

RESILIENCE AND FAMILISM

The Dynamic Nature of Families
in the Philippines

Edited by Veronica L. Gregorio,
Clarence M. Batan and Sampson Lee Blair

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES
IN FAMILY RESEARCH

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RESILIENCE AND FAMILISM

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RESEARCH VOLUME 23

**RESILIENCE AND FAMILISM:
THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF
FAMILIES IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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Enrique G. Oracion is concurrently Professor of Anthropology and Sociology and the Director for Research of Silliman University in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental. He earned his Bachelor (1980, cum laude) and Master of Arts (1985) degrees majoring in Sociology from Silliman University while he completed his PhD in Anthropology (2006) from the University of San Carlos in Cebu City. He was also a United Board Fellow assigned at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2011) and Baylor University, Texas, USA (2012). He is a regular member of the National Research Council of the Philippines and a past Board Member of the Anthropological Association of the Philippines or the Ugnayang PangAghamtao and the Philippine Sociological Society. He was a zonal and qualifier recipient of the REPUBLICA (Research and Publication Award) of the Commission on Higher Education in 2005 and 2016, respectively. He is the Community Specialist of the Silliman University South Negros BFAR-USAID Fish Right Program (2018–2023). Specifically, he coordinated the development of the Right Fishing Modules to augment science lessons in basic education, the Fish Tiangge initiative that introduces livelihood to women through fish consolidation and fish processing, and the rapid fish stock assessment tool based on fishers' perception. His disciplinary interest is environmental anthropology and he covers various issues and dimensions related to human–environment interaction. Related to his contribution to this book, he had published about child labor in fishing and intergenerational support to marine conservation. His other publications include Negrito adaptation, gender and women issues, education and service-learning, ecotourism and marine protected area management, cultural heritage management, aging and health, and culture of disaster and resiliency.

A. M. Leal Rodriguez is a PhD candidate currently affiliated with the University of Auckland as a Faculty of Arts doctoral scholar. A product of the Department of Sociology and the School of Critical Studies in Education, her PhD project focuses on masculinities in the global south, gender, and higher education, or universities (University of Auckland Doctoral Research Fund). Working as a feminist activist with almost 10 years of experience in the development and education sector led her to decolonial and post-structuralist theory. She has presented her work to numerous organizations across the globe (the New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference, the Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Contacts and Continuities: 500 Years of Iberian-Asian Relations Conference, the American Education Research Association, and the Women's and Gender Studies Association of the Philippines). The textbook she co-authored, *Gender and Society: The Whys of Women, Their Oppressions,*

and Paths to Liberation, is being used by higher education institutions for their curriculum on gender studies. She has also worked on projects focusing on ethnicity and youth achievement in education (Performance-Based Research Fund, Tertiary Education Union New Zealand) and exploring political gift-giving in the context of (Marsden Fund, Royal Society of New Zealand). She now resides in Aotearoa New Zealand where she burns rubber through cycling and touches rocks through climbing, to chase inspiration.

Tricia Olea Santos is an adjunct Professor at Baylor University, Robbins College of Health and Human Sciences, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. Her primary area of expertise is in healthy aging and adult cognitive-linguistic disorders. Over the past decade, she has been involved in research that explores discourse in healthy aging, dementia, and aphasia, cultural differences in illness narratives, renegotiating identity in aphasia, caregiving in dementia, health literacy in minority populations and stroke patients, and life participation after stroke. In addition to teaching at the undergraduate, graduate, and clinical levels, she also provides professional continuing education webinars for speech-language pathologists. She maintains a clinical caseload in acute care and inpatient rehabilitation hospital settings involving the assessment and intervention of adult neurogenic disorders. She has co-authored journal articles and a book chapter on topics pertinent to discourse in healthy aging, aphasia, and dementia. She has published her works in a variety of peer-reviewed journals, such as *Aphasiology*, *Folia et Phoniatica*, *Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation*, *Journal of Aging and Social Change*, and *International Journal of Speech-language Pathology*. Her work has been presented nationally and internationally at speech-language pathology and gerontology conventions.

Hanna K. Ulatowska is Professor Emerita at the University of Texas at Dallas, School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Callier Center for Communication Disorders. Her primary area of research is neurolinguistics, and more specifically, investigations of discourse in aphasia, dementia, and advanced aging. The focus of her research is the characterization of the communicative competence of these populations and how it relates to preservations and impairments of both linguistic and cognitive functioning. Another research focus deals with the effects of different language types on the disruption of language in aphasia which stems from my investigations of aphasia in Polish. In the past, she has investigated discourse in African American, Hispanic-American, and Filipino American elderly. She has also been involved in studying the representation of camp experiences in narratives told by elderly camp survivors in Poland. Her recent research has involved how communication in testimonies from American World War II veterans can be used in collective memory by examining autobiographical memory, emotional memory, and life review of the veterans in evaluations of war experiences. She is presently studying patterns of recovery from aphasia in writers from different cultures.

Jofel D. Umandap was a marketing professional, with a Management undergraduate degree from Ateneo de Manila University and a post-graduate degree in Commerce from Macquarie University, before deciding to pursue a career as a psychologist. She completed her MA in Psychology from the Ateneo de Manila University and is currently pursuing her PhD in Clinical Psychology, also at the same university. Her areas of interest are marriage and family therapy, personal growth, mindfulness, and self-compassion. She is also involved in developing programs and modules, as well as in facilitating workshops for psychoeducation and brief intervention programs. She is currently a licensed psychologist practicing therapy and training at the Ateneo Bulatao Center for Psychological Services, the research and training arm of the Psychology Department, at UGAT Foundation, an organization with psycho-spiritual interventions for Filipino grassroots families, and at the Life Science Center for Health and Wellness. She is also a part-time Lecturer at the Department of Psychology at Ateneo de Manila University, teaching Abnormal Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and a core formation course, Understanding the Self.

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FOREWORD

The evolving nature of families across the world is continuously subjected to social changes, cultural shifts, and global flows. In our contemporary world, the dynamics and confluence of factors shaping and influencing “families” remain an intriguing facet of both scholarship and policies. This sociological fascination roots in the central interest of/in knowledge and/or the lack of it in understanding the nature, contours, and textures of families, especially in societies that are historically colonized and persistently marred by problematic socio-political and economical tensions such as the Philippines.

The Philippines is a unique country, and its distinct history and culture provide an intriguing context for families. Comprising over 7,000 islands, the Philippines has been visited by numerous groups in its prehistoric times, while over the past five centuries, Spanish colonization influenced the course of Filipino culture, particularly regarding religion. Even after the formal establishment of the Republic of the Philippines in 1946, American cultural influence persisted. Its long history, coupled with its peculiar population distribution across thousands of islands, has resulted in a culture which is decidedly familistic. Filipino families maintain perhaps the strongest family bonds of any culture and have shown a unique ability to persevere, even when faced with the direst of circumstances.

This multidisciplinary volume of CPFR brings into focus a comprehensive collection of the dynamic nature of families in the Philippines. Generally, we ask: Why do Filipino families maintain perhaps the strongest family bonds of any culture? How has this shown a unique ability to persevere, even when faced with the direst of circumstances?

MAIN THEMES OF THE VOLUME

Our journey in soliciting academic responses to these questions led us to this collection covering a broad range of topics including Filipino family’s social demography and various dimensions of “familism” in contemporary Filipino families such as parenthood, care provisions, families across sectors (overseas Filipino workers or OFWs, farmers, and fisherfolks), and emerging familial representations. By looking at census and survey data, Jeffrey B. Abalos details his findings in the lead chapter, “A Demographic Portrait of the Filipino Family: A Glimpse from the Recent Past.” In this work, he examined the following: marriage, cohabitation, and other types of relationships, rise of non-marriage, fertility and fertility preferences, childlessness, attitudes toward the family and other relationships, and the living arrangements and exchange of support among the elderly. One of Abalos’ fitting conclusions for this volume is that

while the Filipino family may have changed in size and structure and how it is formed and dissolved, it has remained constant in how it values its members, particularly the young and the old.

Drawing from multidisciplinary views, the empirical descriptions in this collection also draw attention to the underlying “resilience” of/in Filipino families relative to the multifaceted issues explored in this volume. We will discuss the four themes in the succeeding subsections.

Narratives of Parenthood

Parenthood is one of the longest stages of one’s life. Chapters 2–5 will explore the different experiences of parenthood in the Philippines. Samuel I. Cabbuag, in “The Road to Visibility: IVF and Motherhood Journey of Filipino Influencers,” discusses the taboo topic of childbearing via in vitro fertilization (IVF). Through web scraping, he coded 438 comments from YouTube videos of Filipino influencers who opted to bear children via IVF. He argues that through the visibility labor of influencers, the phenomenon of childbearing via IVF is not only promoted as a viable, if not acceptable procreative process, but also perpetuated as an in/accessible procedure in the Philippines.

From YouTube influencers, the volume will then move to a different group in Chapter 3: incarcerated women. Romulo Nieva Jr’s work, “Pregnancy, Motherhood, and Family: Stories Behind Bars,” is based on his PhD project wherein he conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with women who had experienced pregnancy in prison. Nieva suggests that experiences of mothering and childbearing for incarcerated women are negative and complex. He finds that “women’s institutionally imposed ‘prisoner identity’ overshadows their pregnancy status and mothering role, exacerbated by their experiences of systemic scarcity, restricted contact with family, and limited autonomy.”

Partnership (or its absence) in connection to parenthood is also an important factor in family formation. In Chapter 4, “Acceptance Is Key: Toward a Framework for Understanding Serial Cohabitation,” Veronica L. Gregorio explores how serial cohabiters with children, in response to social stigma, exhibit resiliency toward stepfamily formation and committed sexual relationships. She conceptualizes “family acceptance” which refers to embracing the fluidity, reconfigurations, and “imperfections” of cohabiters’ newly formed family and “community acceptance” which covers the same affirmation from friends, neighbors, and extended relatives who are considered as relevant others by serial cohabiters.

The above chapters which focus on women’s experiences will be complemented by Chapter 5, “Selected Cases of Teenage Fatherhood in the Philippines: An Analysis of Risks and Resilience,” by Joselito G. Gutierrez, Tisha Isabelle M. De Vergara, and Clarence M. Batan. The authors interrogate the consequences of sexual behaviors on the well-being of teenage fathers in the contexts of their families of orientation and families of procreation. The authors argue that the risks of teenage fatherhood in the Philippines are relatively mitigated by conservative culture and religious orientation that leads to the experiences of “natauhan” (realization), “pinangatawanan” (accountability), and “pinanindigan” (owning responsibility).

Care Provisions in/From the Family

As lifespans continue to increase, the chances of facing shocks during middle and old ages also increase. Families face sudden shocks like losing jobs, natural calamities, and health issues, among others. In such times, how do Filipino family members take charge and continue with their lives? The second theme of the volume, Care provisions in/from the family, will explore this question.

In Chapter 6, “ICT-mediated Familial Care in Turbulent Times: Filipinos’ Subjectivities, Virtual Intimacy, and Resilience amid Social Change,” Derrace Garfield McCallum draws on data collected as part of a multi-sited transnational ethnography. The work revolves around the lives of Filipino migrants who live in Japan and their family members who live in the Philippines. McCallum explains how transnational families preserve and nurture their collective commitments using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). He argues that families maximize ICTs not just to (re)enact and (re)create mundane existences but also to recognize, celebrate, and display significant family milestones.

Is it possible to turn “caringness” and “responsibleness” into a personality? Rizason L. Go Tian-Ng and Jofel D. Umandap’s chapter, “An Exposition of the Multidimensionality of the Tagasalo Personality,” uses Philippine indigenous psychology literature to provide an in-depth theoretical-historical development of the Tagasalo personality. The Tagasalo is the family member who “catches” or “saves” the family from the different shocks as mentioned earlier. Using case study reviews and thematic analysis of reflective essays, Go Tian-Ng and Umandap propose new dimensions of internalizing and externalizing behaviors that serve to alleviate the distress experienced by the Tagasalo.

The next chapter, “Maintaining Personhood and Identity in Dementia: Families as Partners in Care,” focuses on informal caregivers of persons with dementia. Tricia Olea Santos, Hanna K. Ulatowska, and Carla Krishan A. Cuadro’s work probes into the characteristics and structure of the Filipino family, and the challenges in caring for a loved one with dementia. Aside from turning down career opportunities to stay at home full time, these family caregivers (mostly women) are also designing the day-by-day schedule of their elderly parents using family photo albums, TV shows, prayer meetings, gardening, and even music-related activities. The authors also analyze cultural and relational factors that influence dementia care and the preservation of identity in dementia.

Sexual identities in relation to health status are often analyzed in terms of individual well-being, coping mechanisms, and access to services. The work “Sexual Identity Visibility and Compounding Stigma in the Familial Context: Life Histories Among Filipino MSMs Living with HIV” by Jerome V. Cleofas and Dennis Erasga provides a different perspective by focusing on the family of men living with HIV. The authors partnered with The Project Red Ribbon, a community-based HIV organization, to recruit and conduct key interviews with 31 participants. Based on the results, Cleofas and Erasga conceptualized sexual identity visibility in the family (SIVF) as the nature of the family’s consciousness and acceptance of the informants’ sexual identity/ies and further posit that SIVF shapes an individual’s sexual health across the lifespan.

The last work under the theme on care provisions is “Family Relationship, Mental Well-being, and Life Satisfaction During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Mediation Study Among Filipino Graduate Students.” With school and work moving online for long periods of time, the quality of life within households abruptly and steadily changed. Drawing from an online survey among 337 graduate students enrolled during the second year of the pandemic, Ryan Michael F. Oducado and Jerome V. Cleofas examined the three family relationship domains (cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict), their predictive relationships with life satisfaction, and the mediating role of mental well-being on these relationships.

Families of OFWs, Farmers, and Fisherfolks

The next theme is sectoral, with a focus on families of overseas Filipino workers or OFWs, farmers, and fisherfolks. In the exploratory work, “Response and Coping Mechanism of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Children to Parents’ Separation,” Sunshine Therese S. Alcantara focused on the social and emotional costs of migration to Filipino families. She analyzed the experiences of OFW children with separated parents due to marital infidelity and found how they process their emotions to eventually accept their parents’ decisions. Alcantara also emphasized the role of peers in OFW children’s coping process. For future research on the same sample group, she recommends comparing mechanisms between male and female children.

As international migration continues, will farmers continue to work in the fields? In Chapter 12, the contribution of goods to the economy and the reproduction of the next generation of farmers was problematized by Carlo S. Gutierrez. His comparative work, “The Family as a Farm Institution: Cases in Japan and the Philippines,” factors in the demographic changes, role of civil society organizations, and pluriactivity of households in the survival of smallholdings. More importantly, Gutierrez emphasized that in the Philippines, “the absence of an effort by the state for a farm industrialization project led to primarily family-based farming.”

Fishing livelihood is as important as farming, especially in an island nation like the Philippines. The collective decision of rural families to maintain or sell their farms has similarities with the collective decision of fishing families to stay in the sector or to explore other options. Chapter 13, “Parental Livelihood Preference for Children Among Municipal Fishing Families in South Negros, Philippines” by Enrique G. Oracion, will focus on this issue. Using a survey covering 23 coastal barangays, he found that

while fishing is perceived now as risky and hard because of the accumulated impacts of climate change and the persisting problem of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, it is always a ready option for the livelihood of their children if they would fail to get quality education and secure better employment opportunities.

Representations of the Filipino Family

The last theme in the volume will underscore representations of the Filipino family in three aspects: family-orientedness, masculinity vis-à-vis fatherhood, and filial piety toward the elderly.

The chapter of Janus Isaac V. Nolasco, “Self, Family, and Democracy: Individualism and Collectivism in Two Contemporary Filipino Family Films,” provides a refreshing take on democracy and its political resonance in Filipino families. By analyzing hierarchical siblingship dynamics and family relations in the films *Kung Ayaw Mo, Huwag Mo* (1998) and *Four Sisters and a Wedding* (2013), Nolasco argues that such “films seek to articulate, manage, and resolve the tensions between self and family, autonomy and dependence, individualism and collectivism.”

By engaging with Sikolohiyang Pilipino or Indigenous Filipino Psychology, A. M. Leal Rodriguez traced the construction of masculinity vis-à-vis fatherhood in the Philippines. The chapter, “*Tunay Na Lalaki*/True Manhood in the Philippines: Historical Development, Identity Formations, and Family Contexts,” based on a critical review of literature, factored in colonial history and informal systems that form such manhood. Rodriguez proposes to explore Filipino manhood using the banig (woven mat) as representation. Through this banig, “one can dissect how different facets of manhood are woven together to further the country’s machismo, one that pervades different powerful institutions.”

Finally, the last and closing chapter of the volume discusses filial piety toward the elderly. The chapter is symbolic on its own as it was co-authored by pioneering Filipino family sociologist Belen T. Medina with her daughter, sociologist and Asian Studies expert Maria Cecilia T. Medina. Chapter 16, “The Elderly in the Filipino Family,” reviews the importance of intergenerational solidarity (adult child and elderly parent) for the well-being of the elderly. The authors also explain in the chapter why and how institutionalization of the elderly appears to be a last resort, to complement rather than replace the welfare function of the family.

THE FUTURE OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF FAMILY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The first and sole book on *Filipino Family* (1991, with 3rd ed. in 2015) was written by Belen T. Medina. Prior to its launch, many scholars from various fields have also published articles and book chapters that touch on the issues and challenges that Filipino families have faced. This volume is however the first attempt to put together more recent works that highlight the complex changes and relationships among Filipino families, as mediated by technology, and influenced by cultural shifts, economic conditions, and even by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The collection is multidisciplinary but with most authors (15 out of 23) and all three editors coming from the field of sociology. The authors and editors also came from different academic stages – from graduate students, and recent PhD graduates, to postdoctoral fellows, and professors who are already established in their areas. Hence, the topics of interest are not just diverse but also fresh or even controversial. The empirical works, theoretical contributions, and critical reviews in this volume will be most useful if read as a whole collection. With that, we would like to thank all the contributors and anonymous reviewers for their commitment to this collection.

What do we have to say after the completion of this volume? First, parenting among Filipinos will continue to evolve and be increasingly resilient. Second, more work is needed about sexual minorities in family contexts. Third, generational perspectives in different sectors will persistently be tied to economic conditions. And lastly, while hierarchies and gender inequalities are recognized and questioned, familism among Filipinos is here to stay.

As reflected in this work, the future of the sociology of family in the Philippines is in good hands. There is a lot of work to do in enriching the field. We hope to invite more scholars to write, collaborate, and produce related works – looking forward to the next volume!