

The lifelong development of identity and psychotherapy on the basis of developmental crises

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The purpose of the present study was to clarify the characteristics of identity crises and developmental process in adulthood empirically based on Erikson's Epigenetic Schema. Middle age and retirement age were developmental crisis periods as well as adolescence, in which the identity was re-questioned and reconfirmed. It was found that these psychodynamic process were similar to the separation-individuation process in early childhood. Based on these empirical data, The Spiral Model of Identity Development in Adulthood was advocated.

Many people in middle age visit psychotherapists claiming a lot of mental problems. By analysis of psychotherapy cases by the author, it was suggested that the depth of middle age crises were related to the roots of their clients' conflict level, that is, the roots of their unresolved conflict was in early childhood, the pathology of middle age crisis was serious. Some points of psychotherapy for middle aged clients were suggested according to the levels of unresolved conflicts.

Key Words: identity, adult development, middle age crisis, psychotherapy

Introduction

In this paper, I would like to consider the light and shadow of a person going through life as an adult. Adulthood comprises the longest time of a person's life, and it has long been thought of as the peak period in life. However, the life of our mind cannot be simply classified into phases such as growth, peak, and decline. There is no doubt that in life there are ups and downs, and at times people undergo crises that they cannot manage by themselves. How do our minds develop and change over the course of our lives? How are our minds affected by crises and stumbling blocks that we experience throughout life? How is the potential of people to turn crises into positive things cultivated? In addition, how can we understand the psychic world of people in the midst of stumbling blocks and crises? If we could support these people on the psychological level, what would that entail? My heart was engrossed in questions like these and I have kept deep interests in

them since adolescence.

Erikson's identity theory is a concept that is extremely attractive for inclusively and comprehensively grasping a person's life cycle. It amply involves both the development of a person's mind over the course of their lifetime and the clinical viewpoints of understanding and supporting people through stumbling blocks and crises. We can get close to the root of the matter if the above questions can be addressed from the point of view of identity crises and development. As such, I have theoretically and empirically researched the post-adolescent developmental process of the identity from the viewpoint of developmental crises. In addition, I have examined clinical psychological support and techniques for midlife crises based upon my clinical practice as a clinical psychologist (Okamoto, 1985, 1994a, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2007). I will outline these in this chapter.

Since Erikson's first book, "Childhood and Society" was published (1950), his theories of identity and the life cycle have become widely influential in not only psychology but also sociology, pedagogy, and cultural anthropology. For all-encompassing introductions and criticisms, refer to "The Perspectives of Identity Research I~IV" (Tatara, Miyashita, & Okamoto, 1995-2002). Erikson himself was greatly concerned about identity development and pathology in adolescence. He has not spoken much about identity in adulthood. In the 60 years from 1950 until the present day, most of the extensive identity research accumulated has been regarding adolescence. Apart from Josselson (1973, 1987, 1992, 1996) and Franz & White (1985), no research has been conducted regarding lifelong identity development from the perspective of the overall life cycle.

1. Identity crises and development in adulthood

(1) The concept of the developmental crisis

Today, the word crisis is used to imply an uncontrollable catastrophe. However, crisis originally meant a decisive and critical period of change or a turning point where two choices existed. Looked at in terms of development of the mind, it indicates a forked road where the mind continues to either grow and develop or backtrack and regress. Erikson (1950) was the first person to theorize this concept of a developmental crisis. Erikson divided the life cycle into eight stages, asserting that each stage had an inherent psychosocial issue and developmental crisis. According to Erikson's Epigenetic Scheme (1950), adulthood and old-age psychosocial issues and crises that follow adolescent identity achievement are intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and ego integrity vs. despair.

With regard to this, I believe that there are also a biological-psychological-social transition phases in life after adolescence experienced in common by many people, and that these are the crises of identity itself. Developmental crises in the life cycle are childhood, adolescence, middle

age, and retirement. As I will mention later, fundamental change in the state of the relationship between the attitude of one's ego and that of its objects can be seen in these periods, and the state of subsequent development varies greatly depending upon how one navigates these periods.

1) A crisis as a disruption of identity —the external and internal pressure experienced in a period of crisis—

I would like to consider this experience of crisis a little more in the context of psychodynamics. Within the life cycle, there are structural crisis periods such as adolescence, middle age, and retirement, where fundamental changes occur in various levels, such as physical, psychological, and social. Our lives are constantly developing in response to both (1) changes from within ourselves—the body itself, bodily functions, intellectual function, development of the ego, etc. and (2) changes from outside ourselves—the needs, requests, and hopes of people around us, family, affiliated groups and society. When this internal and external pressure is concentrated and experienced during one period, it has a great impact on the mind.

In a period of crisis, one's mind is shaken by external pressure due to social or physical changes in the world around oneself, internal pressure due to changes from within because of physical growth and decline, psychological development and differentiation, or by both external and internal pressure. The combined pressure shakes the mind and causes an identity crisis when the continuity of one's own way of life and consciousness is disrupted.

2) The influence of unresolved conflicts and crises in childhood and adolescence on adulthood

Another important developmental and clinical issue in adulthood is the clinical psychological problems that appear in adulthood and the relevance of the prior health of the ego. How does one's ego during the infancy period, which is a basis for development, and one's ego during adolescence change throughout one's later life, and to what extent does it stipulate subsequent development? If conflicts remain unresolved in infancy, childhood, and adolescence, will adulthood crises become even more serious?

It goes without saying that disturbances to identity experienced in middle age due to internal and external pressure, i.e., the seriousness and magnitude of a middle-age crisis, is strongly linked to one's health. It has already been substantiated by numerous studies that a significant relationship can be seen between identity formation during adolescence and one's post-infancy ego development. However, there has hardly been any research conducted on the pathology of a middle-age crisis and the relationship between post-infancy ego formation and one's health until middle age apart from studies based on my own clinical cases. I would like to discuss this issue in section two of this paper.

(2) Middle-age crises and developmental changes in identity

Firstly, I would like to look at identity in middle age. It is considered that middle age has the most significant meanings for development in adulthood.

1) The world of the mind experienced in middle age —the middle-age crisis as a structural crisis—

In middle age, i.e., when one is in their 40s, one experiences a world of the mind that is completely different in their 30s, with a decline in physical strength, a narrowing perspective of time due to not being so young anymore, coming to face one's own aging and death, and the perception of various limits. In middle age, changes are experienced on all biological, psychological, and social levels. Many of these are negative changes such as loss, descent, and decline. Changes in middle age and clinical problems that arise from these can be grasped as structural crises and structural conflicts that shake and set into motion an individual's entire existence. Various changes are experienced physically (a decline in physical strength and awareness of aging), in the family (children's independence from their parents and self-reliance, readjustment of the spousal relationship) and professionally (awareness of work-related limits). Self-awareness of one's finiteness is the mentality that is at the core of these changes (Okamoto, 1994a, 1997).

2) Reconfirmation of identity in middle age

Changes such as these from within and without oneself cause people to question their way of life and way of being. This is a crisis, a questioning of identity itself, where one can no longer live with what had been their identity up until now. If one can accept these internal and external changes in self and disturbances independently without denying them and without running away, and one proactively explores their future way of life, then they can face the latter half of their life and discover a way of life more acceptable to them. The process of internal transformation experienced upon entry to middle age can be explained as the following four stages: □.The crisis period with experience of negative changes mentioned above, □.The period of reviewing ,evaluating and reconsidering one's life, □.The period of modification or turnabout of the life track(choice and decision of new way of life and/or adjustment), and □.The period of identity reconfirmed. This kind of internal transformation is a phenomenon common to many middle-aged people. I call this process the reconfirmation process of middle-age identity (Okamoto, 1985, 1994a, 1997).

3) Diversity in ways of life in middle age—middle age identity status

Up until now, many people have believed that if they are able to establish their profession and outlook on life and guide themselves towards one's own style of life during their adolescence, i.e., if they achieve an identity, their subsequent adulthood will be based upon this and stable adulthood years will follow. Many healthy people have a fixed profession and household, and as far as can be

seen by an outsider, would appear to be fulfilling their responsibilities as a member of the society. However, have all middle-aged people living in the peak of their lives truly achieved their identity? If we observe the internal world of their mind, are middle-aged people really involved proactively in their roles and work, and have they really accepted their own way of life?

In fact, in an interview survey on middle-aged people, there were more than a few people who had experienced various changes in the mind and body in their middle age, and were instable, or who had abandoned self-inquiry without being able to accept their own way of life so far or their future outlook on the latter half of their life (Okamoto, 1985, 1994a). How can we grasp the various states of identity in middle-aged people? In psychology, individual differences were long considered as a matter of course. However, this is not a problem that can be done away with as individual differences, i.e., individual differences that accompany diversity in the life course and lifestyle situations of adults. A new image of middle age is born when the various differences in situations seen in middle-aged people are looked at as differences in identity development and accomplishment levels.

As a standard for the extent to which adolescents have achieved a firm identity that does not waver in a critical situation, Marcia (1964, 1966) examined crises (experiences of proactive inquiry/decision-making periods) and the commitment, and established four identity statuses: identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion. The creation of these four statuses made the level of identity achievement an issue. In other words, it has become easier to concretely grasp the fact that not all adolescents in late adolescence are definitely and properly overseeing their own upbringing, deliberating upon their future selves, and establishing their own way of life; i.e., they are not achieving identity in the original sense.

When the identity of middle-aged people is analyzed with a middle-age identity status theory to which Marcia's adolescent identity status has been applied, it can be understood that identity statuses with the same characteristics of those in adolescence also exist in middle age (Okamoto, 1994a, 1997).

(3) Spiral model of identity development in adulthood

1) The life cycle's themes are repeated

In the life cycle, the transition period that occurs after middle age is the period of mandatory retirement or retirement from active duty. This period is also a period where a person's identity is shaken and questioned as one's lifestyle structure changes greatly with retirement. According to Okamoto & Yamamoto (1985) and Okamoto (1994b), the period of mandatory retirement is an important developmental crisis period in the latter half of life, and it has been suggested that reconfirmation of the identity similar to that conducted upon entry to middle age is also carried out.

The psychological characteristics of the identity reconfirmation process seen in middle age and

retirement is extremely similar to the process put forth in the separation–individuation process of Mahler, Pine, & Bergman (1975), the process of an infant becoming physically and psychologically distanced from the mother. Table 1. is a summary of the characteristics of the developmental crisis periods in the life cycle: infancy, adolescence, middle age, and retirement.

Considering the adolescent identity development research by Blos (1967) and Brandt (1977) and my identity research on middle age and mandatory retirement (Okamoto, 1994a, 1994b, 1997), one can see that the same themes are repeated several times throughout life. The common themes of acquiring and reacquiring an identity exist in adolescence, entry to middle age, and mandatory retirement. Questions regarding identity such as “What am I?” and “What is a way of life that is true to myself?” are repeated at each crossroads encountered even in adulthood, and it would appear that identity develops in a spiral manner.

As I have already mentioned, identity crises in middle age and retirement are extremely similar to the process of reconfirmation. In addition, as indicated by Blos (1967) and Brandt (1977), the process of identity formation in adolescence has characteristics extremely similar to the process of separation–individuation in infancy (Table 1). When looked at in this light, it appears that identity is reconfirmed and resynthesized at each of life’s junctures and turning points. This way of thinking, whereby the achievement of inherent psychological issues and characteristics seen in each life stage allows one to develop to the next stage, is a view of development that differs from previous development stage theory.

Figure 1 is a spiral model of identity development in adulthood created by compiling my series of research results. The view of identity development in adulthood shown in this figure is as follows: Firstly, in the life course of adulthood, stable periods and transitional periods (crisis periods) occur in an alternating manner. In transitional/crisis periods, one realizes that their previous identity cannot support them well enough, or that they cannot continue living in this manner and their identity is shaken. Then, this causes a period to occur where rearrangement or reconfirmation of identity is conducted. During the stable period, one’s internal and external world becomes stable and is enhanced through the identity that was reacquired.

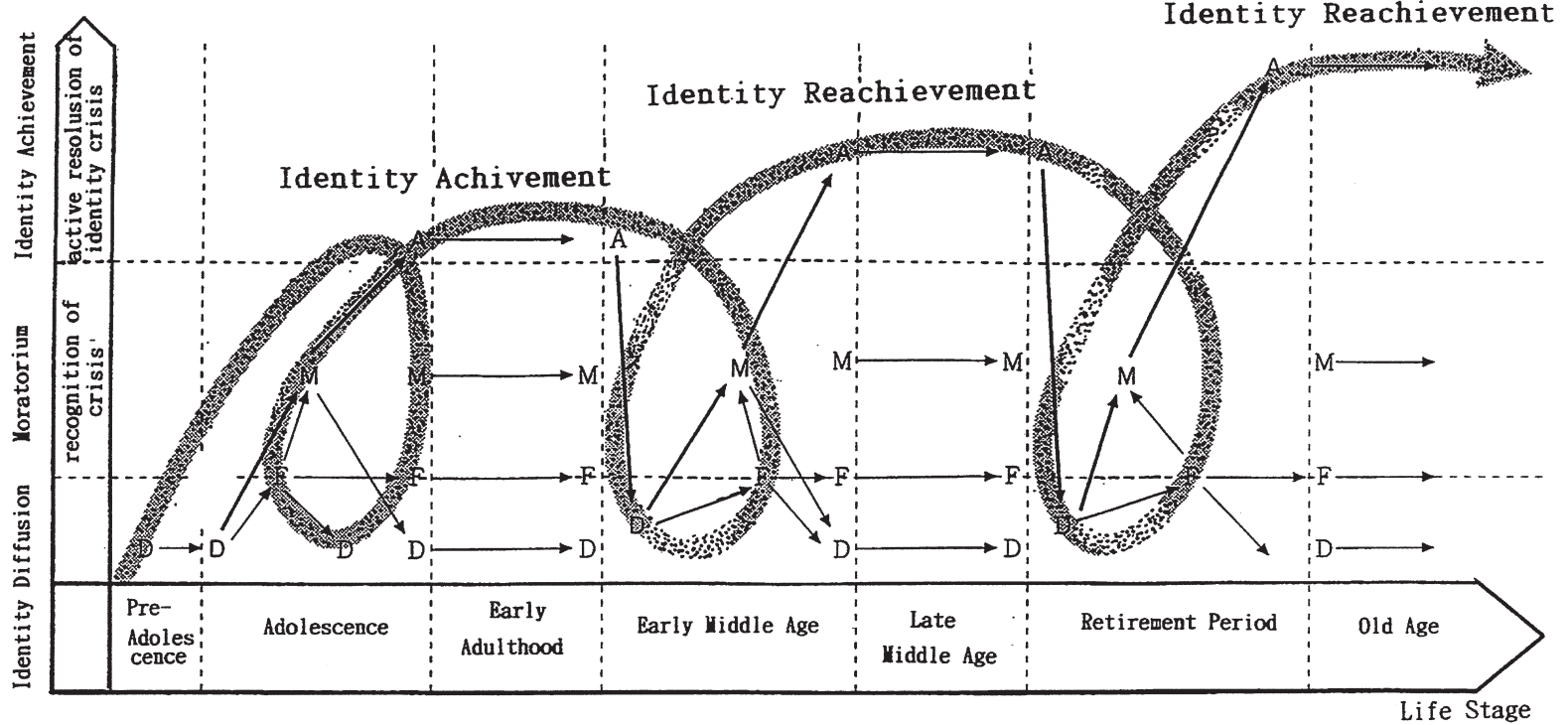
Secondly, this figure provides the information regarding identity achievement in adulthood. According to previous identity theories, many people achieve identity in late adolescence, and they maintain this achieved identity in adulthood. However, in reality, a fair number of people exist for whom this is not true on the inside even if they appear from the outside to be leading an adult lifestyle with an achieved identity. This model suggests that moratorium, foreclosure, and diffused identity can be observed in all periods of adulthood, and that the changes in identity status occur in developmental crisis periods where identity reconfirmation is conducted.

Thirdly, it is also possible that identity will develop regressively as identity status does not necessarily shift towards more mature attainment.

Table 1. Comparison of four developmental crisis periods in life cycle

life stage	early childhood	adolescence	middle age	retirement period
researcher sub-stage	Mahler, M. S. (1975)	Erikson, E. H. (1950) Brandt, D. E. (1977)	Okamoto, Y. (1985, 1994)	Okamoto, Y. (1994, 1997)
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Differentiation • recognition of “not me” • awareness of one’s body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognition of changes of body • appearance of primary and secondary sexual characters (from child body to adult-body) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognition of changes of life –pace • loss of health • contraction of time perspective • awareness of the limitation of ability • anxiety of aging and death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognition of changes of life • loss of job, social status, economical base, and interpersonal relationship
II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Practicing • physical separation between mother and child, having a emotional base • increase of autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moratorium • trial of one’s role • trial to find one’s place in society • establishment of future perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Re-evaluation of one’s life • trial to find a way in the second half of life <li style="text-align: center;">⇓ ■ Adjustment or modification of life-track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Re-evaluation of one’s life • trail to find a way of retirement life <li style="text-align: center;">⇓ ■ Adjustment or modification of life-track
III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rapprochement • increase of separation anxiety • needs for intimacy with mother • resolution by getting an optimum distance to mother 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change of self-object relationship • independence from parents • securing one’s place in society • obtaining a new relation which enable active life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change of self-object relationship • independence from child • death of parents and friends • role loss, object loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change of self-object relationship
IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consolidation of individuality • acquirement of the first sense of identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Achievement of ego identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reconfirmation of identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reconfirmation of identity

Development of identity



- 1) A: Identity Achiever, M: Moratorium, F: Foreclosure, D: Identity Diffusion
- 2) Identity formation process: D → M → A (Identity Achievement)
- Identity Exploration Commitment
- Identity reconfirmation process: (A) → D → M → A (Identity Re-achievement)
- Crisis with Re-evaluation Modification
- changes of life of one's life of one's life-track

Fig. 1. The Spiral Model of Identity Development in Adulthood (Okamoto, 1994)

Development of the mind in adulthood can be understood as a process of repeated cycles comprising crisis → reconfirmation → rebirth, where one goes through a temporary confusion and once again forms a stable way of being themselves, as one is faced with failure and breaks in one's previous way of life and lifestyle structure at each crossroads encountered in life. If one looks at the life of the mind from this kind of a viewpoint, the points where each developmental crisis is experienced throughout life appear to be joined by a line and can be understood in one direction.

2) The power to acknowledge a crisis and the power to respond to a crisis

I would like to investigate a little further as to what it means for an adult to truly achieve an identity based upon this spiral model of identity development. First of all, the level of identity achievement can be understood by how deeply the person realized that they were experiencing an identity crisis, and whether they were able to conduct reconfirmation decidedly and proactively after experiencing it. In adult life, numerous developmental crisis periods exist. These crisis periods are periods where one realizes that one can no longer be supported by one's previous way of life and identity and that one cannot live in a manner that is true to oneself. Reexamination and rearrangement of identity, or reconfirmation, begin from this acknowledgment. With this realization of the crisis, one explores one's way of being in keeping with the new circumstances, and this is resynthesized into one's previous self. Identity develops into a higher level with this process of acknowledgement of crisis → proactive exploration → reconfirmation (resynthesis).

However, there are people who do not acknowledge this identity crisis regardless of various internal and external changes of the self. Various events such as declining physical strength and children leaving home do not develop into chances to reexamine oneself for these kinds of people, and pass by them as the events become disconnected from their way of life. Self-inquiry is either not carried out or ends at a very shallow level in these kinds of people. In this light, how deeply internal crises are acknowledged is an important point in the development of the mind.

Secondly, the strength to question and resynthesize identity is important with the internal crisis of self. In the course of this questioning, parts of oneself which had become shadows or were missing—issues left undone in the past and things one cannot accept—and the part of self that could not be lived and alternative ways of life are closely examined. This then replenishes and is synthesized into one's current self and one's future way of life.

It goes without saying that the strength to acknowledge and proactively respond to this identity crisis is based upon the strength and flexibility of the ego. The pivotal point for true development of identity appears to be how deeply one can realize one's internal changes and proactively consider one's way of life when standing at life's crossroads.

(4) The identity development process in women

1) The complexity of the identity development process in adult women

When one observes the identity development process in adulthood, women appear to have far more complex characteristics than men (Okamoto, 1999). This is due to the following factors.

The first is the diversity in their ways of life. Compared to men, the life courses of women are varied, and important identity decision-making occurs successively after adolescence. What is more, just because today women have become able to proactively decide their way of life doesn't mean that all of them have been able to put that into practice.

The second factor is the complexity of decision-making regarding identity. Women do not necessarily give priority to their own convenience or will when choosing their way of life. Many women shift their identity base towards a significant other en-route to their adolescent identity formation or during early adulthood household establishment.

The third factor is issues regarding care. Even in the modern society, women shoulder most of the caring roles such as childrearing and looking after elderly parents. It is a fact that the pressure of being the main person in charge of caring roles within the household and primary responsibility—the sense that they are the most suitable person to look after the children and parents—is considerably heavy.

I compared the post-adolescent life cycle of a woman to a tree in “The life cycle tree of modern women” (Okamoto, 1994c). This figure suggests the diversity of women's lifestyles and the fact that there is light and shadow in whatever life style they choose. This figure would also appear to be fairly relevant for today's women who have seen in the 21st century. In comparison to men, for many of whom life unfolds around the firm axis of their career after graduating from school, women's life courses are divided up into various parts such as marriage, birth/childrearing, and career. The turning point of selecting a direction is constantly filled with issues directly related to identity. At each juncture and turning point in life, there are many women who worry about what is a way of life that is true to themselves.

2) The state of individuality and relationships that decide identity in adulthood

When speaking of formation and achievement of identity, many people probably imagine self-actualization and independence as individuals. However, identity is achieved when proactively being an individual and one's relationships with others influence each other like an encasement. Adult life has deep commitments to various worlds such as career, family, and other aspects, and one must bear responsibility and fulfill multiple roles. Each person achieves balance between these in various ways, but I believe that the two axes of proactively existing as an individual and relationships supporting others are crucial elements in the maturing and deepening of adulthood identity. For women in particular, due to the factors mentioned above in (1), these two axes tend to oppose each other and in many cases they cause a jarring to identity.

3) Questioning of identity by middle-aged women

1. The contents of a middle-age crisis differ according to the orientation of one's way of life

Various negative changes such as declining physical strength, a sense of one's own limits and children's independence from their parents are experienced in middle age. An identity crisis where one questions one's previous state of being and way of life will occur in middle age, regardless of one's sex or the life course one has chosen (Okamoto, 1997). However, the way that women and men re-examine their way of life and state of being differs substantially.

With middle-aged women in their 40s and 50s as subjects, I investigated how lifestyle and taking on caring roles influenced the development and maturation of identity in women (Okamoto, 2002). The results were as follows. (1) Adolescent identity formation can be divided into Type A—those who attach importance to identity establishment as an individual (i.e., vocational independence) and Type B—those who conduct identity formation based upon relationships (i.e., spouse selection). (2) Considerably different characteristics can be observed in these two types in the life processes after adolescence until entry into middle age (3) Although middle-age identity crises were experienced by all subjects regardless of differences in lifestyle, the content of these crises differed considerably between Types A and B.

Type-A women exhibited clear independent orientation in adolescence and aimed for clear-cut vocational independence. In contrast, Type-B women had weak independent orientation or they abandoned the idea of vocational independence early in school life, shifting the foundation for their way of life to a significant other. I will refer to the former as (A) individual establishment-oriented types and the latter (B) as relationship-oriented types.

2. Reexamining what one has achieved —reexamining one's total way of life—

In middle age, when one looks back over the way they lived half of their life, they reexamine the various roles that they shouldered, things that they achieved, things that they have left undone and things that they truly wanted to do in their lifetime. Then, one looks out over the latter half of their life from now and considers within their mind what way of life is most acceptable to them and true to themselves. This task of the mind is called identity reconfirmation, or rearrangement of one's identity.

Many men look over the way they lived half their life up until middle age by evaluating themselves as an individual in their own way. This includes evaluation of things that they have done up until now, such as business results achieved at work, and questioning their meaning. In contrast to this, women do not stop at things that they have been involved with or achieved, but conduct a reexamination of their core identity, or their total way of life and state of being. This includes not just vocational and social activities, but whether they have been adequate as a mother or as a wife for the family, and whether their life and way of living looked at as a whole has been adequate. In effect, their questioning of identity occurs at two levels, including not only their

involvements and achievements as an individual, but also their total way of life.

The characteristics of identity crises in middle-aged women differ considerably between (A) individual establishment-oriented types and (B) relationship-oriented types. To women who have lived their lives as individual establishment-oriented types, (1) questioning of core identity signifies a re-examination of the state of one's involvement with their work and what they have achieved throughout their career. Questions posed to themselves are whether one considers what they have devoted themselves to have been acceptable and whether they have produced acceptable results. Furthermore, (2) their total way of life is also seriously questioned—Is my way of life acceptable when my lifestyle is observed in its entirety? Is my relationship with my husband and children alright as it is and is the balance between my job and the rest of my lifestyle adequate? For women who have lived their lives single, is a life without a household really acceptable? Because women who manage both a career and a household bear many roles such as career roles and household-related roles, deterioration in the balance of these multiple roles often causes a middle-age identity crisis.

In contrast to this, (1) core identity questioning for women who enter their middle age from a relationship-oriented type way of life becomes a question of whether they were able to gain satisfaction from their own household-related activities and childrearing. When they re-examined their (2) total way of life, even if they believed that they were doing well with their household and the childrearing that they had been deeply involved with, many women asserted that they wanted to establish themselves as individuals, that they wanted to have a career they could call their own, and that they wanted to do things left undone that they really wanted to do but suspended for their family. In many cases this forms the core of the middle-age crisis of relationship-oriented type women. The identity of middle-aged women is questioned on these two levels.

Many people have been reported by Okamoto (2002) as being able to discover a new way of living due to this kind of middle-age crisis becoming a catalyst for looking back over their way of life. A woman retired, giving up the business she had poured her efforts into to a younger staff member, saying “I poured too much energy into my work up until now. I want to place more importance on my family and those around me and to deepen my connection with them.” A woman nears 50 years of age entered a master's course at university after contracting a serious illness and her children became independent stating “Since my 20s, I have put everything into my family for thirty years. From here on, I want to study the things that I wanted to study.” At any rate, many middle-aged women solve conflicts between the way of life as an individual that they desire and their connection with their significant other, discovering a new way of life that is acceptable to them. The existence of a balance between oneself as an individual and the self who cares for and supports others appears to be extremely important in the maturation of identity in middle age.

2. Clinical psychological understanding and support for middle-age crises

(1) Middle-age crises looked at from clinical psychology cases

Middle age is a period of structural crisis where the ego is shaken on numerous levels from both within and outside of the ego. In middle age, in addition to internal changes such as declining physical strength and vitality and a narrowing perspective of time, problems in various areas such as family and work cause upset of both the mind and body. First of all, I would like to examine situations where clinical psychological problems manifest in middle age.

1) Experiences of loss characteristic of middle age

When a clinical psychological problem manifests in middle age, the impetus for that crisis is often an experience of loss characteristic of middle age. These experiences of loss include the loss of the energetic and tough self that one used to be due to aging or a menopausal disorder, the loss of oneself as a parent due to children's independence and the loss of one's image of their parents who had supported them up until now due to death or aging of their parents.

Empty nest syndrome, depression and a sense of helplessness in women entering middle age have been attracting attention from the 1960s, which was comparatively long ago (e.g., Deykin, 1966). There have been reports amongst the most recent studies that many people evaluate their children's independence positively as an experience of childrearing success, and there have also been studies that indicated substantial differences in mothers' experience of separation with children depending upon the mother-child relationship up until that time (Kaneda/Okamoto, 2007).

However, attempts at independence by children who have reached puberty and adolescence often result in reckless independence. When the actual state of their child differs from the image of development they had imagined and hoped for over long years of childrearing, disappointment, and depression is caused in middle-aged parents, and their confidence as parents can even be lost.

In addition, the parents of people in their middle age have already entered old age and care has become necessary. In reality, many of them are facing death. These middle-aged people care for and support their parents, and are no longer able to depend upon them. If they are sound of mind and come to terms with this fact, then the psychological dynamics of the parent-child relationship change to accommodate this. However, if their dependence on their parents has not been concluded before they reach middle age, i.e., when psychological independence as an adult has not been achieved by the child, the aging and death of the parents that they depended upon can trigger clinical problems in middle age.

2) The barrier of unsolved psychological problems

A problem faced in middle age is that of solving unresolved psychosocial problems and conflicts encountered in previous developmental stages. Issues encountered in adolescence are independence from parents and the achievement of identity, i.e., placing appropriate psychological

distance between oneself and one's parents, discovering individuality that is different to one's parents, and finding one's place in society. The issue of early adulthood is that of building an intimate and equal relationship of interdependence and cooperation with one's spouse. Issues such as these are crucial for surviving adulthood as an adult, and are issues that must be achieved in each developmental stage. However, in psychotherapy, therapist encounters many clients who have put off these problems until middle age, and are thus unable to overcome the trials of middle age.

3) Generational stumbling blocks

The pivotal psychosocial issues of middle age are nurturing the next generation and supporting one's parents. These generational issues become the theme of many middle-aged cases of psychotherapy. Furthermore, today's generational issues do not only include issues regarding raising children (the next generation), but range to include caring for the generation above oneself in looking after and taking care of one's elderly parents. In other words, middle-age crises do not simply involve one's own problems and issues, but are deeply connected with the problems of one's family. Extremely important issues involved in the clinical psychology problems of families with a middle-aged child and elderly parents include not only care-related stress, but also the problem of reassembling one's lifestyle and way of life in order to support the life of one's parents. When this does not progress well, many people experience a feeling that their life has come to nothing and that they have sacrificed themselves for their parents. In these cases, a search for a state of being and way of life for themselves into which family can be incorporated without losing self is conducted in psychotherapy via a reexamination of half of one's life and their relationship with their husband.

(2) The viewpoint of psychotherapy and an understanding of middle-age crises in relation to the depth of the root of the conflict

I reflected upon the psychotherapy process for middle-aged clients I had been involved with up until now as a clinical psychologist, studying the characteristics of middle-age crises and the relevance of pathological levels (Okamoto, 2007). All clients were receiving psychotherapy for the first time in middle age, but comprehension of their problems and the depth of the psychotherapy and their process differed considerably depending upon whether the problem or the root of the unsolved conflict possessed by each client existed in the following levels: (1) Early Adulthood and later (Level A), (2) Puberty/Adolescence (Level B), or (3) Infancy (Level C). Here, I will outline these levels without referring to cases.

1) Middle-age crises and the depth of the root of the conflict

In case that there are unsolved conflicts and insufficiently achieved psychosocial issues in infancy to adolescence, they cause serious problems to come to the surface in middle age. The mind of the client themselves is violently shaken and it becomes difficult for them to comprehend

what is happening within their own mind. Of course, as was found by my predecessors, experiences during infancy are fundamentally essential as they form the foundations of one's mind, or the basis of the health of the ego. To put it more concretely, the strength and adaptability of the client's ego is greatly influenced by the health of the egos of the mother and father, whether they fulfill their function as parents, whether the home environment provided by the mother and father is a place where the child can feel safe, and whether it is a supportive environment.

2) The viewpoint of psychotherapy and the depth of the root of the conflict

Based upon this, I would like to discuss the viewpoint of middle-age psychotherapy tailored to the depth of the root of the conflict.

1. Level A

Level-A clients, in whom the issues of middle age themselves manifest as problems, are people who have lived a flexible lifestyle up until they experienced a middle-age crisis and who can be thought of as possessing a fundamentally healthy ego. Rapport with the psychotherapist is also easily formed compared to Level-C and -B clients, with reflection and self-restoration progressing easily.

I believe that the following points are important in psychotherapy for level-A clients. The first is straightening out problems and feelings that are currently being experienced while sympathizing with them. That is, a psychological, social, and life historical understanding of the crisis currently being experienced in middle age, and a psychological, social, and life historical understanding of parts that have been missing from their way of life and lifestyle up until now (although in many cases these are undetected by the client themselves).

The second point is aiming for the acquisition of a balanced self and lifestyle in the client's own style. In particular, because middle-aged people have many roles and responsibilities both at work and in the household, maintaining their lifestyle can be thought of as the foundation for continuing psychotherapy. In any case, it is easier to understand the problems of Level-A clients than those of Level-B and -C clients, and the clients themselves find it easier to be aware of them.

The third point is recognizing and supporting the client's positive aspects and the things that they have worked hard at. Each client has lived the first half of their life sincerely and in their own style. However, the people around them either have not noticed the client's efforts or have not evaluated them highly. Many middle-aged clients state "However old I become, I am truly happy to be recognized, accepted, thanked, and praised." The psychotherapist is an escort runner who stands beside the client, who has worked hard while harboring problems. I feel that recognizing and praising the client's positive aspects props up the client.

2. Level B

A more scrupulous and whole-hearted life review than that for Level-A clients is necessary in psychotherapy for Level-B clients who have entered middle age with psychosocial issues and

conflicts left unsolved from puberty and adolescence. At this level, considerable pathology is observed in the client's upbringing. In many cases, the parents have a distorted spousal relationship, and various problems are observed in the parents such as overprotectiveness, excessive interference, noninterference, and doting. In many of these cases, the pathology has become ingrained into the client even though the problem is in the parents, and the client is not aware of their distorted childhood, their problems, or their pathology. In psychotherapy, the clients venture into the distortion and lacking in their psychic world for the first time through scrupulous review of their experiences from childhood up until the present. Together with the client, the therapist straightens out and comes to comprehend the problems in the client's upbringing by getting the client to speak about various episodes. The therapist's viewpoint of what was damaged in the development of the client's ego due to their parents and the environment that they were raised in is important.

Secondly, it is also important to pay attention to things currently occurring in their lifestyle and reality. By doing this, one can understand the client's ability for responding to and tackling their reality, and through the progress of the psychotherapy, the way that the client's lifestyle and reality have changed over time can be an indicator for solving their problem.

3. Level C

Psychotherapy for middle-aged Level-C clients who have conflicts left over from their infancy is a much more difficult process than it is for Level-B clients. Firstly, the world of the mind that the client is experiencing is chaotic. Although they are keenly aware of negative feelings and discomfort such as feelings of persecution and anger, what is occurring is not at all comprehended by the client. In psychotherapy for this level, the therapist needs to listen attentively to the history of the client's upbringing while completely supporting the client. Firstly, the therapist needs to straighten out the origin of the problem, level of pathology, and pattern of repeated problems, and grasp the level of which the client will be able to comprehend the problem.

The second important approach is simply re-bringing up the ego of the client. That is, the client speaks about episodes of repeatedly experiencing negative experiences in the therapy, thereby repeatedly experiencing acceptance by the therapist regarding those experiences of negative feelings at every session. Through these experiences, they go about forming the foundation of their ego. Experiences of mistrust and persecution experienced repeatedly in the first half of their life up until now, especially during periods of growth, are portrayed and re-experienced as experiences of trust within the relationship with the therapist—the experience of “If I am self-assertive, I will be rejected” becomes an experience of being accepted without judgment whatever they might say, and independence and hard work, things that they have achieved that had been ignored up until now, become experiences of recognition and praise. When these are sufficiently experienced, the client is also able to feel and understand what it is to stand on one's own feet and speak one's mind. After that, the theme of the next step is their adaptation to social life.

3) Characteristics gained in the recovery from a middle-age crisis

Lastly, I would like to briefly discuss characteristics acquired in the recovery from a middle-age crisis. The first is the ability to trust one's own feelings. It is likely that this is a problem common to clients of all ages, and not just limited to psychotherapy for middle-aged clients. However, in middle-age crises, the ego is shaken by internal and external pressure on various levels. An important issue is regaining sense of self while straightening out those tremors one by one. As I have already explained, there are considerable differences between Levels A, B, and C in the process of acquisition of this sense of self.

The second characteristic is confronting the reality occurring within and outside the self, and accepting and living with that reality. For example, seeing their partner as they are, rather than as an idealized husband, and accepting that. This means enduring the extinction of the relationship between oneself and the idealized person, and facing reality. It could also be called the issue of coming to terms with and synthesizing idealization and disillusionment.

The third is, it goes without saying, restoration of the self, or reconstruction of the identity. This indicates acquiring a self that can be accepted proactively, placing adequate distance between others and achieving balance between one's way of life as an individual and caring for a significant other.

Whatever developmental stage the root of the problem lies in, problems put off unconsciously manifest themselves in middle age. The lifestyle that they had somehow maintained up until now, and the ego of the client waver under the internal and external pressure of a middle-age crisis. Accordingly, an important objective of psychotherapy for middle-aged clients harboring any level of problem or conflict is reflection upon and reconfirmation of the self. Ultimately, psychotherapy for middle-aged clients is the therapist understanding and supporting how the clients themselves want to live as they stand at the half-point ridge of their lives, having surveyed how they will overcome this ridge and having begun to form a picture of their future.

Conclusion —identity and generativity—

In this paper, I discussed identity crisis and developmental changes in adulthood as well as the viewpoint of understanding and support for middle-aged psychotherapy cases. As I explained at the beginning, these studies and clinical practices are based upon an unchanged awareness of these issues from the time of my own adolescence. Even the concepts of clinical development and adulthood development were new during my adolescent years, but today, over 30 years later, knowledge in the area of adulthood clinical development is being accumulated belatedly in comparison with other areas of clinical psychology.

An important issue in the future in the study of adulthood identity development and crises is

that of generativity of identity. That is, the issue of how identity tentatively developed in middle age is inherited by the next generation. Although this issue of generativity is an important theme of middle age, research has not advanced to a surprising degree. Hereafter, I would like to tackle the developmental clinical psychology issue of generativity in my research on the latter stage of middle age.

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