sa nagpalaki sa akin... pero ginagalang ko pa rin ang magulang ko"* (My affections are with those who brought me up ...but I still respect my parents).

For most of the out-of-school-youth participants, their definition of family went beyond members of the family. Close friends were introduced to their nuclear family and treated by the rest of the family as members, not guests. One friend was even regarded as a "parang tatay" (father figure) because he embodies the characteristics of what a father ought to be. A participant from the rural area also stated he has a friend who provides financial help as if he were a family member and feels "very close" to her because *"nauutangan na parang pamilya"* (lends money as if she were family). Thus, whereas blood relations were still a primary consideration for determining inclusion in the family, non-blood "relatives" such as friends were considered family members when they assume familial roles and characteristics.

Adolescents' Perceived Roles in the Family

The respondents' perceived roles in their families were related to the duties and responsibilities that they performed for and assigned by their families. The adolescents who participated in this study embraced the following roles: caregivers of younger siblings, helpers in housework, and providers of financial support. Some roles were connected to gender and birth position. The role of caregiver of younger siblings usually fell on the female respondents, who were the eldest. This was a consistent response from both rural and urban participants as evidenced by the response of *"Alagaan ang mga kapatid kasi ako ang panganay"*(Take care of my younger siblings because I am the eldest). Apart from caregiving, they also provided assistance and guidance needed by younger siblings. Some respondents shared that they have to assist younger siblings in their school work because *"sabi ng mama ko, tulungan mo kapatid mo, napagdaanan mo yan..."* (My mother said I should help my siblings because I went through the same experience before).

All of the respondents from both rural and urban groups reported performing household chores such as *"mag-igib ng tubig, magluto, maglaba, maglinis ng bahay, mamalantsa at maghugas ng pinggan"* (carry buckets of water, cook, wash laundry, clean the house, iron clothes and wash the

dishes). The adolescents reported little or no difference based on gender when it came to parental expectations regarding these chores. Thus, both sons and daughters were expected to know how to cook for the family and clean the home. There was one case of a young adolescent male from the rural group who assumed the role of caregiver to a younger sibling because there were no female children around. However, the firstborn child had an additional role of providing a good model to younger siblings and often heard parents say *"Dapat daw akong maging masipag dahil ako ang panganay"* (I need to be industrious because I am the eldest). In contrast, the youngest child was not expected to perform housework and a few shared *"Ayaw ni papa na utusan namin yung bunso naming babae na maghugas, maglinis"* (My father prefers not to assign the tasks of washing and cleaning to our youngest).

The adolescent's role as provider of financial support to the family had a present and future time frame. Some respondents, particularly the working out-of-school-youth, helped out in paying household expenses for example *"Si ate pagka-sahod 500 ang binibigay namin, kasi nga sa ilaw"* (My older sister contributes 500 as payment for electricity). Many out-of-school-youth participants regretted having failed to reach the goal of finishing a college education as set by their parents; but one claimed "still *ginagawa ko yung* best *ko para matulungan sila sa lahat ng makakaya ko... kahit mabaon ako sa utang hindi ko iniinda"* (I do my best to help as much as I could... even if I am burdened with debts, I wdo ill not mindbe overwhelmed). Another one thought he should continue his studies but reasoned *"Hindi pa rin eh kasi hindi ko pa rin sila natutulungan habang nag-aaral"* (It still is not an option because I could not help out while studying), hence he opted to work. Another working participant shared how her parents were proud of her academic awards when she was still studying, but countered that *"pinaka-*proud *siguro sila siguro kung* totally financially stable *ako"* (They will be proud of me if maybe, I am financially stable). Only one respondent claimed he was not obliged to contribute financially *"Hindi nila ako inoobliga na ikaw magbayad ng ganito...pangsarili ko lang"* (I am not obliged to pay for family expenses, only for my own needs).

Other non-working respondents, particularly from the older adolescents in the rural group, admitted feeling "pressured" about their future role of providing financial support to the family but they were "willing to accept it" as shown in the following statements: *"Kapag panganay ka kailangan makapagtapos ka, kailangang* breadwinner *ka, kasi balang araw ikaw yung magpapaaral sa mga kapatid na nakakabata sa yo"* (If you are the eldest, you have to obtain a degree, you have to be the breadwinner because one day,

you will send younger siblings to school). And a respondent accepted the family's advice: *"Mag-aral nang mabuti..mapaunlad ang pamilya bago mag-asawa,"* (Study hard... establish the welfare of the family before getting married), and another even emphasized that "family first before anything else."

Parental Expectations of Adolescents

The roles that the adolescents reportedly portrayed in the family are generally based on the parents' expectations of them, such as academic achievement, assistance in household chores, and financial obligations. Nonetheless, there were also parental expectations of adolescents that pertain to their appearance, conduct, and peer relationships.

More than the expectation of assistance in household chores, the respondents' parents expected the adolescents to study hard, in order to prepare them for their future. A few said that their parents had very definite ideas regarding their college course (e.g., become a teacher), but in general, parents had no specific course in mind, but instead had a general advice that they should do well and eventually help the family financially (i.e., "Graduate, get a job and give financial support to family.")

Adolescents reported that they made most of the decisions regarding their clothing (i.e., what kind or style of clothing to wear), although their parents would sometimes voice their disapproval over some of their choices. The same was true when it came to their choice of friends - this was primarily the domain and decision of the adolescent. Nonetheless, they mentioned that they introduced their friends to their parents in order to show that the friends they chose are responsible and trustworthy, indicating some need for continued parental approval of these choices.

Because they were not in school, the out-of-school youth respondents' responsibilities included the following: a) help with the day-to-day chores, b) contribute to the family economically, and c) not to be a burden either emotionally or economically to their parents. The decision to discontinue schooling seemed to be both personal and practical; for most respondents, it was a combination of having academic difficulties as well as financial difficulties (e.g., not being able to afford tuition and books, or the desire to work and help the family). Most of the respondents aspired to go back to school but only if certain conditions are reached, such as financial stability for the family. Most said that this might be difficult to do as their current status as volunteers in the community and wage-earners might be hard to give up, along with the continued instability of the family's economic status.

Whereas most of the homosexual adolescent respondents claimed that their parents have fully accepted them, the majority still experienced very clear restrictions regarding their sexuality. Gender-appropriate behavior and conduct were expected of them. Most were not allowed to bring dates or partners home, or to even mention them, particularly in the presence of fathers. Most were asked to "tone down" mannerisms and speech inflections that were stereotypically associated with the "parlor gay." Clothing was also an issue (i.e., they were not allowed to wear feminine clothing). One respondent, however, presented an exception to parental issues about homosexuality as his parents accept his homosexuality (e.g., his mother expects to be privy to all of his relationships, and even allows his boyfriend to visit at home).

Values Transmitted by the Family

Adolescents reported that the primary message, which is consistently communicated by parents and other family members, was the importance of family. They cited the values of family warmth and cohesion: *"kapag may* celebrations *ang saya kasi buo kami, madami kami"*(if there are celebrations, we are happy to be together); mutual support: *"tinutulungan ko sila, tinutulungan din ako,* exchange *lang yan"* (I help them and in return, they also extend help to me); respect and obedience to parents: *"huwag daw sumagot"*(do not answer back) and "we should obey our parents, and we should study hard"); and peace and harmony in the family: *"hindi nag-aaway-away"* (not fighting each other). They received praise from family members when they behaved according to these family values. They have learned from their family to prioritize one's own family despite occasional disagreements and misunderstanding. The following response summarized this: *"kahit mali siya, i-*correct *pag nasa loob ng bahay, pero pagdating sa labas hindi mo siya puwedeng ilaglag dahil ikaw ang kakampi... mas importante ang* family" (a family member's wrongdoing should be dealt with inside the home and not outside, family members are allies and should not let each other down because family is more important).

The values of education and hard work conveyed to majority of participants were also related to upholding the family values and achieving the family goals. This was evident in the response: *"Yung kapatid ko na panganay, maaga nag-asawa kaya ako dapat magpatuloy sa pangarap ng magulang na makatapos at magkatrabaho para makatulong sa pamilya."* (My eldest sibling got married early so I am tasked to continue my parents' dreams to earn a degree and work in order to help the family). The adolescents

also learned to value religion because their parents teach them to "always keep in touch with God. *Lagi nilang sinasabi na* you run to God *pag may problema ka, saka siya yung unahin, at pag may* achievement *ka, siya yung unahin mo.* " (Parents say turn to God if there are problems as well as achievements.)

Social Concerns Affecting the Family

Some respondents expressed social concerns that are affecting their families, such as separation of parents and family members due to overseas work of a parent or marital infidelity, parental unemployment, and early pregnancy and marriage for the out-of-school-youth participants. These social concerns changed the family structure, and adversely affected family relationships and the adolescents' emotional well-being. For instance, an out-of-school-youth respondent expressed concerns and difficulties associated with early pregnancy and marriage such as "Father *ko galit sa akin simula ng mag-asawa ako na wala sa hustong gulang, hindi ko nasunod ang gusto nya na makapagtapos, ang hinanakit ko naman sa kanya hindi nagbibigay kapag walang* job *ang mister ko, walang panggastos*" (My father is angry with me because I got married early contrary to the plans he set out for me to earn a degree first; my resentment is he does not extend financial help if my husband is out of job) .

Nevertheless, the adolescents and their families dealt with these challenges through various adaptive strategies. For instance, a young adolescent from the rural area stated that frequent telephone calls from her mother, who worked overseas, was a way of maintaining their family's closeness. An out-of-school-youth participant narrated how her mother's lengthy work stint in Singapore adversely affected her family relationships and shared "*nagkaproblema sila, nambabae si Papa..tumira ako sa Papa ko kaso hindi ko naman* feel, *kasi mama ko ang lagi kong kasama noon*" (My parents had problems with my father's infidelity... I lived with my father but it was not to my liking because I was accustomed to being with my mother); but she eventually accepted the situation and forgave the father "*tatay ko pa rin siya kaya tatanggapin ko. Ganon ko kamahal yung pamilya ko.* " (He is still my father so I will accept this. That's how I love my family). A young adolescent from the urban area, who admitted to feeling envious of her cousins with intact families because "*sila isang pamilya tapos ako di ko makasama mga magulang ko*" (they are one family, I on the other hand could not be with my parents), nonetheless she reported learning to accept her family's situation. Another participant claimed that her family deals

with family issues by talking about them: *"si papa may anak sa labas...* *habang kumakain pinag-uusapan namin na talagang minsan may ganun* *kaya okay lang"* (My father has an illegitimate child but we talk about the situation and we discuss that these things really happen).

Another concern raised by adolescents from both rural and urban areas was parental unemployment. Their families coped by asking financial help from relatives and friends who are well off, that is *"umuutang sa* grandparents *or mga* aunties *o mga kaibigan"* (Ask financial help from grandparents, aunts or friends) and in the case of one participant, from the church *("umuutang sa Iglesia ni Cristo)*. Parental unemployment was usually the reason why the out-of-school-youth participants chose to look for a job so that they could contribute financially to their families.

Adolescents' Identity in the Family Context

The themes of the participants' identity in the family revolved around connection, support, and autonomy. Their expanded definition of family (e.g., family and close friends who care, help and support), their roles in the family (e.g., caregiver of siblings, helpers in household chores, financial providers), parental expectations (e.g., study, work and help the family), values (e.g., family values) and responses to social concerns about the family (e.g., communication, acceptance, assistance) served to define the adolescent self as connected to significant others through a mutuality of care and support. Being connected to family relationships emphasized the supportive identity of the adolescent participants, that is, a self that is not only a recipient of emotional and financial support from the family but also a giver of support to the family's needs and goals. Despite the strong connection to the family, the adolescents exercised their autonomy through asserting their personal expression (i.e., clothes, personal appearance), and choice of friends.

DISCUSSION

Defining the Family, Defining the Self

The adolescents' definition of the family went beyond a nuclear-extended dichotomy of kinship by considering living arrangement, emotional & financial support, and close friendships. Family was defined based on a pattern of reciprocal obligation or duty and the voluntary performance of family related roles. It was different from the traditional kinship definition of family where family is based on blood relations (Medina, 1991).

Redefining the conventional meaning of family allowed the adolescents to reconfigure their notion of family relationships to account for their psychosocial needs, expectations, and values.

By expanding what family means to them, adolescents revealed their own identity through what they value in family relationships, which are connection, intimacy, care and support. Redefining what family was seemed to be an exercise of autonomy because they can choose to include who and what is important to them based on their own notions of what family is supposed to mean. The adolescents in this study had the liberty to form relationships in order to fulfill their needs for support and belongingness. Moreover, expanding what family means served to compensate for the absence, lack of financial support or emotional unavailability of a real parent. The knowledge of having someone there, even if non-kin or non-parent, could fulfill some of their needs for material and emotional support. The adolescents could harness resources from non-kin or non parent as was evident in a study by Cristobal et al.(2007) who found that adolescents expressed happiness when friends stand in place of an unavailable or otherwise unresponsive parent. Lanuza (2001) went as far as calling the "peer group as a surrogate institution of the family" (p.6).

Gilligan (1982) has shown through her study and theory of women's identity development that defining one's self through relationship was as valid as forming identity through autonomy. The Filipino adolescents, regardless of gender, could form their identity based on their connection to others, hence, showed the self in relation to others, specifically the family. This relatedness was supported in a decontextualized portrayal of the Filipino adolescent self as having predominantly relational self-aspects, and more interdependent in terms of self-construal (Peña-Alampay, 2003). Given the broader societal concerns that affect the family, this identity of connectedness allowed the adolescents to address these challenges by meaningfully locating the self in a cluster of mutually supportive, caring relationships.

Family as a Continuing Source of Socialization

The adolescents' perceived roles in the family were similar to previous studies. However, apart from viewing these roles in terms of the process of socialization based on gender roles (Liwag et al., 1998), it could be seen as a portrayal of a supportive self that is integrated in the family. Family integration allowed family members to have meaningful relationships by investing themselves in common goals (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). When adolescents accepted family goals (i.e., the parental

expectations concerning educational attainment, work success, financial support) as legitimate goals for themselves, it also helped them to clarify their self-definition in terms of the commitments they want to make for the family. The values of family relationships, academic achievement, and religious beliefs were sources of meaning that the Filipino family developed in the youth to provide structure and purpose to their lives.

Without reducing the "agentic" capacity of the adolescents, the family influenced their identity formation through parental expectations of what they should do and what they should be in the present as well as in the future. This contextual basis of Filipino youth identity development could be understood through the concept of parents as "identity agents" (Schachter & Ventura, 2008), that is, individuals who interact with the youth in order to participate in their identity formation as well as mediate broader societal influences on the process of identity formation. The parental expectations influenced the identity of the adolescents by allowing them to integrate the goals of the family into personal goals that they can project into the future, with the awareness that these goals serve both their own needs and the family's needs for security and support.

Despite the changing family structure, family socialization remained to be a major source of socialization of adolescents because of the inclusion of the extended family (e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles). The experiences of the adolescents in their families and their process of identity development showed that the socialization goals of role preparation and performance, and cultivation of sources of meaning (Arnett, 1995) are met. The family prepared adolescents by socializing them to learn gender roles and birth order roles (e.g., Liwag et al., 1998), occupational roles, and roles in social institutions such as marriage (e.g., Sta. Maria, Resurreccion, Yabut, & Tan-Mansukhani, & Yabut, 2007) and parenthood.

There were differences in roles and expectations based on gender and birth positions for both rural and urban samples. The role of a caregiver to younger siblings usually fell on the female respondents who were the eldest. This was similar to the results found in a comprehensive survey of literature on child rearing practices in the Philippines (Liwag et al., 1998) and in western literature in that oldest adolescent siblings were consistently ranked first as a source of support for interpersonal and academic activities (Tucker, McHale, & Crouter, 2001). It would seem that there were more parental demands and higher expectations set for firstborns. Older adolescents often experienced greater demands to assist their family (Goodnow, 1988).The boundaries of what household tasks should be performed by males and females were less definite. Liwag et al. (1998) pointed out that there is an

alternative view showing a shift from gender-based task assignments to a more gender-neutral one in which children, regardless of gender are expected to be equipped with the right attitude and skill to perform household chores. Ogena (1999) also observed that adolescents endorsed the participation of males in household tasks that were in the past customarily performed by females.

Adolescents' Positive Identity in the Family Context

The values of family, education, hard work, and religion that are transmitted by the family to the adolescents were consistent with previous studies (Gastardo-Conaco et al., 2003; Porio et al., 1975). These values, which are also consistent with the parental expectations, family goals, and adolescents' roles, provided not only guidance to the adolescents on what identity commitments to make but also provided support and coherence to the definitions that the family contribute to the adolescent's process of identity formation. Hence, family integration was supported, as shown by the willingness of the adolescents to undertake the tasks, duties and responsibilities related to their assigned roles in the family, and to explore adaptive strategies to respond to difficulties and problems encountered in the family. These tasks and strategies provided opportunities for them to learn and practice skills in order to develop competence in different areas, such as social and emotional competence, intellectual competence, and vocational competence (Huebner, 2003). These different domains of competence would contribute to their growth and development, and prepare them for adulthood.

Although the themes of connection and support in adolescents' identity highlighted family integration, the theme of autonomy provided a space for the individuality of adolescent to emerge in the context of family. This was supported in the findings of Pena-Alampay (2003) which showed that although the Filipino adolescents' self-construal is more interdependent, they nonetheless endorse independent attitudes and values (i.e., self-assertion, achievement and autonomy) to a moderate degree. In the present study, the areas where self-assertion occurs pertained to choice of friends and personal expression (e.g., clothing), and were generally granted autonomy by parents. However, autonomy in choosing and expressing the adolescents' homosexual orientation might require a process of negotiation with Filipino parents.

The Filipino adolescents' identity fostered the development of initiative as Larson (2000) prescribed for positive development; however, their process of developing initiative partially stemmed from and interacted with the strong

influences of the family. The identity portrayed in the context of the family showed a strong sense of initiative (e.g., taking their duties and responsibilities seriously, seeking productive ways to respond to problems in the family) that was guided by the values transmitted by the family. The specific context of the family elicited the articulation of a positive, embedded identity of adolescents.

Implications

Findings of this study have implications on the role of family processes in the positive development of adolescents, such as in their role taking and enactment of supportive roles (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009), family communication processes (Carandang & Lee-Chua, 2008; Grotvevtant & Cooper, 1986), parental autonomy granting to adolescents (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2001), parents and grandparents as identity agents regarding specific areas of identity commitments (Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Training programs on empowering the youth, parenting skills and communication with adolescents that facilitated positive development and positive family relationships may be offered to conflicting parent-child relationships or families.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, Filipino adolescents form a positive identity in the family context based on connection, support, and autonomy. This family-embedded identity involves a synthesis of their redefinition of family and their family's definition of them through supporting roles in the family, parental expectations of fulfilling family goals at present and in the future, and guiding values. Providing assistance and fulfilling a supportive role in the family is an important and meaningful activity for them in which they learn to be responsible and feel valued by the family. It allows the adolescents to balance family integration and individuality, and access resources and capacities to deal adaptively with adolescent developmental concerns and family difficulties in the midst of challenging societal concerns. The continuing process of developing a positive sense of self in different contexts will prepare the adolescents to engage in a widening circle of demands and opportunities for growth and adulthood.

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AUTHOR NOTES