

Achievement and succession of professional identity in potters II :

A microanalysis of generativity through examination of the master–student relationship
at Tsunehide Shimabukuro Studio

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The purpose of the present study was to investigate the achievement and succession process of professional identity of a potter artist from the viewpoint of Erikson’s Epigenetic Schema. The interviewee was Prof. Tsunehide Shimabukuro, one of the leading potter artists in Okinawa, Japan. By the analysis of his narratives on the achievement process of mastery through master–student relationship at Tsunehide Studio. The following results were clarified: ①Seven important tasks were suggested for growing as a professional potter, e.g. active motive for choosing to become a potter, learning the system of the job and being responsible for the entire pottery process, “watch and learn” from the master, obtaining aesthetic sense. ②Professional identity was achieved in the process of re-achievement of psychosocial tasks from infancy to adolescence in professional work.

Key Words: professional identity, achievement and succession, generativity, potter artist.

Introduction

A time of crisis for “generativity”

What is the mechanism of succession (apprenticeship) in a profession? The worlds of culture, art, skill (craft), academics, and religion are gradually transforming themselves by allowing the old and new ways to overlap with one another. The world of professionals, in particular, has always guided social and human practice in all eras. And now, how is individually achieved professional works passed on to the next generation? We can follow its footsteps through history by zooming out to a macroscopic view; however, the psychological process of succession through face-to-face relationships between the older generation—the masters—and our generation, as well as the younger generation, is not yet explained. The key factors that allow an individual to become independent and proficient can also be captured from a psychological perspective, which can be further

applied to nurturing the next generation in other professional fields. But the definite characteristics and process have not been clarified yet.

It is a time of crisis for generativity. Particularly, significant facts from the past that are worth keeping alive, such as experiences of war, are not being shared, and many practical arts that require high skill levels cease to exist in modern Japan due to the lack of successors. These are some examples illustrating experiences and wisdom of the older generation that are not being passed on.

One major underlying factor in this generativity crisis may arise from the fading “master–student” relationship, the major interpersonal relationship/function in learning a profession. This may be because of the following: 1) the astounding development of an information-distribution system that allows information acquisition through research on the internet, making it unnecessary to ask masters and mentors for guidance; 2) the master–student relationship has a lower value since it is a strong hierarchical relationship, and this paternalism is not so much respected today; and 3) an adverse effect of mass democracy where the wise and ignorant are all equal. Another underlying reason may be that the basic human strength, depth, and maturity necessary to join a profession are deteriorating. At one time, “respect thy master and learn with all thy might” was a ubiquitous mentality and relationship archetype. Since it seems to be on the verge of extinction, much more may be at risk of loss.

Generativity

Generativity is a well-known term developed by Erikson (1950). The term encompasses the following: 1) generate and nurture the next generation, 2) generate and create new products and ideas, and 3) support others. In addition, McAdams (1998) explains that generativity has two characteristics—relationship with a chain of generations and self-contained individuality.

Relationship with a chain of generations is the practice of bearing, raising, and passing on information to subsequent generations. Self-contained individualism is defined as creativity in one’s own life and showing great value for something. These major components of generativity intertwine and affect each other to achieve this generative state. Taking a deeper look at self-contained individuality, however, we still have to learn more about the process of succession. The details of how mentality and skill are passed on, polished, and passed on again to the next generation are still a mystery.

From a different perspective, generativity consists of two dimensions—macro- and micro-succession. Macro-succession is a comprehensive succession from generation to generation, relaying the current values to the general public. In contrast, micro-succession is a person-to-person, face-to-face succession from master to student, more often involving oral communication. Although micro-succession may be explained as a psychological process, it is still not well defined.

Purposes of this study

What is the practice of generation and succession of profession through contemporary master–student

relationships? How can it be explained with a psychological theory? By exploring these questions, this study attempts to empirically investigate the process and characteristics of generation and succession in a profession through a master–student relationship in craftsmanship. The purposes of the present study are as follows:

1. What and how was it passed on from the older generation? (Process of independence)
2. What and how is it now passed on to the next generation? (Process of helping students become independent)
3. What are the details of generativity from the masters' and students' perspectives?

The process derived from interviews was then examined to see whether it could be applied to Erikson's (1950) Epigenetic Schema. Within the three purposes shown above, question 1) has already been published in Okamoto (2010); therefore, this article focuses on questions 2) and 3).

Hypothetical perspective on generation and succession in a profession

For the analytical perspective of this study, the hypothesis is as follows.

The process of re-experiencing a psychosocial task on a professional level

The process of re-experiencing a psychosocial task, as shown in Erikson's (1950) Epigenetic Schema, may also be seen on a professional level. That is, after selecting a unique career (Stage V: Identity), students will experience each stage of the psychosocial themes—Stage V-1 (Basic trust) to Stage V-5 (Achieving professional identity) in the professional work world. On the other hand, the master, through accepting his/her students, may experience Stages VII-1 (Basic trust in nurturing the next generation) to VII-7 (Raising a professional) in Stage VII (Generativity), a stage that relates to nurturing successors as a psychosocial theme.

Method and Participants

Based on the above purposes, interviews were conducted to closely examine the work and self of the leading potter of the Yomitan Tsuboya-style pottery, Tsunehide Shimabukuro, who is also a professor at Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts. The interview topics included Shimabukuro's life story with his professional work as the main thread, and generativity as seen through the master–student relationship. Although the interviews tell the original life and experiences of Shimabukuro, many of the details include characteristics that are universal.

In Study I, two interviews (around six hours) were conducted with Professor Shimabukuro to identify Purpose 1—the four steps in achieving his professional identity and the process of re-experiencing a psychosocial task on a professional level (Okamoto, 2010). In Study II, as examined in this article, the process of initiation and independence of the students at the Tsunehide Shimabukuro Pottery Studio are described, along with the master's perspectives and points for training students. This information was gathered in two additional interviews in approximately five hours, and forms the basis of an empirical discussion of Purpose 2 and 3.

Table 1. The contents of the interviews

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- (1) The characteristics and process of identity formation of potters through a master–student relationship
 - 1) What are the individual motives to become potters?
 - 2) After initiation, what are the points/skills to acquire in the process of becoming independent? What is the role of the master? What do students learn from masters?
 - 3) The relationship and involvement with independent students.
 - (2) Change in master–student relationship over time
 - 1) Difference in training and education between the present and previous generation when the master–student relationship was prevalent.
 - 2) The characteristics of professional training that are different from the education system in schools.
 - 3) Are advancements in pottery techniques through the years affecting ways of life, work, and interpersonal relationships (especially master–student relationships) for potters?
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The details of the interviews are shown in Table 1. Each interview lasted for two to three hours, and a total of four interviews, including the two interviews for Study 1, were conducted for this study.

Results and Discussion

1. The process of mastery and succession as a potter through a master–student relationship

(1) Micro-succession through master–student relationship—the process of attaining expertise from initiation to independence

In the professional work world of potters where masters and students work together daily, how is a master’s mentality and skill passed down to students in such a relationship? To obtain an answer, the following questions were asked: “What are the requisites for students to attain expertise from initiation to independence?” “What is being passed on to students in a daily, face-to-face work environment?” “How is it being passed down?” The answers to these questions are stated below. In this article, Shimabukuro’s words from the four interviews, mainly the third and fourth interviews, are included as true to his words as possible, and their psychological implications are discussed.

1) Motive for choosing to become a potter

The first and foremost factor to become a potter is the student’s motive for choosing to become a potter at Shimabukuro’s studio, in another words, one’s attitude towards making pottery one’s occupation. Tsunehide Shimabukuro Pottery Studio specializes not in porcelain or pottery as art, but in ceramics, mainly dishware. Those who wish to enter the doors of Shimabukuro’s studio must understand and agree with the characteristics

and orientation of the studio.

Another important factor in choosing to become a potter is the student's strong initiative, which is subject to severe scrutiny. The master will never force students to join his studio but rather wait patiently for the students to join willingly. Traditionally in the worlds of art, academics, and religion, many students choose to enter that world with deep admiration for a master's prominent work or character. At Shimabukuro's studio, some students chose to join the studio because they were attracted to the master's work and skill, while others joined with no experience only because of a strong interest in pottery. Some happened to see that the studio was accepting students. In any case, the important factor is that every student decided to enter this world on his/her own freewill.

2) Learning the system of the job and being responsible for the entire pottery process

The second step to become an expert potter is learning the entire process of creating a piece of pottery. Although these are only basics in the job, they involve quite difficult tasks. A layperson may imagine pottery as creating a plate by using throwing wheels; however, the actual process of creating one piece of work requires a series of long and complicated steps. The whole process requires endurance, whereas the various steps demand stamina, perseverance, concentration, and a sophisticated pair of eyes and hands, as well as a good sense and momentum.

In particular, preparing the basic ingredients for pottery, namely forming naturally obtained clay, blending it to create clay that is suitable for making a product, is tough labor that requires stamina and perseverance. Although this blending and preparing of clay can now be done automatically with pug-mills, there this job has long been one for newcomers in training, along with other routine duties.

At Tsunehide studio, however, the entire staff (students) cooperates in the processes of preparing clay, forming, painting, firing in a kiln, and finalizing the products. While division of labor has become popular in other studios, each staff person at Shimabukuro's studio assumes responsibility for the entire process of finishing a product. This method is Shimabukuro's original idea, and he claims that it is a shortcut in the process of becoming an independent potter. Division of labor may be more efficient for mass production and a smarter choice from a management perspective; however, it only allows students to learn one part of the pottery-making process. Students can only acquire the mentality and skill necessary to become independent by giving them the responsibility of creating their products from the beginning to the end.

3) “Watch and learn” from the master

According to Professor Shimabukuro, one of the most crucial abilities needed to grow as a professional is the ability to “watch and observe.” The skills of professionals are not easily described by words, nor by what can be relayed with words. Therefore, they are often passed down by observation, or by “stealing their master's skills.” How do students “watch and learn” from their masters without oral instruction?

At Tsunehide studio, the master himself throws pottery on the wheel and creates a model product to be put on display. Students create their own products with that example in mind. The master keeps quiet during this process. In the large workshop of the studio, the wheels are lined up with the master and staff facing each other

with their backs against the walls. When Professor Shimabukuro molds or paints, staff “casually” watch him work and incorporate the movements into their own work. When the master introduces a new technique or creates an extraordinary product such as Zushi-game (also known as Zishi-gami in Okinawa, a type of urn popular in this area) or a large Shisa (an Okinawan lion dog statue), he will gather the students around and let them closely examine his work.

“Watching and stealing the master’s skill” is a process that was experienced by Professor Shimabukuro since childhood. His father and master, Joukei Shimabukuro, did not teach his son, Tsunehide, anything about making pottery. However, the work of making pottery was very appealing in young Tsunehide’s eyes. Joukei was an expert wheel thrower, and Tsunehide would stand close by his father’s side to watch him work. He would watch “how clay was shaped with hand motions,” and when his father moved away from his chair, he quickly sat in his position and tried to imitate those motions. His observation skill was simply remarkable. When Tsunehide was eight-years old, he was able to freely maneuver a kick wheel and, by college graduation, he had mastered many techniques (Okamoto, 2010). This concentrated observation skill seems to be the foundation of proficiency and, in order to acquire skills, many repetitions of the same task must be done.

4) Repetitive work

Much of a professional’s work involves repetitive tasks that require concentration. Professional potters may produce over 100 products of the same shape and colored design every day. This process of preparing the clay, to molding, painting, firing and finalizing, is repeated within a three-month cycle, since firing the climbing kiln is done only four times a year. To place the products on the market with the Shimabukuro name, all potters must be able to shape and paint with integrity. Potters, therefore, must train themselves to have the integrity to produce the same shape and colored design every time. Through this daily repetitive task, timed with the firing cycle, the professionals gain integrity.

5) The ability to distinguish great artwork

Gaining integrity is complemented by the ability to distinguish great artwork from the rest. Of the three major processes in pottery—molding, painting, and firing—molding and painting reflect the individual talent of students. As for firing, Professor Shimabukuro takes charge of adjusting the temperature and time. When a less-than-perfect product is created in the firing, a critique session is held to discuss where the process went wrong. If the problem was found in the molding or painting, the student realizes the need to improve his/her skills.

6) Obtaining aesthetic sense: “ability to feel and accept beauty” and the “ability to internalize and create great artwork”

It is extremely difficult to “teach aesthetic sense”, therefore, the potters have to polish their aesthetic sense by themselves. According to Professor Shimabukuro, the secret to gaining aesthetic sense is to watch many great art works, internalizing them, finding excellent work through your own eyes and trying to create an even better piece. Gaining aesthetic sense is deeply related to the “ability to watch” (stated in 3), and observation is strongly affected by the aesthetic sense of the beholder. To see an art piece and “be overwhelmed”—the process

of internalizing wonderful art work—begins here. Professor Shimabukuro says that copying a remarkable piece is a good beginning. Copies can give off a different feel with different clay or glaze enamel. This is an “output of what has been received from the master.” Repeatedly creating products with that wonderful art piece in mind eventually leads to producing “the one.” Even when a piece was made with the same image in mind, it may turn out completely different, due to a slight difference in the firing process in the climbing kiln.

Professor Shimabukuro’s works are original designs rooted in Okinawan nature and culture, such as arabesque, gosu rou-nuki kaimon (gosu blue shell pattern with a wax-resisting dyeing effect), Indian coral tree, shell ginger, and arranged Minsa weaving. He claims that all his designs and techniques have a source. His famous technique “Kakiotoshi,” for example, was a technique seen in a Chinese Jishou kiln; however, when created with clay and glaze enamel from Okinawa, it produces another type of feeling. His experiment with Minsa weaving patterns on pottery defined Professor Shimabukuro’s originality. This demonstrates specific proof of his “ability to feel and accept beauty” and the “ability to internalize and create great artwork.”

Other professional potters have written of their own experiences with this core practice of “gaining” aesthetic sense in their succession of skill. The late Yasokichi Tokuda III, who was designated as a human national treasure for his Kutani pottery using the Saiyu technique, at a young age was deeply moved by Lucio Fontana’s style of slashing the center of a pure black cloth and creating a single white line. Fontana’s art greatly influenced Tokuda’s pottery life thereafter, and he talks of “a beautiful single line in the heart,” as follows: “Beauty is hard to find inside one’s self. If only I could see what I feel is beautiful and create it, but this is all too abstract. So I believe that by looking outside, you see inside yourself. The line you like is the beauty that your heart approves. So look outside and search for a beautiful line. The line you find beautiful is the line you will also find within your heart.” (Inui/Asahi Shimbun Company, 2011)

7) Gaining originality with skill and aesthetic sense

Students who have reached a certain level of skill and aesthetic sense can then become independent and establish their own studios. The time it takes from initiation to independence is about five years for college graduates with a pottery degree, and ten years for those who began with no experience.

Becoming independent means students will become masters themselves. Once independent, new masters will never ask for guidance from their old masters. All masters must solve all of their issues at their studios on their own. Professor Shimabukuro himself has no one from whom to seek guidance and always solves his own problems. When faced with an unprecedented problem in the pottery process, he reads technical materials to find a solution, although books do not often provide the best answers. When working with glazing, in particular, Professor Shimabukuro creates test pieces with old reference materials in hand, and repeats these steps to gain experience. A professional’s perseverant attitude is displayed here. Self-improvement and research must be a lifelong work for professionals in any field.

8) Two types of succession

Approximately 30 potters have become independent and are making a living with pottery after working at the Tsunehide Studio. This is an astounding number, considering that making a living with pottery is said to be

difficult in this age. To this day though, none of these students have given up on making a living through pottery.

Interestingly, students who have become independent can be divided into two types. The first type of students succeeded at copying Professor Shimabukuro's style and later added their own touch, whereas the second type broke off from the master's style upon independence and began producing their original styles. Although all students at Tsunehide Studio learn many skills, from the basics of clay making and glaze making to decorating, firing, and completing a product, the first type take more time in developing their style. As they produce more of their own pottery, their style gradually begins to change. On the other hand, the second type has a strong resolve to show their own aesthetic sense different from the traditional Tsuboya-style pottery and that of their master. Professor Tsunehide does not deny either type; he hopes his students can be true to themselves and pursue their own paths. As master, he has given his students the following three messages: 1) It is "possible to make a living" as a potter; 2) If you would like to be a pottery artist and not just a potter, your art work must be unique; and 3) Products must be practical and usable, not just good for display.

(2) Process of proficiency from initiation to independence from the viewpoint of Erikson's Epigenetic Schema

As stated above, Professor Shimabukuro believes the process of gaining proficiency in pottery requires the following seven steps:

- 1) Initiative in choosing to become a potter (Choosing to join the master's professional work world by his/her own will)
- 2) Study of the work system (Mastering the rules of the professional work world) and responsibility (Being in charge of the whole pottery process)
- 3) Observation and learning (Using aesthetic sense and "watching and stealing" the master's skill)
- 4) Repetitive tasks (Repeating tasks to acquire skills)
- 5) Ability to distinguish great artwork
- 6) Cultivation of aesthetic sense (See many great artworks and cultivate aesthetic sense)
- 7) Mastering originality with skill and aesthetic sense

This process of forming a professional identity will be discussed in accordance with Erikson's Epigenetic Schema. Table 2 shows the corresponding tasks in each step toward proficiency as compared to Erikson's Schema.

Table 2. Stages and characteristics of formation and succession of the pottery profession from a student's and master's perspectives

1. Initiation

1) Student	Choose pottery as a profession and choose the master's style using their own initiative.
2) Master	Wait for students' initiative.
3) Psychological task	Trust in the master and the professional work world. The master and the student share the same world, orientation, and values.
4) Stage in professional work world	Stage V-1: Basic trust in the professional work world

2. Mastering the system of work

1) Student	Endure all chores and hard labor (including jobs that pose little interest).
2) Master	Present work rules. Instruct students to act by them.
3) Psychological task	Persevering/enduring. Learn the rules of the world and abide by them.
4) Stage in professional work world	Stage V-2: Ego Autonomy in the professional work world

3. Responsibility

1) Student	Be responsible for all of their own products from beginning to end.
2) Master	Allow students to experience all the processes of pottery. Lead them on the authentic road (mentality and skill) to independence.
3) Psychological task	Pacing with others while working independently.
4) Stage in professional work world	Stage V-2: Ego Autonomy in the professional work world

4. Watch and learn

1) Student	Steal the master's skills while exerting his/her own aesthetic sense. Discover the main points in each skill on their own.
2) Master	The master does not teach. Always shows how he works.
3) Psychological task	"Watching" with voluntary initiative.
4) Stage in professional work world	Stage V-3: Initiative in the professional work world

5. Repetitive tasks

1) Student	Repeat tasks to master skills. Master the uniformity of products.
2) Master	Work in the same environment. Indicate the characteristics of the studio.
3) Psychological task	Acquisition of the sense of competence based on industry.
4) Stage in professional work world	Stage V-4: Industry and sense of competence in the professional work world

6. Distinguishing great art work

1) Student	Be able to distinguish great art work from the rest.
2) Master	Lead critique meetings after firings (Instructions, particularly on molding and painting)
3) Psychological task	Learning discrimination in the professional work world
4) Stage in professional work world	Stage V-4: Industry and sense of competence in the professional work world

7. Gaining aesthetic sense

1) Student	Cultivate aesthetic sense by watching many great art works.
2) Master	Introduce great art works.
3) Psychological task	Gaining independence after acquiring artistic sensibility and skill; Once independent Exerting uniqueness based on skill and aesthetic sense
4) Stage in professional work world	Stage V-5: Independence in the professional work world

1) Basic trust

Erikson proposed “basic trust” as the main psychosocial task for infants in their earliest developmental stage (Stage I). In order to live, we must trust our surrounding world, trust the people in it, and believe in ourselves. This feeling is acquired through interactions with mothers and fathers with whom we build intimate relationships.

Process of proficiency in pottery 1): “Joining the studio with initiative” is based on the premise of taking the initiative to choose a career; however, this suggests the same psychological theme as basic trust. Joining the studio is assuming trust in the master and the professional work world, and sharing this world. As infants learn a sense of security and basic trust for themselves and others through interactions with mothers and people around them, new students who enter the professional pottery work world must also learn basic trust—a sense of belonging and trust in people around them—to succeed as a potter. In sum, the foremost foundational psychosocial theme in a professional work world is basic trust in this world.

2) Ego autonomy

Erikson proposed ego autonomy as the psychosocial task in the second developmental stage (Stage II). At this stage, toddlers internalize the system of accepting external influence and of controlling their own impulses. Balancing external and internal demands is an extremely difficult psychological task. In other words, ego autonomy involves learning and experiencing the rules and regulations (“law and order”) that exist in our world.

Process of proficiency in pottery 2): “Learning the system of work (mastering the rules of the professional work world)” and 3) “Responsibility (being in charge of the whole pottery process)” are certainly the processes of mastering the law and order of a distinct professional work world. This involves enduring the trivial tasks and hard labor of the whole pottery process, not tending to tasks of interest and desire. From the master’s perspective, his task is to introduce the rules of the professional work world and train his students to abide by them.

3) Initiative

According to Erikson, the psychosocial task for children in early childhood, from three or four years of age to five and six (stage III), is “initiative.” Initiative is the power to display their own desires after acquiring the ability to control external and internal influences. It is the ability to act with one’s own will while holding external and internal balance. In this period, children begin to mentally form elements related to social values and order that could also be called ideal models. Through daily games, children imitate their fathers and mothers—boys “act” like their fathers and girls “act” like their mothers—and create a foundation for defining “me.” This process is called “identification” in dynamic psychology.

Process of proficiency in pottery 4): To “watch and learn” is to see the “hands” (or skill) of the master in your own hands, to identify strongly with the master. At first, students “copy” their masters, and through repetition, student potters learn the correct motions of a proficient potter. Identification with not only the skills on a behavioral level, but also the master’s way of life can be observed.

4) Industry

Erikson’s Stage IV: psychosocial task for children in middle childhood is called “Industry,” the attitude of school-age children who are working hard on academics. Children practice writing and solving math problems every day to master literacy and computation. When an internal intellectual curiosity and external demand are well balanced, a “sense of competence” is nurtured, which is the feeling of “I can make it on my own. Learning is fun.” This sense of competence provides inevitable strength and support to live in this social world.

Process of proficiency in pottery 5): To “master skills and uniformity through the repetitions of tasks” is inextricably linked to initiative as mentioned in Stage 3). A potter’s mastery of skill through repetitions of tasks also relates to the same psychological theme as a sense of competence and Industry—“I can make it on my own. Working is fun.”

This process can be displayed as shown in Figure 1. Hypothesis (2) notes that the process of proficiency for student potters in the professional work world can be interpreted with Erikson’s Epigenetic Schema from Stages I to V. The master, on the other hand, follows levels I to VII within Stage VII (Generativity) in a manner that is inextricably linked to the student’s process. The master will ensure that his students achieve the tasks in Stages I

to V by providing help and support. The study found that they had mutual experience in the master–student relationship. This mutual interaction and the effort of achieving the psychological tasks specify the details of formation and succession of a profession on a micro level. This may describe succession in other professions as well.

In summary, the following roles are expected of a master and student in the process of formation and succession within a profession.

The first role expected of a master is to “show” his own professional work world and his work, “accept” those who are attracted to his world, and provide “space” for them. This equates to the master and the student sharing one professional work world, orientation, and set of values to build mutual trust. The second role is to teach the rules and regulations of the professional work world and encourage the students to abide by them. Rules in professional pottery involve the techniques and methods of each pottery process and the rules for surviving in the world, which signifies ego autonomy in the professional work world. If a third theme were to be added, it would be “to watch over.”

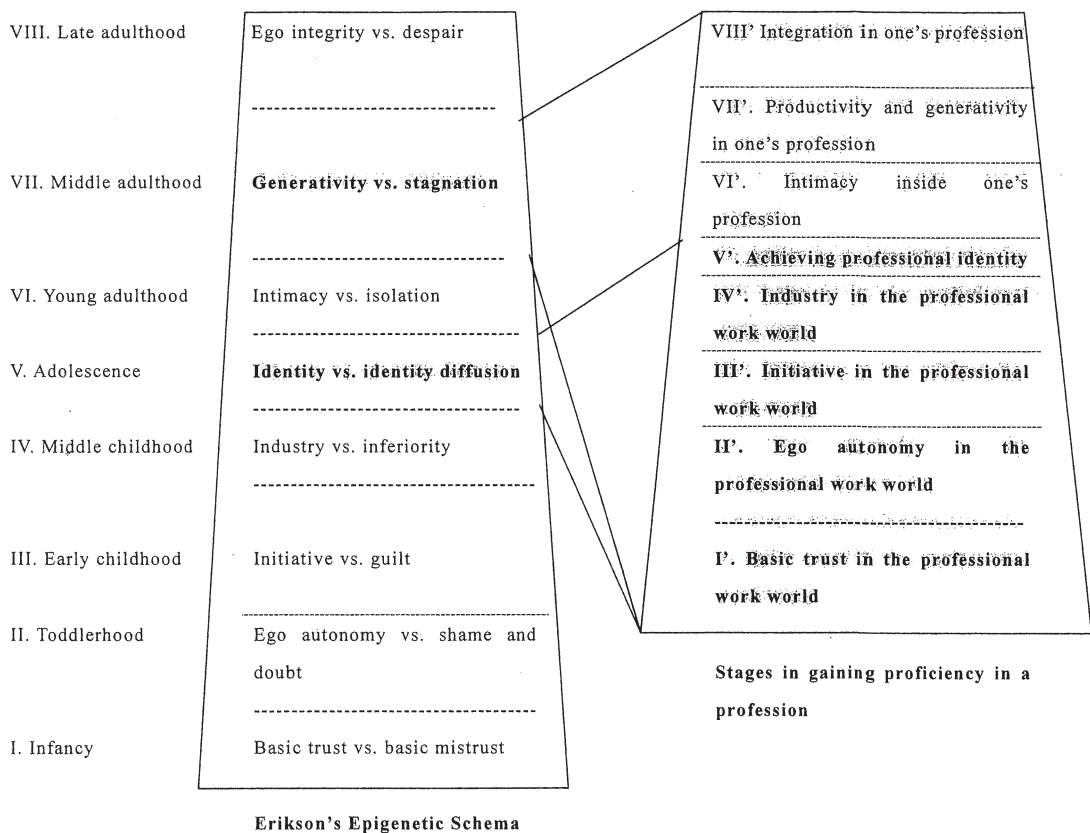


Figure 1. Relationships among the processes of psychosocial task experiences in lifecycle and profession

The roles of a student and his master are similar to two sides of the same coin. The role of a student is to have the “sensibility to be attracted to” and “energy” to join the master’s professional work world and his work (may include the master’s human nature and character). This is the enduring energy to exert continuous effort in mastering the rules of the professional work world, and the ability to “watch” with one’s own initiative and sensibility. It is extremely significant that the psychosocial tasks, which are the foundation of ego development, are also the foundation of proficiency in the professional work world.

2. Spiritual nature that supports succession of a profession—the foundation of “basic trust” and aesthetic sense

Till now in this article the process of a potter’s proficiency process through a master–student relationship has been discussed. However, the process is more than just a tale of the student’s and master’s growth. Since the 17th century, unique pottery, dyeing, and textile arts have been cultures involving succession in Okinawa. This signifies a spiritual nature that supports a professional’s life and work in this land. This section will discuss the cultural background that supports a potter’s professional work, which is the foundational spiritual nature of Okinawan craftsmanship.

Many potter studios in Naha city, Okinawa, has traditionally produced Okinawan Tsuboya-style pottery. Festivals and prayers are still a daily ritual there, providing spiritual support for a professional potter’s work. Religion and myth rooted in its unique history and nature are alive in Okinawa. One former student of Professor Tsunehide’s studio, currently a professional potter, shares, “God is felt close in Okinawa. Half-hearted work is out of the question.”

The past and present people of Okinawa have long believed that various gods are found at the heart of three supreme deities: the lord of heaven who is the ruler of the universe, the god of creation who is the visiting god from Nirai Kanai in the Far East Sea, and Amamikyo of the Ryukyu myth. They are related to the people’s way of life. “Utaki,” the holy ground of gods, is the place that Okinawans believe the guardian god of the village and its people live in, a place where the villages come to “ugan” (to pray). This is an important event throughout the year. Springs, wells, large trees, and stones have been known as house gods, and people have prayed to them for protection. In Tsuboya, a well at the foot of a large tree (Kaa) is also a holy ground, where festivals celebrating the God of Fire and God of Water are held eight times a year. The priest who leads the festivals is traditionally a woman.

As noted in Okamoto (2010), pottery making is a practice that combines the elements of nature—earth, water, wind, and fire. During the firing ceremony at the climbing kiln, the master presents Awamori (traditional Okinawan rice alcohol), rice, and salt, and prays to the God of Fire, “May great ware be born.” Worship of nature’s elements; fire, water, and earth; along with gratitude have created a mutual mentality within potters, making Tsuboya a world and community protected by the Gods of Fire, Water, and Earth.

Another essential element is the pottery wheel that is the core of pottery skill, and said to be the most important technology from ancient times. One of the central elements of modern industry, the lathe, originated

from a pottery wheel. Pottery wheels were introduced to Japan in the fifth century, and formal pottery using wheels spread in the 17th century in Tsuboya. The technology of a pottery wheel was already completed in the 17th century, and although electric wheels and automatic wheels were developed to replace kick wheels, its basic technology has remained the same. Professor Shimabukuro still uses a kick wheel for his work. A professional's skill to freely maneuver a machine such as the wheel is a sophisticated skill that combines hands, arms, feet, and aesthetic sense with the wheel's movements.

Unique creativity is born from continuous succession using this traditional machine. The traditional practical arts of Okinawa, including pottery, did not mass-produce new products with ever-evolving state-of-the-art technology; however, they devised ways to produce everyday necessities where none of these existed. It was a practice that created products with the most essential senses of a human—the senses to see, touch, and feel. Clay for the pottery and ingredients for the glazes are all offerings from nature. This succession of traditional skill and value as the most fundamental strength may be the reason that the unique practical philosophy of the “beauty of use” was established. In such a world, “God” is felt close every day, while prayer and machine are combined in the work.

It may not be an overstatement to say that pottery making generates a cyclical perspective on the world and life. A turning pottery wheel symbolizes the turning earth and the universe. Moreover, pottery making is cyclic since firing at the climbing kiln is repeated every three months. This happens to coincide with the human practice of living with nature and its cycles. I cannot help but think that a deep-down sensibility is invigorated by this “sense of security” as protected by these primordial elements.

3. Future tasks of the study on generativity in profession

Although much literature focused on identity that can be found in the last 60 years, studies on generativity, in particular psychological research on the formation and succession of professions, are difficult to find. A micro-analysis of a succession process and its psychological characteristics in a field with a long history in academics and practical art is an important task for the future. Furthermore, discussing the principles of the “master–student relationship” related to succession and to strengthening a profession would be useful comparing various types of master–student relationships, contemporary as well as traditional, would be a valuable task in this time of crisis for generativity.

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