Reflections on My Research During Forty or More Years

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Twenty-five years have passed since I entered the teaching profession in Juntendo, and 40 or more years since I began to engage in research in graduate school. My major is psychology and my themes of research were classified into two topics. The first topic is moral development. I had been working on this topic since my thesis for my Master's degree, which was based on Kohlberg's theory, and the first research in Japan. I introduced his theory and carried out a number of studies related to moral development. I review the trends of psychological research on moral development as follows: 1. before Kohlberg, 2. Kohlberg's theory, and 3. current trends - after Kohlberg. The second topic is interpersonal framework, which is based mainly on Bowlby's attachment theory (internal working models (IWM), which is a mental representation and operates as a framework). I have carried out my research on nursing students in Juntendo as participants, and have been continuing these studies longitudinally after they graduated from university. I review adult attachment as follows: 1. Bowlby's adult attachment theory and related research, 2. the stability and changeability of IWM over the lifespan, and 3. factors contributing to IWM or adaptation in adulthood.

Key words: moral development, Kohlberg, IWM, adult attachment, longitudinal study

Twenty-five years have passed since I entered the teaching profession in Juntendo. I have taught psychology in Urayasu campus 21 years and in Sakura campus 4 years. Forty or more years have passed since I began to engage in research in graduate school. My themes of research were classified into two topics, as I explain below.

The first topic of my research is on moral development. I had been working on this topic since my thesis for my Master's degree, which I started in 1972 and was accepted in 1974. It was published in The Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology (Yamagishi, 1976) 1), which was the first article published in Japan that addressed Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which is now a well known theory that is universally accepted. I continued my research on this theme in my doctoral study and received my Doctor's degree from Tokyo University in 1994, titled "The empirical and theoretical studies about development of moral judgment".

The second topic of my research is on the relationship between interpersonal framework and interpersonal experience. This is based mainly on Bowlby's attachment theory, an internal working models (IWM) that is a mental representation operating as a framework. I have carried out my research using nursing students in Juntendo as participants, and have been continuing this research longitudinally even after they graduated from college or university. The longest case study in my research spanned over 20 and more years longitudinally, from adolescence to adulthood.

It has been my good fortune that my researches into these two themes have been published, and we succeeded in obtaining funds for the promotion of these publications from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Figure-1).

I give below a brief review of the general trend of the development of these two topics in psychology, which also, on occasion, includes reference to my own research on the subjects.
The trend of psychological research of moral development

1. Before Kohlberg

Psychological theories that attempt to explain moral development consist of three aspects: psychoanalytic theory, social learning theory and cognitive developmental theory.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory was the first to treat morality as a central issue in the psychological domain. He proposed that the superego, which is formed in the personality structure during the Oedipal period, becomes the source of our morality (Freud, 1923). Children form an Oedipus complex: libido towards the mother, aggression towards the father, and anxiety about punishment for these drives. In order to dilute this dangerous complex, children identify with their father. By doing so, they internalize the values and standards which parents show during child rearing, and they learn to obey their moral standards. They feel guilt when they deviate from parental standards or are tempted to do so.

According to the social learning theory, we learn appropriate behavior by conditioning, i.e., receiving reinforcement of our actions: endorsement of appropriate actions and disproval of inappropriate actions, and the norm is internalized to behave within the norm without negative reinforcement. Another learning mechanism is "modeling", where one learns to behave by observing another's behavior, as proposed by Bandura. He considered that both moral and immoral behavior, like aggression, moral judgment, and pro-social behaviors are learned by modeling (Bandura, 1969, 1971).

In both these theories, moral development is considered to be the internalization of a moral norm. The strength of that internalization, i.e., the degree of obedience to moral standards provides an index of one's moral development.

As opposed to these two theories, the cognitive developmental theory considers that the problem of development is how one recognizes morality or the reason for moral judgment, and why one protects such a norm, not the problem of the behavior whether to protect the norm or not. The article of Piaget (1932) became the start. He suggested the stage theory of morality from cognitive developmental theory that considers moral development as the problem of one's view of morality. During the heteronomous stage of morality, which is Piaget's lower stage, one considers an act that will be punished by authority to be bad. In the autonomous stage of morality, the higher stage, an act of breaking mutual trust is considered to be bad. For children, however, the criterion in the heteronomous morality is determined by the adult who has authority, whereas in autonomous morality, the criterion is determined by the mutual trust they agree by themselves.

2. Kohlberg's theory

Kohlberg expands and elaborates on Piaget's theory, proposing six stages of moral development, considering it a problem of rational cognition, how we think and make judgments on matters concerning morality (Kohlberg, 1969, 1971). Kohlberg considered that moral development is not a problem of the strength of internalization, but rather the way of internalization of how one considers moral standards and values.

Kohlberg uses a unique interview method, which asks what a main character should do in hypothesized moral dilemma, where moral values conflict. For example, he uses a dilemma in which a husband, whose wife is suffering from cancer, steals a necessary drug from a druggist, because he has no other means to obtain the drug that will save his wife. The druggist is only interested in making a profit from the sale of the drug. One's framework of rightness or morality is assessed from one's reasoning and judgment of these dilemmas. Kohlberg considered that there are six stages (cf. Table–1), that he thought are universal regardless.

Figure 1 The front cover of two books
of culture. He accepts that culture does influence moral judgment of what is right, but does not influence the reasoning behind judgment, or the framework of rightness.

According to Kohlberg’s theory, the direction of moral development seems to be from a narrow perspective, in which one regards justice only from one’s own viewpoint, to an abstract or formal perspective, by which one considers and integrates various viewpoints and situations.

Kohlberg’s first article was published in 1963, and much research around his theory was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. He also proposed moral education based on his developmental theory and two journals, Moral Forum and Journal of Moral Education were published. Research based on Kohlberg’s theory was done extensively, and many articles and books of moral development were published.

In Japan, in the 1970s, research based on Kohlberg’s method was reported for the first time by Yamagishi (1976) and his theory and research were introduced (Yamagishi,1977). We also translated two of Kohlberg’s important books (Kohlberg, 1969, 1971) in 1985 and 1987. Kohlberg visited Japan in 1985. He delivered a lecture, which I attended, and I was fortunate to have a discussion with him. Figure-2 and 3 show photographs and a

Table-1 Outline of Kohlberg’s 6 stages (reasons for doing right)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 Preconventional</th>
<th>Stage 1 Heteronomous morality (Avoidance of punishment and the superior power of authorities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Conventional</td>
<td>Stage 2 Individualism, instrumental purpose and exchange (To serve one’s own needs or interests, sometimes other’s needs or interests.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 3 Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationship and interpersonal conformity (The need to be a good person, your caring for others, belief in the Golden rule)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 4 Social systems and social order (To keep the institution going as a whole, to avoid the breakdown)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3 Postconventional or principled</td>
<td>Stage 5 Social contract or utility and individual rights (A sense of obligation to law because of one’s social contract for the welfare of all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 6 Universal ethical principles (The belief as a rational person in the validity of universal moral principles)</td>
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</tbody>
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Kohlberg came to Japan in 1985. Unfortunately he died one year after.

Figure-2 Photographs of Dr. Kohlberg in Japan

Figure-3 Kohlberg’s message with his autograph

Table-1 Outline of Kohlberg’s 6 stages (reasons for doing right)
Thereafter, I carried out a number of studies related to moral development, for example, the development of role taking, which is supposed to be the basis of moral development, development of a Japanese version of moral judgment questionnaire, a theoretical examination of alternative development and experiences to promote it, etc. from cognitive developmental viewpoint. Details of these researches have been compiled in a book (Yamagishi, 1995).

3. Current trends – after Kohlberg

Kohlberg’s theory provoked much controversy, and many critical papers were published. Kohlberg refuted some criticism, but also made partial revisions to his original theory (Levine & Hewer, 1983). The central criticism to Kohlberg’s theory was his assertion about cultural universality. Kohlberg’s developmental stages are criticized that they seem to relate only to western cultures and that there may be alternative courses of development (Snarey, 1985). Data in Japan has shown a developmental tendency that partially disagrees with a universal sequence of development, and that in Japan, there are more people in various age groups more than in the USA, who are supposed to be at Stage 3 orienting to interpersonal relationships (Yamagishi, 1976, 1987).

Gilligan criticized that Kohlberg’s stage is only men’s developmental courses (morality of justice) and though women are apt to be assessed to be stage 3, their developmental courses are different from Kohlberg’s one (morality of care and responsibility) (Gilligan, 1982). These controversy was summarized by Walker (2006) and in Japan by Yamagishi (2010).

Furthermore, there was also criticism that Kohlberg considered moral judgment to be developmentally important, in spite of the fact that the actual problem is that behavior does not often match with judgment and moral behavior is exactly important in actual problem. It is said that adolescents in modern Japan find it easy to deviate from social norms. From a cognitive developmental point of view, we should consider the developmental meaning of the dilution of consciousness of social rules (Yamagishi, 2002). However, our society and public opinion demand that education in our schools should foster appropriate behavior in adolescents and teach them not to deviate from accepted social norms and rules. In these circumstances, research into the practice of social skills is carried out exclusively, and the character education which aims to make children have good character or “virtue” is also paid attention (Ryan & Karen, 2003).

In academic circles of psychology in contemporary Japan, Kohlberg’s theory has become outdated. Research based on cognitive developmental theory has declined, though Turiel’s social domain theory (Turiel, 1983) is still the subject of research. One reason for this departure from Kohlberg’s theory is because it seems incompatible with recent
academic trends, which seem to indicate that feeling, which is neither necessarily conscious nor rational is more important than cognition or judgment. A universal rule or a "grand theory" for moral development cannot be constructed. With the attention paid to feeling and consideration of the role of feeling, moral feelings, like empathy and guilt, becomes a central theme in the research into morality. It has been pointed out that the exchange of feeling, and emotional relationships in families are important for moral development in childhood (Dunn, 2006) 19. I have also published a paper on guilt, which argues guilt peculiar to the Japanese from a new point of view (Yamagishi, 2014) 20. Haidt (2001) 21 has advocated a social intuitionist model, that a moral judgment is made not by reason but by feeling and intuition, and that intentional moral reasoning is made only after feeling and intuition has guided the path to judgment.

It has been shown by the latest research on brain science that cerebral domains differ when moral judgment is made with rational moral reasoning, as opposed to when it is made with feeling (Greene, et al., 2001) 22. It shows that the concept of morality expands wider than Kohlberg’s considerations, although his viewpoint remains of importance.

The trends of adult attachment

1. Bowlby’s theory of adult attachment and related research

Bowlby (1973) 23 expounded the theory that infants form an affectionate bond to their caregivers, which he termed “attachment”. Infants’ direct attachment toward their caregivers, for example, is demonstrated by maintaining proximity, seeking touch, crying or smiling to get a sense of security. Attachment researchers devise various procedures, like the “Strange Situation Procedure”, to measure the quality of attachment. Much research has been done which has shown that with secure attachments, children are more likely to have good relationships with others. Also, attachment patterns influence adaptation. Having a secure base will facilitate children’s exploration, which will lead to appropriate cognitive and social development (Endo, 2007) 24.

Bowlby (1969) 25 considered that attachment is not an issue confined to infancy, but also exerts influence throughout one’s life. He conceptualized “Internal Working Models” (IWM), a mental representation of attachment that operates as a framework for interpersonal experience. Based upon repeated experiences with their caregivers, infants construct IWM representations of others and themselves in relation to others, and these work throughout their lives. The IWM can also explain adult attachment. By devising procedures of measuring IWM (interview method of Main et al. (1985) 26 and many questionnaire methods like as Hazan & Shaver (1987) 27, Brennan et al. (1998) 28, etc.), research of adult attachment has been conducted fruitfully, especially on interpersonal and emotional features of each type of IWM, and relationships to attachments in the past.

2. The stability and changeability of attachment (IWM) over a lifespan

According to Bowlby (1973) 23, the most sensitive time for IWM formation is “from about six months to about five years, and persists during the decade after five, albeit in a steadily diminishing degree”. The formation of attachment (IWM) over time has been scarcely examined empirically. But recently, longitudinal studies have been conducted on the period from infancy to childhood. Methodologies for the measurement of adult attachments have been developed and longitudinal studies have spread to include adolescence, for example, Hamilton (2000) 29, Waters, et al. (2000) 30. Grossman edited longitudinal researches of a long time (Grossmann, et al., 2005) 31. The results of these researches do not have unanimous agreement, but there are many that show continuity of early attachment and thereafter. For example, in Hamilton (2000) 29 and Waters, et al. (2000) 30, 77% and 72% cases coincided when types were classified into groups: secure and insecure. On the other hand, there were cases of types who have a secure IWM now, although they had an inappropriate relationship to attachment figures in their childhood.

But most of these studies have focused on the period from infancy to adolescence, or early adulthood. Only a few longitudinal studies have examined IWM during the period from adolescence to adulthood. Klohnen & Bera (1997) 31 investigated adult females longitudinally from 21 to 52
years of age, although the questionnaire on IWM was administered only to the 52 year-olds. I have been conducting longitudinal studies to nursing students in Juntendo as participants, and have been continuing these researches after they graduated from university (Yamagishi, 2006, 2013). The design of these studies is showed in Table-2. The results indicated that correlations between IWM scores assessed by each questionnaire in the two different phases were moderate.

3. Contributing factors to interpersonal framework or adaptation in adulthood

According to Bowlby, a change of IWM is not supposed to occur basically, only when one has a different interpersonal experience than before or a drastic change of environment, which may contribute to change (Main et al., 1985). Further, it is related to one’s personality or disposition, such as ego strength, resilience, intelligence, ability of reflection, etc. However, as yet, these assumptions have not been verified empirically. I have been conducting studies into longitudinal change in IWM, cognition of one's mother and adaptation (Yamagishi, 2009, 2013, 2014). These studies have shown that the seriousness of one’s problem, interpersonal relationships especially with one’s partner, attitude to one’s occupation, and ability of reflection, also contribute to change. Moreover, not only IWM in adulthood but also in adolescence contribute to adaptation in adulthood (Yamagishi, 2013, 2014).

I would like to continue my longitudinal research from adolescence to adulthood. I wish to examine factors contributing to changes, as well as interpersonal factors in adolescence that influence IWM and adaptation in adulthood.

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References


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