

Relation between Ego Identity and View of Friends in Adolescent Women: In Comparison with View of Home

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Abstract

From the viewpoint of the identity formation, I investigated how adolescent women observed their friends. To put it concretely, an identity status scale (Kato, 1983) and free description answers to the view of friends were given to 513 female university students. Two investigators encoded the contents of 1,630 descriptions into 173 categories to analyze them statistically. The number of answers at each category was counted and the views were reported according to the frequency. In this study, 41 categories (multiple descriptions) were displayed. I realized that each status had a distinctive view of friends as a result. We should recognize that studying the way adolescent women relate to friends gives an important insight into how adolescent form their own identity.

Key Words: ego identity, view of friends, adolescent woman, free description

Acquisition of ego identity is an extremely important theme for the modern people who live in such an opaque age when the future cannot be prospected easily. Especially for women, the situation of adolescence in the forming process of ego identity has been largely changed by the diversification of the life style such as increasing the ratio of students go on a university and of graduates find employment, the late marriage or the non marriage.

A trial is paid to attention as a new trend of the study of ego identity not only from the dimension of individuation that has been emphasized but also from the related context in recent years (e.g., Sugimura, 1998). Especially, only the acquisition of individual ego identity was focused with the viewpoint of the development assumed to be important problems -parting from the protection of the parents and being autonomic and independent- in adolescent and the aspect of "Relation" was overlooked.

By the way, one of important agents that deeply affects the ego identity formation to adolescent woman is "Friends" . It used to be said that the youth is the time of emotional independent and the center of personal

relationship shifts from the parent-child relation which centers on the home to the friend relation. However, in recent years, there are a large number of young people who cannot create the good relationship with their friends, cannot restore the relation which is about to break off, or have only seeming friends because of the uneasiness to have intimate friends. The modern peculiar relationship is seen here. Although understanding the relationship with friends is indispensable to catch the forming process of adolescent woman's ego identity, the study is very few at the present situation (Naganuma & Ochiai, 1998).

Then, "The relationship with friends" thought to affect the forming of ego identity of adolescent woman deeply is focused in this study. The view of the friend by a free description is arranged to the list, and the relation to ego identity is examined in this study. The purposes are as follows: (1)To catch the view of the friend which adolescent woman holds objectively and produce the list, (2)To clarify ego identity using an identity status scale (Kato, 1983) in addition to analyze the result of a free description again and examine the relation between ego identity and the view of the friend.

Method

Subjects

The investigation was executed in 1 university and 4 junior colleges (Chugoku and Kyushu area). I requested to the teachers of each university and it was executed by unsigned, in a group, while lecturing. I asked them to take enough time to describe. 382 first-year students, 131 second-year students, 513 students in total out of 552 students who answered all the questions behind except 39 male students are analyzed.

Procedure

The investigation was executed twice, in 1999 and 2000. The month is June when two months passed from the entrance. This entrance period including this time (one year after entering school) is the most time when many students visit to consult their problems on adjusting themselves to new circumstances or changing to their new relations (Tsuruta, 1998).

The question which asks the view of the friend was "What is Friend (Peer) to you now? ". Peer relation is a relation based on mutual similarities where the age, the position, and the role, etc. are equal. Not vertical relationships with their parents that have different roles or positions but parallel ones with their friends based on mutual similarities was focused here. The way of description was to add (Peer) to Friend because Friend is used synonymously with Peer so that more various and extensive answer can be expected. The examples of typical answers are shown in appendix 1. 12 items of identity status scale (Kato, 1983), questions on home and face sheets were also mentioned.

Setting Category

Following Toyota and Maeda(1994), the free description was treated just like as a big, unrestricted category selection item, and the answers were processed numerically twice by using different methods, setting and encoding the category in this study.

All answers were objects to encode, and the data procession X , the number of answers (N) \times the number of categories (K) was produced. When the category was made, the answers of 39 male students were excluded at first because it has been forecasted that answers of males and females are different. Some categories were made from 250 free description data, about half of 513 data by two investigators' collating because the amount of work became huge if referring to all answers continuously and a new category was set by the conference encoding the remainder. The category was classified into a positive item (one that an affirmative view to the friend appeared), a negative item (one that a negative view appeared), and a neutral item (one not included in any of both and included answers impossible to classify). Finally, positive item 123 categories, negative and neutral item 50 categories (An impossible classification is included), $K=173$, and the data procession X of 513×173 was produced¹.

Results and Discussion

Marcia(1964, 1966) advocated the paradigm of identity status theory based on the concept of ego identity by Erikson(1959). Ego Identity Status Scale by Kato (1983) etc. are widely used to study in Japan along this paradigm. Kato's scale(1983) measures three variables, the standard of general commitment at present, the past crisis, and the desire of commitment in the future(the present crisis) and classifies investigated person into six kinds of ego identity according to the result.

In this study, the investigated person is classified into six identity statuses by using the scale. In the following analyses, "Diffusion" which especially requires attention in clinical, contrary "Achievement", "Foreclosure" whose frequency is few though, are taken up and the relation between ego identity and the view of friends is considered, compared with Nishiyama, Katayama, and Tazume (2001) by which the relation between ego identity and the view of home was examined. These three model status mean Achievement (A): A student who performs the high level commitment at present after the high level crisis in the past, Diffusion (D) : A student who performs the low level commitment and doesn't desire to do in the future, Foreclosure(F): A student who performs the high level commitment at the present after the low level crisis in the past. 41 categories as multiple description, answers' frequency (the sum of column X) is more than 10, of all 173 categories final set are shown the contents and the frequency and the six divided ego identity status in Table 1². The categories are shown in order with high frequency in Table 1. For instance, the answer of appendix 1 was counted to category number 2, 5, and 10 in Table 1.

Table 1. Contents and frequency distribution of view of friends (Multiple descriptions)

No.	Contents	A (31)	AF (33)	F (14)	M (35)	DM (350)	D (50)	Total (513)
1	Adviser	11	11	6	11	134	19	192
2	Be happy and enjoy being with him/her	8	6	7	7	109	11	148
3	Important	9	8	3	8	84	11	123
4	Existence different from family	3	7	4	6	38	7	65
5	Don't want to lose, all the world to me	4	3	1	1	43	2	54
6	Playmate	3	2	1	2	39	5	52
7	Company	4	6		6	35	1	52
8	Share happiness and sorrow	7	3	3	5	22	1	41
9	Can say anything	3		1	2	30	3	39
10	Emotional supporter	2	5		3	26		36
11	Consult or be consulted	3	4	1	2	20	4	34
12	Necessary	1	2	3	2	20	4	32
13	Help each other	2	2	1	4	20	3	32
14	Irreplaceable	3	2	1	3	17	1	27
15	Supporter	2	1		2	21		26
16	Stay with me	3	2			17	4	26
17	Understanding	1			3	18	2	24
18	Give encouragement and vigour				5	18		23
19	Can bluster and do foolish things together	1		1	2	15	2	21
20	Can be relieved		1	1	1	17		20
21	Work hard together, Go beyond difficulties	1	1	1	4	13		20
22	Laugh together	3	1		2	9	2	17
23	Tell me who I am	1	1			12	2	16
24	Reliable	2	1		3	10		16
25	Make me happy				2	13	1	16
26	Can say anything	1	1	1	1	10	2	16
27	Want to value through life	3				13		16
28	Make me improve, Make me develop	3			2	10		15
29	Stimulating				3	9	2	14
30	Helpful		2			12		14
31	Can not live without him/her	1	1	1	1	8	1	13
32	Treasure	1	1		2	8	1	13
33	Stay with me, stand by me	1			2	8	2	13
34	Can settle down	2	1			10		13
35	Reliable				2	9	2	13
36	Can improve each other	1			4	8		13
37	Miss him/her, Be lonely without him/her		1			11		12
38	Think about me kindly				2	8	1	11
39	Rival	1		2		7	1	11
40	Can encourage mutually	1	1	1	3	4		10
41	Talk to me properly	3	1			6		10

Note. The alphabets of the upper column show A : Achievement, AF: The medium of Achievement and Foreclosure, F : Foreclosure, M : Moratorium, DM: The medium of Diffusion and Moratorium, and D: Diffusion. The figure in () shows the number of each status. The figure in the table shows frequency. And the blank means frequency 0.

First of all, friends seem to be indispensable for them at the present and to play an important role in keeping a good mental health as shown in 1.Adviser, 3.Important, 4.Existence different from family, and 5.Don't want to lose, all the world to me. Moreover, it can be said that friends satisfy their desire for the joys of lives shown in 2. Be happy and enjoy being with him/her, 6.Playmate, and 7.Company. The number of negative description is few totally, compared with positive description and there was nothing 10 or more answers from the point of the frequency.

When the view of friends and of home are compared, along with the result of Nishiyama, Katayama, and Tazume(2001), items like "Adviser" or "Important" or "Don't want to lose, all the world to me" or "Emotional supporter" have much in common. On the other hand, items like "Be happy and enjoy being with her/him" or "Playmate" or "Company" or "Share happiness and sorrow" are characteristic in the description of the view of friends. Oppositely, items like "Can be relieved" or "Can settle down" or "Feel at peace", furthermore "Can be myself naturally" are fewer than the description of the view of home. Friends are the existence which can enjoy or talk each other rather than the existence of healing by which the relief of the mind can be obtained became clear, though friends are important and indispensable for them.

A characteristic description is different clearly according to identity status. In Achievement group, the description 8.Share happiness and sorrow, was more than other statuses. Moreover, the numbers of descriptions 22.Laugh together, 27.Want to value through life, Want to get along through life, 28.Make me improve, Make me develop, and 41.Talk to me properly, were a little bit more than other statuses. On the other hand, the descriptions 4.Existence different from family, and 12.Necessary, were fewer than other statuses. For this group, friends are such existences that make them improve and share happiness or sorrow. Moreover, in Achievement group such descriptions "Want to value through life" or "Make me improve" that show the time prospect, which agrees with the point of Tsuzuki(1993) "The achievement of ego identity can be consisted in a time flow (the past, the present and the future)on the continual and integrated consciousness."

In Diffusion group, a large number of descriptions were not seen especially compared with other statuses. On the other hand, 5.Don't want to lose, all the world to me, 7.Company, and 8.Share happiness and sorrow, were fewer than other statuses and there was no description 10.Emotional supporter, and 15.Supporter. Nishiyama, Tazume and Katayama (2001) did not find out the negative description to the home completely by considering Diffusion group woman thinks about her home as "Existence which is reliable, can trust, help and support me". This showed strong "Dependency", which others are necessary not for the consideration or the respect to them but for self's existence. On the other hand, there was little description by which the dependency to friends such as "Emotional supporter" and "Reliable" were shown from the result of examining an outlook of friend at this time.

Next, an outlook of home and friends are compared and examined on Foreclosure group which especially requires attention in clinical and on Diffusion group. Foreclosure group is a student whose experiences of

crisis are no or very few in the past and do the high level commitment at the present, and is characterized in matching her target and parents' target. As for Foreclosure type, the image of "Healthy young man who does not have any worry" without the confrontation with the parent might be given as quoting the peaceful youth theory (Sugihara, 1988). However, there is a case where a potential diffusion tendency is contrarily suggested, it is thought the status which requires consideration in clinical with superficial health (Kato, 1990; Sugihara, 1988). The number of Foreclosure group is so few that I can't take a decisive attitude, however, the descriptions 2.Be happy and enjoy being with him/her, 4.Existence different from family, 8.Share happiness and sorrow, and 12.Necessary, were more than other statuses in this study. This can be an evidence that the involvement with home is a task for Foreclosure group because they enumerate the difference between friends and home in spite of asking an outlook of friend. On the other hand, there is a possibility with a low dependence and the support wish to the friend because there is no descriptions such as 7.Company, 10.Emotional supporter, 15.Supporter, and 16.Stay with me. The point without the description by which the dependency such as "Emotional supporter" or "Reliable" is shown that is similar to an outlook of friend in Diffusion group. However, when an outlook of home is compared, neither dependence nor the support wish to the parent are shown in Foreclosure group while a peculiar dependency to parents is shown in Diffusion group (Nishiyama, Tazume, & Katayama, 2001; Nishiyama, Katayama, & Tazume, 2001). The similar points and the different points of an outlook of friends and home in Foreclosure group and Diffusion group can be a remarkable finding when we try to understand their relationships and think about the clinical way.

In this study, the focus was appropriated to "Relation with friends" thought to affect the ego identity formation of adolescent woman deeply, her view of friends by a free description were arranged to the list, and examined by comparing with view of home. Naganuma and Ochiai (1998) assumed a characteristic relationship with friends for woman at any steps of adolescent as follows; "Not be disliked" such as association method that the wish to be loved is in the background or "Always act with a particular companion" such as sticking relation that the consciousness of mutual individuality is little. Though these characteristic woman's friendship were also seen partly from the result of this study, it became clear that view of friends is quite different according to identity status. It will be necessary to clarify how a present outlook of friends and the way of related to friends affects the ego identity formation or the shift in the future.

Note

¹ A part of the data overlaps with Nishiyama, Katayama, and Tazume (2001), etc.

² As for the category which total frequency is fewer than 9, please refer to Nishiyama, Katayama, and Tazume (in press).

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Appendix 1 Typical Answer from amount and content (A first-grade student)

“My friends always support my mind. I never want to lose them and can't live without them. The existence is also annoying for me though I'm so happy being with them”

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