

## Changes in Youth's Authority Concept After a Group Accommodative Event

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### Abstract

This paper concerns moral development in the framework of cognitive modeling. Traditionally, moral development researches have been conducted, mostly discussing different level of development among subjects of different ages and their developmental tendencies and orders. This methodology works well in finding the ratio of subjects in each level at the time of research, as well as subjects' tendencies. However, it fails to address the paths taken to move from one level to next, as well as from the low-level to high-level.

In order to get accurate information on the process of changes and order, it is necessary to conduct follow-up researches with same subjects and predict the determining factors.

This paper discusses the moral development changes taken place during a school group accommodative event.

The objective for the event set by school was to "provide activities which would allow students to learn how to function in a group, as well as allow them to have a desirable morale-learning experience. The purpose was to nurture collectiveness and to learn social abilities in a small group environment by interaction, being in the situation where each other's role and relationship are clearly defined. We can say that this activity was relative in providing the necessary information concerning the authority concept development where problems usually exist between the leaders and the followers. Our results indicate that there was a notable difference between males and females in terms of authority concept development.

### Method

The study was conducted among 72, public elementary school fifth-grade students (33 males and 39 females) in the Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. Subjects are divided into groups of six with mixed genders. Then students decided on different roles and responsibilities for each member, including the group leader. The collective accommodative event over two nights and three days took place in the form of a camping school.

The questionnaires were prepared based on the materials used in Watanabe's study (1989) on authority and were given both within a week prior to and after the event. To

check the longevity of the changes in the subjects, the third questionnaire was given three months after the event.

### Results and Discussions

Damon's developmental stage theory

Concerning authority concept development there are two studies conducted: one by Damon (1980) and the other one by Watanabe (1989) whose study tested whether Damon's findings would hold true with Japanese subjects. However, neither one of those studies did not illustrate how one would advance from one level to the next, nor did it show the relationship between morale education and morale development.

Our understanding of Damon's developmental theory, as indicated in Fig. 1, shows developmental stages in a structure (authority and merit) and sub-stages (absolute-relative). With this interpretation, the grading accuracy had improved to 86%.

Changes in authority concept development stages and observation

The authority concept development stage distribution before and after the group accommodating event is shown in Fig. 2. Of those, 25 (34.7%) have seen changes in their development steps. Fig. 3 shows the changes that had taken place: changes made from both level 1-A to 1-B and 0-B to 1-B, had most with 8 people each. It is noteworthy to see a significant number of students had moved up from 0-B to 1-B, skipping 1-A altogether. When observing the changes from 0-B to 1-B, the axis indicating relativity which is found in both does not see any changes. However, the change does take place on the "authority and merit" axis. Also, it is believed that the reason for no movement recorded from 1-B to 2-B is because of the holding of the axis of relativity on 1-B leads to the absoluteness of the "authority and merit".

Gender differences

There was no apparent difference between genders recorded when the overall distribution was looked at initially (before the trip:  $D=0.0219$ ; after the trip= $0.207$ ). However, when individual stages were closely analyzed significant difference was revealed: before the event 0-B (male: 15.2%, female: 43.6%), 1A (male: 39.4%, female: 20.5%); after the event 1-A (male: 36.4%, female: 5.1%). (Prior to the event: 0-B ( $\chi^2=6.55, df=1, p<.05$ ), 1-A (

2=4.94,df=1,p<.05). After the event: 1-A ( 2=7.14,df=1,p<.01)).

To examine this finding further, each individual's developmental changes and answers were analyzed. After the analysis, it was clear that males changed from "0-A 0-B 1-A 1-B", exactly following Damon's developmental stages (Damon, 1980). However, in case of females 44% of them moved up to 1-B without going through 1-A. In case of women, being more "considerate" than men is a part of their nature therefore it is quite possible that the reason for their thoughtfulness has changed from "affection/desire" "focusing on the authority figure", at least in case of Japanese elementary school female children. Discussion concerning this finding may suggest problems related to Damon's development stages process for females.

Educational effectiveness of the group accommodative event

When the third and the final questionnaire was conducted two individuals' developmental changes had gone down, rather than up, making the retention rate 92%. When analyzing the differences between the questionnaire given immediately after the event and three months after the event, we can say that with 34.7% of the participants experiencing the advancement in their developmental steps in an event which lasted for less than a week, the impact the group accommodative event had on the authority principle concept was very profound.

We feel that this was a study that shed some light on what kind of experience affects children's developmental stages while revealing its educational significance, as well.

FIG. 1 : Early Authority Levels.

2	Merit • Respect	2-A	2-B
1	Focuses on the authority figure	1-A	1-B
0	Affection • Desire	0-A	0-B
		Absolute	Relative

FIG 2 : Subject distribution on developmental stages after the group accommodative event

	0-A	0-B	1-A	1-B	2-A	2-B
Before	4	22	21	15	10	0
After	1	14	14	28	15	0

FIG. 3 : Developmental change charts

	After				After		
Before	M	F	T	Before	M	F	T
0 - A	0 - B			0 - B	1 - A		
	1	1	2		1	0	1
	1 - A				1 - B		
	1	0	1		1	7	8
					2 - A		
					0	1	1

  

	After				After		
Before	M	F	T	Before	M	F	T
1 - A	1 - B			1 - B	2 - A		
	3	5	8		2	1	3
	2 - A						
	0	1	1				

### References

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