Changes in the Levels of Relatedness in Identity Exploration among Japanese Female Late Adolescents.

This study examines the changes of relatedness levels in identity exploration among female adolescents along with the factors associated with the changes. The expanded Ego Identity Interview, which covers the domains of occupation, friendships, dating, and sex roles, was administered to university students (N=31) during their first semester as juniors and seniors and then again later in their senior year. Significant changes were noted from the lower to the higher levels in relatedness for three domains of occupation, friendships, and dating. The results suggest that the levels of relatedness develop during university years, and that the period between the first semester as juniors to the senior year is especially important to the changes from the lower to the higher levels in relatedness. The results for the factors associated with changes suggest that events in the proximal contexts for university students in Japan primarily influence their identity exploration from a relational viewpoint. As expected, job-seeking activity was the most crucial factor of the level change. It concludes that for university students in Japan, job-seeking activities contribute to personality development as well as getting a job in adolescence. (JDM)
Changes in the Levels of Relatedness in Identity Exploration among Japanese Female Late Adolescents

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Abstract

This study longitudinally examined changes of relatedness levels in identity exploration and identified the factors associated with the changes among female adolescents. The expanded Ego Identity Interview, which covered four domains of occupation, friendships, dating, and sex roles, was administered to 31 university students three times: the first semester as juniors and as seniors, and the latter semester as seniors.

Significant changes to the higher level in relatedness were observed in three domains except sex roles. Main factors associated with changes are “job seeking/career decision” which was primarily and the most common factor in the movement to both higher and lower levels, and “changes in relationships with friends/dates” which was remarkably found in the movement to the higher level.

Those results support the recent view emphasizing relational aspects in identity and provide some positive proof for the identity formation process associated with relatedness.

Introduction

Background

• The current view of identity researchers emphasizes that identity formation occurs not only by separation from others but also in relational contexts (e.g., Archer, 1993; Graafsma et al., 1994; Josselson, 1994; Kroger, 1989).

Identity formation from a viewpoint of relatedness

• From a relational viewpoint, identity exploration can be conceptualized as the process of considering, making use of, and negotiating with others to make decisions about important life choices (Sugimura, 1996).

• Two levels of relatedness in identity exploration were formulated based on the relative sophistication of social cognitive development (Sugimura, 1998):
  —Lower: Adolescents are unable to recognize one’s and others’ points of view, or just copy others’ points of view. They have little representation of
relationships, and are not able to elaborate what persons are involved in the
decision-making process and how they function in the process.

—*Higher*: Adolescents are able to recognize one’s and others’ points of view and
to resolve disagreements by mutual regulation between themselves and others.
They construct the representation of relationships between self and others, and
elaborate what persons are involved in their decision-making process and how
they function in the process.

**Aims**

- To longitudinally examine changes of relatedness levels in identity exploration.
- To identify the factors associated with changes in relatedness levels among female university students.

**Design**

- Because it is suggested that job seeking activity promotes identity formation among Japanese university students (Shimoyama, 1986; Takamura 1997), the present study focuses on three occasions before and after their job seeking period:
  —Time 1: the first semester as juniors (before job seeking)
  —Time 2: the first semester as seniors (in job seeking)
  —Time 3: the latter semester as seniors (after job seeking)

**Method**

**Participants**

- Female late adolescents (N = 31) at age of 20 to 21, who were third year students of a national four year university in Japan.
- They were unmarried and from two-parent families, and had at least one sibling.
- The social status of participants' parents was upper middle class.

**Measures**

- Levels of relatedness
The expanded version of the Ego Identity Interview (Grotevant & Cooper, 1981), which covered four domains of occupation, friendships, dating, and sex roles, was used at all three interview points.

- The Ego Identity Interview was expanded to include two types of questions about relationships:
  (a) Questions to identify the persons involved in the exploration process and their functions in the process
  (b) Questions to probe the contents of the regulation between self and others in the exploration process

- Examples of questions in the domain of occupation
  (a) What people or experience have been major influences on your plans for the future?; You told me that _____ influenced your plans for the future; what sort of roles do you think that he/she played when you made the decision?
  (b) Have you and your parents ever disagreed about your future plans? How?; [If disagreed:] Was this disagreement resolved in some way?; [If resolved:] How did you solve this disagreement?; [If not resolves:] How are you trying to solve this disagreements with your parents? (Probe: Can you give me any examples of the interaction between you and your parents? What did you say to your parents at that time? Why did you do in this way?)

- Factors associated with changes in the levels of relatedness
  At Time 2 and Time 3, participants were asked to report the reason when level change seems to have occurred.

- Reported factors were classified into one of the following six categories:
(a) Job seeking/career decision
(b) Changes in relationships with friends/dates
(c) University/everyday life event
(d) Internal change
(e) Lack of opportunities
(f) Unknown

Coding procedure
- By using a coding manual, each interview was coded as the higher and lower levels of relatedness for each domain (reliability $M = 78.3\%$).
- Where the level change occurred, the factor associated with that change was classified into one of six categories by using a coding manual (reliability 81.8\%).

Results
Changes in the levels of relatedness in identity exploration
- A binomial test was used to analyze the change in the relatedness level for each domain (see Table 1).

- The significant changes from the lower to the higher levels were observed in three domains: from Time 1 to Time 2 ($p = .020$) for occupation, from Time 1 to Time 2 ($p = .035$) and Time 1 to Time 3 ($p = .031$) for friendships, and Time 1 to Time 3 ($p = .020$) for dating.

Factors associated with the changes in levels of relatedness
- The total number of participants who changed to the higher level from Time 1 to Time 2 and/or Time 2 to Time 3 was 31 and that who changed to the lower level was 18 (see Table 2).

- Two factors were mainly associated with the changes.
  - "Job seeking/career decision" contributed primarily to the changes to both
higher and lower levels. It is noteworthy that this factor was found not only in occupation but also in other domains.

—“Changes in relationships with friends/dates” was a secondary factor of changes to the higher level.

Conclusions

• There were significant changes from the lower to the higher levels in relatedness for three domains of occupation, friendships, and dating. The results suggest that the levels of relatedness develop during university years, and that the period between the first semester as juniors (Time 1) and as seniors (Time 2) is especially important to the changes from the lower to the higher levels in relatedness.

• The results for the factors associated with changes suggest that events in the proximal contexts for university students in Japan (i.e., “job seeking/career decision” and “changes in relationships with friends/dates”) primarily influence their identity exploration from a relational viewpoint.

• As was expected, job seeking activity was the most crucial factor of the level change: It affected the changes in the relatedness level and played an important role not only for occupation but also for other domains. The results suggest that, for university students in Japan, job seeking activity contributes to personality development as well as getting a job in adolescence.

References


**Acknowledgements**

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Kuze, Takeshi Sugimura, and Masanori Urakami, and Kazuyo Takamura for their helpful suggestions on this work, and Shinji Nagamine and Dr. Atsushi Oshio for their research assistance.
Table 1. Changes in the levels of relatedness for each domain (N = 31)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Time 1 to Time 2</th>
<th>Time 2 to Time 3</th>
<th>Time 1 to Time 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex roles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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*p < .05

10 9 11
Table 2. Factors associated with changes in the levels of relatedness for each domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain Category</th>
<th>Changes in relationships with friends/dates</th>
<th>University/ everyday life event</th>
<th>Internal change</th>
<th>Lack of opportunities</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Occupation</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex roles</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
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Change to the higher level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain Category</th>
<th>Change to the lower level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Dating</td>
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<td>Sex roles</td>
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<tr>
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