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Significance of *Amae* as a Transitional Mechanism:
Function and Role of the “Zone of Practicable Adaptability”

臨床教育学研究科臨床教育学専攻

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Dissertation for Ph.D

Significance of *Amae* as a Transitional Mechanism

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

SIGNIFICANCE OF *AMAE* AS A TRANSITIONAL MECHANISM: FUNCTION AND ROLE OF THE “ZONE OF PRACTICABLE ADAPTABILITY”

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Developmental theorists past and present have grappled with the question concerning the contributions of individual and environmental factors in understanding the process of developmental changes. Today, most developmental researchers recognize that both elements play an essential role in development. However, question remains as to the mechanism of change that underlies such interaction and the active role environment play in inducing the developmental change. This dissertation attempts to explain the mechanism of change underlying developmental process through examining how the concept of transition embodied in the Japanese indigenous theory of *amae* contribute to such process.

Review of major developmental theories of dynamic systems approach and sociocultural framework illustrated changes to occur gradually with various underlying mechanisms spontaneously emerge to assist in bringing about smooth transitions. This point to the possible existence of the zone of practicable adaptability which enables experimentation to take place even after one has acquired certain level of competency. The mechanism exists in the form of *amae*, which is the utilization of strategic non-intervention by the Japanese mothers and teachers to create a *mimamoru* type environment in allowing children to learn through experiencing.

Comparison of *amae* to the constructs of dependency and attachment also suggests the zone of practicable adaptability to exist as a transitional mechanism that allows gradual transference of the attachment function from biological based attachment bonding to other potential attachment figures as one's social network expands with age. The meta-analysis of the therapist-client interaction in five case studies concerning aggressive behaviors, school refusal, and aging reveal that the clients' ability to recognize the “environmental affordance” of the zone of practicable adaptability coupled with the therapists' allowance of such respite period to take place is a prerequisite for a successful intervention.

The results of the study reveal the zone of practicable adaptability as a transitional mechanism that allows the coexistence of both existing and novel behaviors until an adaptive, dominant form takes precedence. The zone of practicable adaptability suggests developmental changes to occur in a gradual fashion where the process of discovering how to achieve a developmental milestone is what brings about adaptive change. The transitional mechanism also presents a new way of looking at the role the environment plays in facilitating adaptive change. This provides new insights to current developmental models, pointing to a need to focus future research in understanding how intervening from the perspective of environment can foster healthy, adaptive changes

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INTRODUCTION

The study of human development seeks to understand how human beings change from the time of conception to death, describing the growth of humans throughout the lifespan. As defined by Valsiner (1998), development is the “constructive transformation of form in irreversible time through the progress of organism↔environment interaction,” implying that all biological, psychological, and social organisms exist and develop only because of their permanent exchange relations with their environments (p.192). As reflected in Valsiner’s description of development, the interaction of nature and nurture is considered as the current mantra in developmental science for explaining how and why people change throughout life. Developmental theorists past and present have grappled with the question concerning the relative contributions of individual and environmental factors in understanding the process of developmental changes. For instance, Skinner’s (1953) theory of operant conditioning perceives a child’s behavioral changes as a passive response to the environment’s active control, through rewards and punishments. In contrast, Gesell’s (1928) maturational model perceives changes as stemming from the passive features of the environment supporting the behavioral changes as programmed in the child’s genetics. Although these models are useful in explaining the roles genetic factors and environmental experiences play in shaping the course of development, the positions held by Gesell and Skinner are essentially extremist positions which are no longer supported in light of current research of developmental psychology (Keenan & Evans, 2009). Today, most developmental researchers recognize that both elements play an essential role in development, though debate continues as to how each factor contributes dynamically to the process of developmental changes.

Addressing the need to move away from perceiving developmental changes as dichotomous, either-or in nature, contemporary scholars have taken the stance of viewing

developmental changes as co-constructed and facilitated by both the individual and the environment (Lewis & Mayes, 2012). Sameroff's (2009) transactional model of development is one such example that emphasizes the dynamic and adaptive nature of the environment and the organism as an active participant in its own growth. According to the transactional model, development in the individual is influenced by interplay with processes in the individual's context over time. As shown in Figure 1-1, the child's characteristic (C_1) at Time 1 interacts with the environment (E_1) at Time 1 to produce a transformed child characteristic and environment at Time 2, where both the child and the environment at Time 1 are similarly transformed from some earlier time, Time $n-1$ (Sameroff, 2009; Lewis & Mayes, 2012). The transactional model not only indicates that the individual and the environment are never independent of each other, it also illustrates how these features transform over time in response to changes stemming from either the individual or the environment that require new adaptations in one or the other. However, unlike developmental models in the past, the transactional model suggests that developmental changes are a product of the continuous dynamic interactions of the individual and the environment that both changes over time for adaptive purposes.

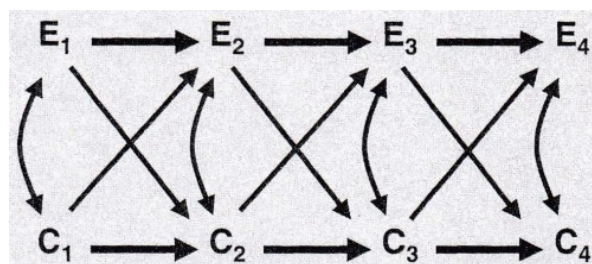


Figure 1-1. Transactional Model with Continuities in the Child and the Environment

Source: From "The Transactional Model" (p. 13), by A. Sameroff, in *The Transactional Model of Development: How Children and Contexts Shape Each Other*, A. Sameroff (Ed.), 2009, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Books.

Although the transactional model provides important insights as to how adaptive changes stem from the dynamic interplay or “passes” between the individual and the environment, question remains as to the mechanism of change that underlies such interplay. Piaget (1952) addressed this issue by exploring the process of change underlying the organism↔environment interaction through the concept of equilibration, a movement from equilibrium to disequilibrium and back to equilibrium. Equilibration is a process that promotes the development of increasingly complex forms of thoughts and knowledge through assimilation and accommodation of schemes and organizes patterns of behavior as the individual engages with and comes to learn the environment.

According to Piaget (1952), an individual is in a state of equilibrium when one can address new situations using existing schemes (assimilation). When encountered with circumstances for which present knowledge and skills are ineffective, the individual experiences a form of mental discomfort or disequilibrium. This prompts one to deal with the situation through reorganizing or replacing existing schemes with entirely new ones in dealing with a new situation (accommodation). Equilibration helps explain how children are able to move from one cognitive stage of thought into the next by maintaining a balance between assimilation and accommodation, two complementary processes involved in the individual’s adaptation to the environment (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2013).

Piaget’s concept of equilibration contributed greatly to the understanding of the mechanism of change that underlies the process of how an individual engages with and comes to know the environment during developmental transitions. His claim that cognitive development proceeds through a series of stages, where each stage featuring a structured whole in a state of equilibration, provides a rich description of what it is we develop. However, more clarification in terms of “the transitional mechanisms both within a stage and

from stage to stage” is needed in order to understand “how children’s awareness of a contradiction would lead them to the solution that resolves the contradiction” (Miller, 2011, p. 79). Additionally, by explaining changes as stemming from the individual actively assimilating and accommodating to the passive features of the environment, Piaget focused on the adaptive effort solely from the perspective of the individual. He failed to take into account of the active role the environment plays in contributing to such changes, especially the role of social partners. As noted by Valsiner (1998), “the objective world of the child is purposefully subjectified by the actions of others ... who participate in the care and upbringing of the child...while organizing the environment within which the child is to experience relevant development events” (p. 207). Hence, the role and function of the environment, especially the involvement of social others in helping children understand, adapt, and navigate through the social world is an important and necessary component involved in the process of adaptive change that is overlooked and needs closer examination in the understanding of human developmental processes.

As Lewis and Mayes (2012) stressed, the features of the environment and their role and effects in the developmental processes are poorly understood due to the fact that “environment is thought of as the ‘other variable and variables’ that either confound longitudinal predictions or contribute difficult to measure noise and or variance in models focusing on individual child outcome” (p. 1). Therefore, from the viewpoint that the structure of the social environment is particularly relevant in understanding the change process in human development, I seek to examine the role and function the environment plays in the process of individual’s adaptation to new circumstances through socialization.

As a preschool teacher with experience working both in Japan and the United States for more than ten years, I have witnessed an increase in what Elkind (1981) called “the hurried

child syndrome” where anxious parents over-schedule their children's lives, push them hard for academic success, and expect them to behave and act as miniature adults in hope to give their children “a leg up on the competition” upon entering preschool. Having watched many preschool children exhibit stress reaction in the form of restlessness, irritability, and low mood, as well as early signs of adjustment problems as a result, I am reconfirmed of the importance of incorporating a child-centered approach in order for a “hurried child” to become a well-adjusted and mature adult “who loves and allows himself or herself to be loved, and who can work productively with purpose and satisfaction” (Baxter, 2010, p. 44).

Child-centered perspective portrays a child as a natural learner that thrives in an environment where parents and educators take the child’s lead in the learning process by creating opportunities that are tailored to the developmental interest and need of the child, rather than training him or her to fit with adult expectations and academic standards. Jean-Jacque Rousseau, the French philosopher who initiated the child-centered tradition, argued that the “learning process must take the child’s perceptions and stages of development...and just as each stage has its own characteristics, it should also have a corresponding set of appropriate educational objectives” (Elkind, 1981, p. 3-4). Although the viewpoint emphasizes the importance of not hurrying a child’s learning and growth, most believers are inclined to measure a child’s readiness in terms of ages and stages, both of which paradoxically hinder the educators from following a child’s pace in learning. The idea of stages suggests development to be abrupt and sudden with no transition period, viewing development of a skill as either fully acquired or not absent. In actuality, skills are developed gradually through trial and error, which is evident when observing a child in play. Perceiving development in such black and white terms without the viewpoint of transitions, is what confuses and leads educators with good intentions to view the future too narrowly. As a result,

this resorts to evaluating success in terms of tests and academics.

In relation to the stage-oriented viewpoint of development, the child-centered perspective focuses more on the concept of natural growth and maturation, describing development from the adaptive effort of the individual over the role and influence environment plays in the developmental and learning process. Although an individual's effort to adapt to an environment is important, as indicated in many developmental theories such as Piaget's assimilation and accommodation, it is made possible only if the environment affords the time and opportunity for such adaptive processes to take place. I believe that such "affordance" need not be restricted to understanding in purely physical terms but also include "psychological affordance", or the ability to see the world as equipped with environmental affordance, as embodied in the Japanese indigenous concept of *amae*.

Amae is roughly translated as "to depend and presume upon another's love" or "to indulge in another's kindness" (Doi, 2005). The concept describes the feeling of attachment a small child feels toward his or her parents, which may also exist between two adults. Such culturally structured mechanism can be seen in their day-to-day interactions which allow for periodic unwinding, regression, and regeneration (Freeman, 2009). The allowance of *amae*-like dependency initiates not only the process of personality formation but also the process of socialization, existing as a universal phenomenon that sheds light on the basic function of human beings. It also plays an indispensable role in a healthy spiritual life (Doi, 2005). The existence of such periodic interaction, which allows people to receive affectionate support and indulgence beyond nursing years, leads to the assumption that an individual needs time to learn, grow, and experience as embodied in the concept of transition. This is a perspective lacking in the current explanations offered by the stage-oriented theorists.

In this dissertation, I hope to develop a new theoretical framework that explains the

mechanism of changes underlying the developmental process of human relatedness and the role environment plays in inducing such changes. I will provide answers as to why an environment that “follows the lead of the child in learning” is needed for one to become a mature, competent individual and how such approach is feasible. I will also explain the mechanism underlying the process of change and adjustment, such as how people learn, adapt to new circumstances, and discover new strategies. Additionally, the concept of transition as embodied in *amae* will also be incorporated in the study to enables us to understand what is required for smooth adjustments to take place when changes occur in one’s life.

To develop a new theoretical framework that explains the developmental process and mechanism of change, I will conduct the following procedures to understand how the concept of transition and environmental factors may contribute to the process of developmental change and provide new insights on current developmental perspectives.

- (1) Review major developmental theories of dynamic systems approach and sociocultural theory to understand the transitional mechanism that facilitates the change processes necessary for developmental growth.
- (2) Examine how Japanese mothers and preschool teachers assist children in acquiring the necessary skills to adapt to the social world during the socialization process using *amae*, as well as comparing *amae* and attachment to understand how it functions as transitional mechanism.
- (3) Provide new insights on how environmental factors may contribute to the process of human developmental changes through examining published case studies.
- (4) Formulate a new theoretical framework reflecting the functional features of *amae* as a transitional mechanism for adaptability

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES: VIEWS ON TRANSITIONAL MECHANISM

Although many major developmental theories describe development as discontinuous, phasic-specific progression of stages, recent studies have shown that many of the important phenomena of developmental psychology can be more accurately defined in terms of continuous and gradual changes in developmental processes. The idea behind such argument is that while the comparison of static states before and after an acquisition of skill at different age portrays global developmental trend, it fails to capture how these changes occur.

1.1 Nature of Developmental Change: Stage vs. Transition

Flavell (1971), in his presentation of how typical course of human cognitive development proceeds, argued that various forms of cognitive items (knowledge, abilities, strategies, etc) outlined in Piagetian type stages “may evolve toward their full functional maturity much more slowly and gradually than is commonly supposed, often achieving it only well after that stage’s conventional closing date” (p. 421). This suggests that human cognitive growth does not occur in a discontinuous, abrupt manner as portrayed in a linear model of stages but more as a sequence of transitions where items from two or more stages may coexist at different levels and ages, developing continuously and gradually outside the confinement of a stage (See Figure 1-2).

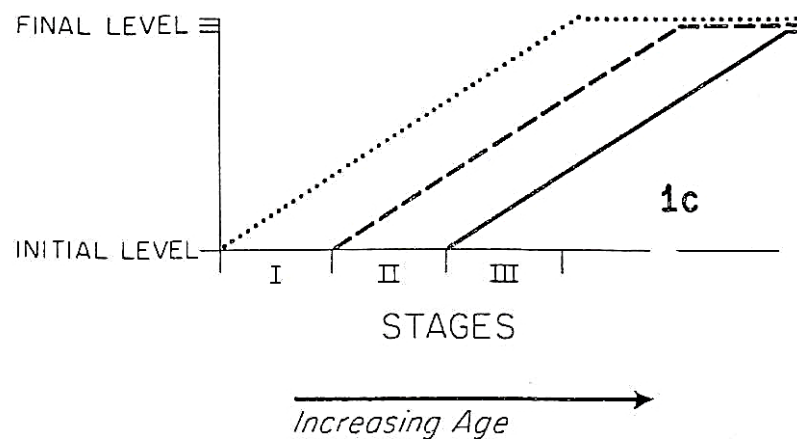


Figure 1-2. Flavell's Interpretation of Developmental Change

Source: From "Stage-related Properties of Cognitive Development" (p. 436) by J. Flavell, 1971, *Cognitive Psychology*, 2(4).

Siegler (2002) also took a similar perspective to Flavell, arguing that changes in developmental functions are often examined at large intervals (e.g. yearly) and are depicted as staircase-like, sudden upward shift in the level of performance, which is puzzling since such approach fails to examine the underlying processes that gives rise to the changes. He stressed that changes, when examined at smaller intervals, can be explained as orderly, gradual, and continual changes derived from adjustment in distribution of different ways of thinking across time. In short, changes are inducted through the use of more varied ways of thinking (Siegler, 2002). Therefore, instead of the staircase model of development as favored by previous theorists, an overlapping wave depiction of development (See Figure 1-3) is a more accurate illustration of developmental change where "waves occur as the variability in strategy use gradually peaks and declines while the overlap between the waves reflects the fact that children use multiple strategies at the same time" (Gallahue, Ozmun, & Goodway, 2012).

The overlapping wave model suggests that the end point indicated by stage theories may be reached via different routes or developmental pathways. Such phenomenon can only be

realized by delving into the nature of changes that occurs during developmental transitions or intermediate steps as overlooked by previous studies and researches. In the next section, the mechanism of change featured in process-oriented studies, in particular dynamic systems approach and sociocultural theory, will be reviewed in order to comprehend what occurs during a developmental transition and how the mechanism of change brings into play in the adaptive processes of individual-environment interaction.

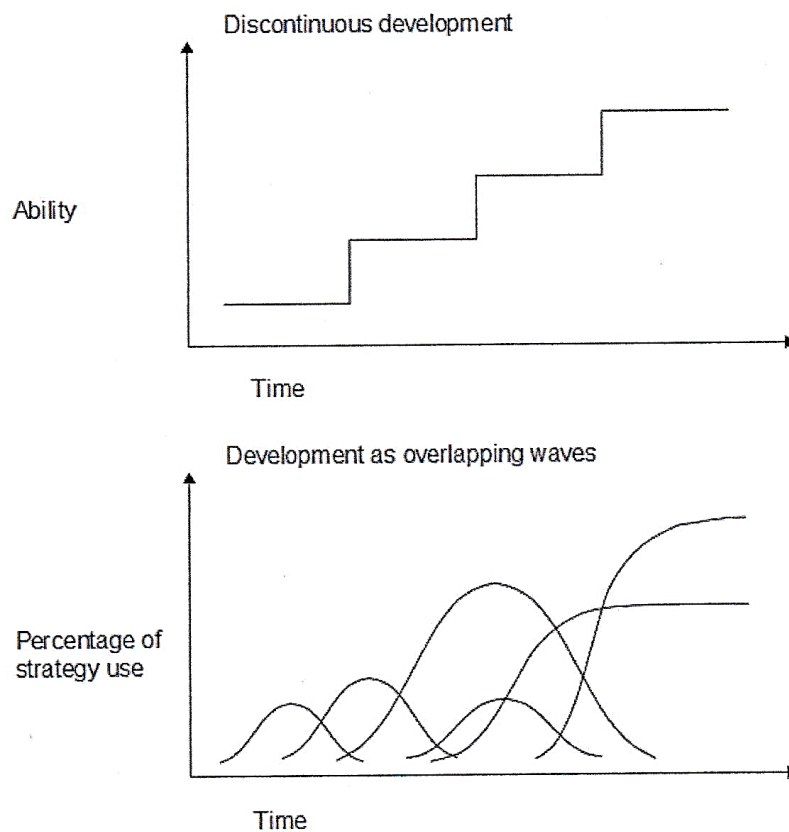


Figure 1-3. Stage vs. Overlapping Wave Model of Development

Source: From *Understanding Motor Development: Infants, Children, Adolescent, Adults* (p. 7) by D. Gallahue, J. Ozmun, & J. Goodway, 2012, Boston, M.A.; McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

1.2 Mechanism of Developmental Transition in Dynamic Systems Approach

In line with Flavell and Siegler's perspective on the process of change in development, the dynamic systems approach provides new models for studying the change process, which focuses on transitions and ways in which a system changes over time. Dynamic systems theory addresses the issue of developmental changes through the concept of emergence, the creation of new forms or properties through on-going processes intrinsic to the systems itself (Lewis, 2000). It is a key foundation underlying self-organization, defined by Thelen and Smith (2006) as the process where "pattern and order emerge from the interactions of the components of a complex system without explicit instructions, either in the organism itself or from the environment" (p. 259). The principle of self-organization indicates that a new form or pattern "does not have to be imported into the system from outside, as presumed by learning approaches, nor preordained from within, as assumed by nativist approaches" (Lewis, 2000, p.39). A new form is constructed during developmental process where specific conditions within the biology of the individual and the environment causes a certain behavior to emerge from the patterns of all the variables operating at a particular moment independent of any one system (Miller, 2011; Gallahue et al., 2012). Such theoretical ideas differ from previous approaches in that development is characterized not as growth, learning, or construction deriving from either innate structures or environmental imports, but as an outcome of a function of both nature and nurture's on-going dynamic interaction (Thelen & Smith, 2006). The dynamic systems approach offers powerful concepts that elucidate upon the developmental process of change: bridging frame, bridging, and the zone of current development.

1.2.1 Bridging Frame

Fogel, Garvey, Hsu, and West-Stroming (2006) examined the developmental processes in interpersonal relationships based on the dynamic systems approach, postulating that the development of interpersonal relationships contains hidden cycles, patterns, or laws applicable to the developmental transitions between any two stages of relationship growth. These regularly recurring patterns of communication are called frames. Frames are stable patterns of social behaviors that have a consistent theme, taking place within a specific location that involves particular forms of mutual co-orientation between participants (e.g. bedtime story and lunch date). Frames are used to examine the process of change over time in social systems. When changes in relationships occur, additional frames are spontaneously created to assist the existing frames to undergo transformations that are often difficult and chaotic. These additional frames are called bridging frames. Bridging frames contain elements of both the existing and emerging frames, which fall away as the emerging frame solidifies into predominant pattern.

An engagement period is an example of a bridging frame seen in romantic relationships that combines elements of both courtship and marriage to allow couples to take part in trial marriages before making further commitment. An engagement contains elements of both the courtship frame, interaction characterized by pure enjoyment of each other without responsibilities, and the marriage frame, where discussions about future family life and relationship between in-laws come into play (Fogel & Kawai, 2008). A bridging frame appears spontaneously at a wide range of ages, occurring within and between individuals in social interactions. It buffers and facilitates developmental transition by creating an intermediate frame carrying elements of past and future. Furthermore, it provides communicative stability that enables individuals in relationships to try out new ways of

relating without having to forgo existing patterns before proceeding to future actions.

1.2.2 Bridging and the Zone of Current Development (ZCD)

Bridging frame is an example of bridging, a transitional mechanism that sheds light upon development and learning processes. Bridging is a partial, transitional step that highlights spontaneous ways in which individuals self scaffold their own knowledge by operating simultaneously on both a lower level of existing knowledge and a higher target level of still undefined knowledge (Granott, Fischer & Parziale, 2002).

According to Granott (2002), development does not occur as a continual progress but as ordered fluctuations of backward transitions to lower developmental levels (regression) followed by progress. Progress is facilitated through repetitive, reiterative construction of higher and lower knowledge levels. When encountering a novel situation, an individual using bridging often starts processing problem at a level lower than the developmental levels he or she exhibits. Regression occurs so that previously constructed knowledge can be modified in support for the establishment of newer and higher level knowledge. Backward transition also frees up capacity, which is conducive to working at an advanced level. Such mechanism enables the creation of a partially defined shell to guide the construction of new knowledge by outlining a perspective for processing new experiences (Granott et al., 2002), and hence linking current knowledge and future target structures.

In addition, people routinely create undefined bridging shells that employ a higher-level structure to guide their learning and problem solving by gradually filling the missing components. As shells transform into explicit skills, people continue to use bridging to achieve still higher levels by generating a series of shifting shells to scaffold their own learning and development (Granott et al., 2002). The developmental range created through

this shifting shells of ordered fluctuations between the lowest to the highest levels is called the zone of current development (ZCD). The ZCD is defined as the distance between the actual (current) developmental level and the potential development expected in the near future. It ensures variability within a developmental range, which functions to reinforce knowledge while simultaneously making knowledge more flexible and amenable to change (Granott, 2002). It also stimulates progress by indicating the focus of current developmental efforts. This mechanism of change occurs spontaneously within and between individuals, enabling smooth transition to transpire through experimentation of new behavioral patterns or knowledge to take place before the most adaptive form become predominant.

1.2.3 Implications

The concept and mechanism of bridging points to the important role transition plays in inducing the developmental change processes. It is evident in the partial transitional steps featured in the ordered fluctuation between existing and emerging knowledge levels of the zone of current development (ZCD), which serves to generate progress and developmental breakthroughs. Moreover, spontaneous appearance of bridging frames in interpersonal relationships during transitional periods indicates that developmental changes do not occur abruptly as understood previously. Instead, a mechanism of change occurs in a gradual fashion, in which individuals are given time to use past and present knowledge to process new experiences and develop the most effective and adaptive form.

The existence of bridging mechanisms provides new insight in the understanding of development. Development is no longer depicted as a continual linear progress but as fluctuations between forward and backward transitions of “effort and rest, progress and stability, and wild guesses and testing” (Granott, 2002). Unlike past interpretations, the

phenomenon of regression and the utilization of less advanced strategies are crucial mechanisms that engender developmental progress, rather than signs of immaturity or pathological symptoms. Henceforth, it is imperative to view transition as the primary object of study, for the existence of aforementioned mechanisms demonstrates that changes are not necessarily induced through external factors. In fact, new structures (ability, behavior, knowledge, etc) can be constructed through existing structures via self-scaffolding.

Despite the adequate explanations of how changes emerge through dynamic, self-organizing interactions, factors that induce the phenomenon of ordered fluctuations remained unanswered in dynamic systems approach. It also fails to consider social factors as a source of change in developmental processes, which is a major influencer in inducing changes from a sociocultural perspective.

1.3 Process of Developmental Change Through Interaction in Sociocultural Theory

While dynamic systems approach perceives the process of developmental changes as mainly stemming from the spontaneous, self-organized properties of the individual, sociocultural theory places emphasis on the role social environment plays in inducing changes. The sociocultural perspective recognizes mutuality in the individual-environment relationship where development occurs through social transactions among the child, the other person, and the social context mediated by the culture. Vygotsky (1978) propounds that development involves the internalization, transformation, and the use of cognitive routines, concepts, and skills by the child through participating in family and societal activities with other members of the culture. These cognitive items are acquired through guidance provided by the adult as well as through observation and imitation of more skilled and competent individuals. The repetitive exposure to guided participation enables the child “to develop sophisticated

cognitive repertoires despite only having rudimentary skills”. The child also becomes capable of successful problem solving through the adults’ provision of a structured context that reduces the complexities of problems to manageable form (Meadows, 1996, p 23). The process in which the child actively organizes his or her own development with the guidance of a skilled adult is known as scaffolding (Bruner, 1983).

1.3.1 Scaffolding

Scaffolding refers to any form of reduction in the demands of a cognitive or social problem for the purpose of the eventual solution to the full problem (Bickhard, 1992). Scaffolding occurs when the competency of the less able child is enhanced through the guidance provided by the more able adult through means of prompting, clues, modeling, explanation, discussion, joint participation, and encouragement (Miller, 2011). When scaffolding takes place, the more skilled adult initially provides majority of the cognition required for the task by structuring and adjusting the extent of support according to how much assistance the child needs. As the child increasingly gains mastery over the task, the adult gradually lessens support by allowing the child to take on more responsibility until he or she can undertake the entire task alone without guidance (Mascolo, 2005). Repetition of scaffolding along with the regular participation in related tasks is what extends the child’s competence and mastery, where scaffolding is internalized so that the learning child can perform scaffolding on his or her own when taking on new tasks (Meadows, 1996). In order for internalization to take place, the more expert adult must scaffold within the zone of proximal development of the novice child.

1.3.2 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance between the actual development level, as determined by the child's capacity to solve problems on his or her own, and the potential development expected in the near future, as determined by the child's capacity to solve problems with assistance. Vygotsky (1978) coined this concept to differentiate between the two levels of development: the actual level of development achieved by independent problem solving and the potential level of development achieved with the guidance of or collaboration with a more capable other. The ZPD embraces the idea that a more skilled adult or peer builds on the competencies the child already has and presents activities that links new knowledge to acquired knowledge to support a level of competence a little beyond the child's actual level (Miller, 2011). Therefore, when providing scaffolds, it is essential to ascertain both what the child is capable of achieving alone and the upper threshold of instruction. Scaffolding below the bottom of the ZPD, where a child can already function autonomously, or above the limit of the ZPD, beyond the reach of a child's present functioning, is pointless and ineffective (Meadows, 1996). Provision of scaffold must be done within the range of the ZPD since "[p]roductive instruction can occur only within the limits of these two thresholds of instruction" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 211). Not only does the ranges of the ZPD indicates the area most effective in facilitating changes, it also exists for introducing prospective future actions without disruption of familiar ones (Fogel, et al, 2006).

1.3.3 Implications

The notions of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) underscore the perception of development as a nonlinear process, where a potential developmental level attainable with the assistance of others is a more creditable reflection of one's ability than the

static assessment of one's actual level. Contrary to the dichotomization of development as prevailed in previous theories, sociocultural theory perceives development in relative terms of what one can achieve with external assistance and how such a "tool" is being internalized for future learning. It highlights the unity and interdependence among social, learning, and developmental processes.

The concept of the ZPD shares commonality with the zone of current development (ZCD); both agree that changes are most successful when a new form is introduced without disrupting the older, familiar ones. Tantamount to the ZCD, where change process is mitigated by the utilization of one's existing knowledge, the ZPD emphasizes the way in which interpersonal relationships buffer and smooth the change process. The ZPD also explains how more sophisticated cognitive competencies could arise from less sophisticated ones through social interaction by demarcating the zone within which effective intervention can induce adaptive changes. Thus, the importance of social environment in inducing developmental changes is evident.

However, the sociocultural approach may present a problem where scaffolding utilized with the intention to avoid total or excessive adult direction may end up ironically fostering intellectual dependency where the child will seek help whenever he or she faces a difficult or unsolvable problem. As Crain (2003) stated, "when we try to move development forward, we shorten the time the child has to pursue her current interests" which can as a result deprive the child the time needed to devise solutions on his or her own terms, as well as fostering extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation in learning (p. 20). Therefore, questions remain as to how changes can also be induced with the provision of an environment catered toward the child's potential level of competence without explicit guidance or input from social others.

1.4 Discussion

The examination of change processes from the perspectives of dynamic systems approach and sociocultural theory point to the important functions transitional mechanism plays in facilitating development and learning. While the zone of current development (ZCD) looked at how individual learn to acquire new knowledge through bridging emerging knowledge and existing knowledge, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) looked at how collaboration between an individual with a more capable other help facilitate changes in levels of knowledge from less sophisticated competencies to more sophisticated ones. Both processes explain development in terms of a nonlinear progression where changes and progress occur gradually through transitional period characterized by the coexistence of two different levels before the emergence of a predominant form. Such coexisting state enables the smooth transition of an existing form to newly emerging ones through either individual's bridging of current knowledge to new ones or the use of interpersonal relationship to scaffold a problem that is not solvable alone. The existence of transitional mechanisms that assist the acquisition of a new function as depicted in the ZCD and the ZPD point to the pivotal role partial steps of transition play in buffering detrimental effect which accompany unstable period of change. Allowance of such a period to exist serves the function to enable acquisition of new skills to go smoothly. However, presence of such transitional mechanisms also point to the possible existence of a temporary "grace period" or a zone of practicable adaptability that may be characterized by the coexistence of two different states or level after the acquisition of a new function or skill has taken place. The above suggestion may answer important questions concerning "what induces" phenomenon such as the ZCD's ordered fluctuations and look at "how" changes can be induced through spontaneous learning without external support during developmental change.

Unlike the ZCD and the ZPD, the presence of a zone of practicable adaptability enables experimentation to take place even after one has acquired certain level of competency. The existence of such temporary periods in allowing the prior and emerging levels to co-exist so individual can resort to the usage of prior forms, reconstruct prior form to make way for newly emerging forms, or experiment with variations of prior and newly emerged skill/ability, is what induces changes. These changes can stem from either the individual's operation in the ZCD through the use of bridging, through operating in the ZPD in using scaffolds provided by social others, or a combination of both depending on the individual or the environmental circumstances. It is this blending together of old and new as well as the flexible, circumstantial usages of different change mechanism that enables the individual to recognize the link between prior and novel forms, which reinforces and strengthens already acquired knowledge so to facilitate the smooth advancement to a new level of mastery. In order for such change in the mechanism to work, both the individual as well as the social environment needs to acknowledge that changes do not occur abruptly but in gradual, small steps that require an extensive time to develop. The allowance of such "grace period" to take place that enables repeated experimentation, practice, and experiencing regardless of whether one has acquired full mastery or not is what facilitates progress and adaptive changes to take place

The utilization of such mechanism of providing leniency and allowance for experimentation to take place is prevalently practiced in the everyday life of Japanese people as depicted in the indigenous concept of *amae*. It is characterized by the allowance of the state of emotional merging (indulgence / dependency) and separateness (discipline / independency) to coexist in the environment in helping children internalize social norms and desirable social behaviors. Details of how *amae* is used in the socialization process to help children become a functional member of a society will be analyzed in the next section to further understand the

unique characteristic of such transitional mechanism.

CHAPTER 2. *AMAE* AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE ZONE OF PRACTICABLE ADAPTABILITY IN THE JAPANESE PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is the process in which individuals become distinctive and active functioning members of a society by acquiring the beliefs, values, and behaviors considered appropriate in their culture. In most cultures, the home and preschool are the primary socializing agents in early childhood since the process of socializing young children reflects the values held by members of a society that is essential to the formation of adult personality. In Japan, mothers bear the utmost responsibility in socializing children to the values of society through interaction with their children. Such interaction bridges the home and the outer world where the prototypical relational pattern of *amae* is carried over to other social relationships.

According to Doi (1973), the ability to engage in appropriate dependency through *amae* is an essential skill for children to acquire in Japanese society. Child-rearing practices, parental involvement, and the educational system incorporate the usage of such appropriate dependency in supporting children's socialization process of *wakaraseru*, or getting the child to understand, over authoritarian methods of reward and punishment to foster a *sunao* child (Burke, 2008). A child with *sunao* nature does not yield his or her personal autonomy for the sake of cooperation, but possesses the ability to work with others while simultaneously act according to one's own will without losing one's own belief (Izumi-Taylor, 2008). "Such characteristics imply a high level of competence in balancing the tensions connected to the need to depend and the ability to forestall dependence, the need to dominate and the ability to defer to others, the need to be close and the ability to disarm tension in close interpersonal relations" (Johnson, 1993, p. 172-173).

Fostering of such high competency in social navigation valuable for one's own personal development and success requires extensive time and training in order to be executed

appropriately and this can only be done through the lenient disciplinary approach of *amae*. In the next two sections, the analysis of child-rearing practices and disciplinary means of Japanese mothers and how these strategies are expanded to the world of preschool will be undertaken to understand how *amae*, as a manifestation of zone of practicable adaptability, is employed and depicted in the process of socializing a sunao child in Japan.

2.1 What is *Amae*?

The Japanese term *amae* refers to an emotion that also reflects the need for dependency or passive love. It is a feeling or a desire for emotional merging that embodies warmth, security, and intimacy, experienced in close relationship where one's thoughts, desires, and intentions are unconditionally accepted by the other (Kato, 1995). Although used as a daily term, it is also academically defined by the Japanese psychoanalyst, Takeo Doi, as the ability "to depend and presume upon another's love or bask in another's indulgence" (1992, p. 8). He maintains that the psychology of *amae* is evident when one "attempt(s) psychologically to deny the fact of separation from the mother" (1973, p. 74), describing what a small child feels toward his mother or his behavior indicating the presence of such a feeling. Although the desire to *amaeru* is most evident in a mother-child relationship, such desire continues to influence the formation of other relationships including those between lovers, friends, husband and wife, teacher and student, and even employer and employee (Doi, 1992). Yearning for such a relationship allows one to seek gratification of love and indulgence while the other provides it in a reciprocal manner.

Amae also relates closely to general theories of psychological development, playing a prominent role in psychological development of *jibun* or reflective self-awareness. Acquiring a sense of *jibun* is possible only when one learns to complementarily balance the

ambivalence that arises between autonomy and dependence while undergoing the process of self-other differentiation (Doi, 1973). As one becomes aware of *jibun*, one also learns *kejime*, the ability to distinguish, where an individual learns to recognize when, how and on whom to be dependent or not to be dependent (Hara & Minagawa, 1996).

Acquisition of *kejime* and a sense of *jibun* require the individual to indulge sufficiently in *amae* interactions with one's caregiver in the earlier years of life (Doi, 1973). Ample experience with positive *amae* interaction enables the developing person to form what Erikson (1963) called "basic trust." Formation of basic trust assists one to accept the reality that mother and others are separate from oneself and have a mind of their own. Acceptance of such a reality makes it possible to learn how to control and accept the frustration that arises from not having one's yearning for reunion and indulgence met. Experiencing of *amae* also allows Japanese children to start regulating socially disruptive expressions of negative affect and to instead actively seek wishful fulfillment by using more culturally accepted forms of nonverbal *amae* appealing behavior.

As related to *kejime*, children will learn to regulate the usage of *amae* behavior depending on situations and affiliations, acquiring the skill and judgment to form a mutually comfortable interdependent relationship with others. Thus, a mature individual who has a sense of *jibun* has the "elasticity and flexibility in managing and expressing *amae* needs" and "a capacity to negotiate a good *amae* interaction." The individual can "move back and forth between *amae*'s sense of oneness and unity at one moment and recognition of separateness at other moments" (Freeman, 2009, p. 76). This can only be achieved when both the denial and acceptance of separateness are held simultaneously in conscious awareness.

To summarize, *amae* is a transitory and transitional state, halfway between oneness and separateness, where temporary allowance of such state exists to protect against the negative

effect of separation (Kitayama, 2009). This temporary denial of separation in the service of emotional replenishment assists the individual to control and endure the frustration that arises from the separation/individuation process of acquiring a sense of *jibun*. The successful integration of self can only occur with abundant use of such mechanism of adaptability, where one learn to use dependency in a socially appropriate manner through repeated experience of engaging in *amae*'s indulgent dependency. In the next section, how *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability functions to help Japanese children become active members of a society will be examined to understand the significant role such transitional mechanism play in socialization process.

2.2 Home Socialization: Maternal Use of *Amae* for Skill Acquisition

In Japan, the attainment of basic social and communication skills during early childhood occurs in the context of a close, emotional bond between the mothers and her child. Although *amae* is used to describe this close, symbiotic relationship, the term also encompasses the use of such bond in child-rearing practices to produce a child committed to and positively engaged in disciplinary efforts. This is evident in the usage of words like *amaeru*, *amaenai*, *amaesaseru*, *amaesasenai* as criteria for maturity. The mother's usage of *amae* related terms allow her child to experiment with acts of self-assertion while simultaneously labeling such act as something inappropriate that need to be outgrown (Kumagai, 1981).

Japanese parenting is characterized by the mother's avoidance of confrontation and conflict with her child where teaching occur with "near absence of 'slapping the hand' to direct the child towards positive behavior" (Kumagai, 1981, p. 259). Discipline is learned by the child spontaneously where the mother teaches only when the child is in a cooperative

mood. The mother is sensitive to the child's reaction to her controlling attempt and often modifies her strategies flexibly by going with rather than challenging the child's will.

In an interview on maternal strategies used in a hypothetical situation of a child refusing to eat vegetables at dinner, 22% of the Japanese mothers who started with a firm demand for compliance ("Eat it") gradually moderated their demands ("Eat just a little bit"), often yield altogether ("Let's eat tomorrow then") if persuasive attempts failed. These mothers attributed their children's noncompliance to their immaturity and lack of understanding rather than bad intention or contested wills (Conroy, Hess, Azuma, & Kashiwagi, 1980). Such interpretation allows the mother to avoid confrontation in order to maintain the emotionally close bonding that plays a crucial role in helping the child internalize socially appropriate rules. Hence, emphasis is placed not on what is right or wrong but to cultivate the adaptive dispositions of *sunao*, a desire to conform and be receptive to adult expectations.

Using empathy to steer the child toward desirable behavior is another way the mother cultivates child-initiated compliance. In Ujiie's (1997) study concerning how Japanese mothers treat children's negativism, majority of the mothers avoided direct confrontation with their children's noncompliance by indirectly urging them to comply. The mothers focused on the use of gentle persuasion in helping the children understand consequence of the misdeed rather than demanding immediate compliance. Two thirds of the mothers expected that once the children come to understand the mothers' thoughts and wishes, they can then discipline the children to act in socially appropriate manners (Ujiie, 1997). Thus, the child's egocentric behavior, although tolerated and indulged, can come under control through exchange of empathy with the mother, where the mother's use of empathetic understanding is modeled and simultaneously cultivated in her own child.

The descriptions above illustrate Japanese mothers' efforts to direct the children's

volitional and emotional development through *amae* to parallel the perspective of the parent and society. When *amae* relationship solidifies and the child and mother are “emotionally united,” the child’s goal and the mother’s goal become one. This enables the mother to use the close bond to gently guide the child’s skill of acquisition while simultaneously allowing the child the space for self-assertion. Additionally, the creation of a warm, relaxed atmosphere emphasizing interdependence and close human ties fosters early awareness of the presence and needs of others. Cultivation of such awareness is crucial to the development of the child’s relational attitude and the ability later in life to form ties with others in group-life situation (Kelly, 2001).

2.2.1 Implications

Japanese mother’s effort in guiding skill acquisition through indulgent nurturance highlights the unique characteristic of *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability, where maternal indulgence coexists with disciplinary efforts. A mother’s creation of an emotionally relaxed atmosphere where a child is allowed the temporary freedom to comply or resist is what facilitates the spontaneous internalization of societal values. Additionally, it is the mother’s empathetic interpretation of the child’s behavior that paradoxically set the boundary of limit, which guides the child toward spontaneous acquisition of proper behavior. Engaging in such empathic interaction not only trains the child to be receptive to adult expectations, but also facilitate the child’s use of such mechanisms. As the mother uses *amae* to scaffold the child’s skill learning, the child learns to use *amae* to scaffold his or her own learning. The use of dependency to buffer the negative effect of separation is one example of such learning, which serves as a basis for formation of other relationships.

2.3 Preschool as an Institution Linking Home and the Outer World: The Transferring of *Amae* from the Mother to Social Others

Japanese preschools play an important role as social structures that ease children's transition from the undemanding environment of the home to the complex, social environment of the outside world. Preschool curriculums are explicitly designed to serve their socializing purpose of bridging this gap by providing an environment that is simultaneously home and not home. Children are eased into the new environment where both freedom in self-expression and a need to follow social rules coexist. This offers children a sense of familiarity and security that allow them time to explore and learn the necessary skills to function in a group-life situation.

In this section, the function of Japanese preschools as a site of transition from home to the broader society will be examined in relation to *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability. The unique educational goals of the institution, teachers' handling of misbehavior, and their management of students through formation of student groups will be discussed to understand how the zone of practicable adaptability is utilized to introduce and ease children to life outside home.

2.3.1 Goals of Japanese Preschools and the Osmosis Model of Socialization

Japanese preschools goals are based on nurturing the development of human relationship in the group (Research Center for Child and Adolescent Development and Education, 2004). Goals consist of social structures that allow for freedom and exploration of surroundings with the main objective of letting children find confidence through exploration. Curriculums are less academic and more focused on the socialization function of learning to become part of a group. Such goals are achieved not by severing the *amae* based communication learned at

home but to facilitate “psychological change in students whereby the desire for nurturance from the mother is transformed into desire for nurturance from the group” (Peach, 1994, p. 13). These socialization focused objectives are implemented through what Hess and Azuma (1991) called “osmosis.”

Osmosis puts emphasis on spontaneous learning where nurturance and interdependence provide exposure to adult values, instilling a readiness on the part of the children to imitate, accept, and internalize societal values and norms (Hess & Azuma, 1991). Children’s learning grows through free interaction with people and others within the preschool environment where activities are relatively unassisted with minimum rules and regulations (Research Center for Child and Adolescent Development and Education, 2004). This allows children to freely learn and explore their interests and skills at their own pace and will (Suzuki & Boomer, 1997). Proper rules and manners are internalized through repetitively going through patterns of daily routines and joint activities with peers and teachers. Behavioral patterns and values of the teachers are naturally and spontaneously imitated, followed, and internalized by the students. Through the osmosis model of socialization, children are given abundant opportunities to handle interpersonal relationship as this is where learning stems from. Additionally, the focus on spontaneously learning also influences the teachers’ role and their methods of instruction.

For osmosis to take place, preschool teachers must help children come to understand the fun of preschool life. Such an objective is universally cited as the primary objective of instruction, especially during the first month of preschool. Without learning to enjoy preschool and feeling an emotional attachment to their teachers and peers, internalization of preschool standards and adjustment to social life through osmosis is rendered impossible (Peak, 2001). Studies have shown that preschool teachers often rely on the use of *amae*,

allowing children to act in a way that is usually not socially permissible in order to build relationship with the children as well as to accustom them to the school (Suzuki & Boomer, 1997; Buchbinder, Longhofer, Barret, Lawson, & Floersch, 2006; Burke, 2008). An example of *amae* in use is evident in how teachers help children with difficulty falling asleep by laying and patting the children under the cover during nap time. Such practices are undertaken to gradually wean them from familiar co-sleeping patterns at home in order to prepare them for the austerity of formal schooling (Buchbinder et al., 2006). Therefore, although co-sleeping seems to replicate the *amae* setting of the home, in reality, this shared physical experience helps children internalize the distinctions between the family and the outside world, transferring strong relationship from the family dyad to the peer group (Burke, 2008). The extensive use of *amae* demonstrates that during the initial adaptation to school life, Japanese teachers adopt various practices originated at home for children to build new skills and routines, on with non-authoritarian approach of disciplining being one of the most well practiced. Such an approach fosters the children's enjoyment of participating in group activities, which in turn encourages the children's spontaneous adoption of the behavior standards demonstrated by teachers and peers.

2.3.2 Teacher's Handling of Misbehavior

As illustrated in the allowance of co-sleeping during nap time, Japanese preschool teachers do not expect children to enter school with well-developed set of social and interpersonal skills or a good understanding of the limits of appropriate behavior in social context. They understand mastery of skills listed above need time to develop. Therefore, teachers permit students leeway in making mistakes and misbehaving, with their basic approach being non-intervention. Teachers possess various techniques for discouraging

socially undesirable behavior without resorting to authoritarian control. According to Lewis (1989), teacher's control strategies include 1) minimizing the impression of teacher's control; 2) delegating control to children; 3) providing opportunities for children to acquire a good girl or boy identity; and 4) avoiding the attribution that children intentionally misbehave. These non-interventionist strategies are utilized since aggression is considered a natural part of a children's development where "allowing it is essential in order to cultivate its eventual control" (Johnson, 1993, p. 142).

Teachers permit physically rough behaviors to take place with the belief that containment of aggressive urges can be learned only through actual experience of "knowing how it feels like." Suppression of aggression is believed to result in more explosive behaviors at a later age, leading to graver problems such as bullying (Suzuki & Boomer, 1997). Therefore, acts of physical aggression are intervened only when necessary since such behaviors are perceived as "a strong building block for character" (Peach, 1994). As a Japanese school administrator explains:

Fighting is not a problem. If there were no fights, that would be a problem. ... Life is full of problems. Our job as early childhood educators isn't to protect children from problems but instead to put them in situations where they can experience problems and struggle to find solutions. (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009, p. 156)

Thus, preschool teachers' conscious use of non-intervention to provide children chances for problem solving is a strategic one. The actual experience of getting involved in fights enables children to experiment with the accepted limits to self-expression. In fact, students with behavioral problems are regarded as those most in need of opportunities to socialize in order to take responsibility for them and to learn to implement self-control (Burke, 2008). Through fighting, children also learn the rules of society, acquiring the skills to communicate as well as accept their own needs and the needs of others (Peak, 2001). It also gives them the

opportunity to express their understanding of culturally sanctioned pro- and anti-social behaviors (Kelly, 2001).

Although children are permitted ample opportunities to misbehave without stringent intervention, this does not mean children are left unattended without supervision. In fact, children's behaviors are subtly but constantly monitored through teachers' watch and wait (*mimamoru*) stance. The *mimamoru* stance, a strategic deployment of non-action, allows teachers to hold back and make decision about whether to intervene or not. Teachers constantly "balance the risk that a situation might deteriorate without their intervention with their appreciation for the value of the social experiences that would be lost if they were to act before it becomes absolutely necessary" while they *mimamoru* (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 111). Their assessment of the situation is based not on their evaluation of risk but on whether their intervention will lead to the development of deeper understanding. When they do decide to intervene, it is done so with the knowledge that some sort of direct input or support is needed for the children to learn to understand (*wakaraseru*). The teachers ask questions and seek explanations to elevate the children's consciousness on the detrimental and dissocial effects of the behaviors in question. They also suggest actions that would be more helpful instead of exerting immediate compliance, since the objective is to help the child understand and to await the development of internal control.

Additionally, teachers are less interested in stopping misbehavior than in fostering children's ability to intervene. To preschool teachers, a misbehaving child who provokes fights serves the function of giving other children the opportunity to practice various strategies both for resolving their own disagreements and for mediating conflicts among others (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989). Teachers also know that children best learn to control their behaviors when the motivation to change comes naturally through peer interaction.

Therefore, instead of intervening directly, teachers prefer to exert minimal control in the classroom, allowing children to assume responsibility for classroom management and discipline where they are “given opportunities to experience life in the gray zone, where things aren’t just black and white” (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 134).

2.3.3 Student Groups

Organizing the classroom into groups is a common and effective approach Japanese teachers take to manage the children, since a class is composed of twenty to thirty children under the management of a single teacher in Japanese preschools (Burke, 2008). Formation of such grouping functions to effectively designate responsibilities of classroom management and discipline to the children, which trains children to become self-directed. Additionally, teachers’ designation of responsibility to the children not only encourages them to construct their own values by exchanging their point of views with others, but also offers emotional and academic support. This helps children gain confidence in interacting with others through collaborative problem solving (Izumi-Taylor, 2008).

Student groups serve as the units for many classroom activities, including lunch, chores, and teacher-initiated projects (Lewis, 1989). The groups are composed of four to eight members based on observed friendships with an equal distribution of ability and gender balance (Peach, 1994). In some preschools, teachers actively match personalities where the shy ones are assigned to sit near sociable classmates and the more capable ones are placed near those who are struggling (Burke, 2008). The memberships are fixed and maintained for at least one year. This gives children extensive experience of learning to work well together where talking, listening, negotiating, accommodating, and shaping the behaviors of others must take place to ensure success at school. These groups function as a substitute family

where desire for *amae* from mothers and teachers is transformed to a desire for *amae* from the group. Therefore, such classroom organizations also serve the paradoxical role of discouraging children from dependence on adults, which helps children learn to distinct between the *amae*-based world of the home and the group life of the school.

2.3.4 Implications

The ethnographic details of the pedagogical practices of teachers and the structural features of preschool reveal how preschools in Japan serves as a socializing institution bridging the contrasting cultures of home and society. The preschools provide children with an environment that holds elements of both home and society, granting them freedom to explore, as well as acquire proper social rules and manners through daily activities with peers and teachers. The unique sociocultural milieu supplements a group-oriented dimension to the dyadic, interdependent aspect of self the children acquired at home, which eases the children into the unfamiliar world outside home.

The disciplinary approach employed by the preschool teachers coincides with that of the mothers. Like Japanese mothers, preschool teachers handle misbehavior in a subtle, non-assertive manner by appealing to the children's awareness of consequences. The congruity in disciplinary styles elicits a sense of familiarity and security, which facilitates the children's acclimatization to the novel environment.

Despite the similarity, the objective behind the teachers' employment of these strategies differs from that of the mothers. On the one hand, the mothers avoid confrontation with the children to maintain the emotional bond necessary for discipline. On the other hand, the teachers' purpose of non-intervention strategy is to prepare children for life in the society and to provide them with the opportunities to learn to behave appropriately in different contexts.

Mimamoru or “standing guard”, where the teachers watch and wait as the children are afforded the time and space to resolve problems on their own, allows the children to judge and act without guidance from adult authority. However, this is a time-consuming approach that requires teachers’ intervention at times. Through temporary suspension of social rules, children acquire the ability to control and monitor aggression and impulses, as well as to gauge social boundaries and limits. Assigning student groups to take on managing and disciplining roles also enables teachers to train peer management indirectly. The participants would also take joint responsibility in assisting and scaffolding the misbehaving children to learn to understand social boundaries and limits.

Inferring from the analysis above, the teachers’ use of *mimamoru*, intervening without intervening, is a manifestation of *amae* and the zone of practicable adaptability. The strategic non-intervention, as Tobin and colleagues described as *mimamoru*, is effective because it is familiar to the children who have received similar training at home. Furthermore, it also offers them the time and space to “learn through experiencing” both for the misbehaving children as well as peers engaged in problem solving. Furthermore, a learning environment in which, cooperation takes precedence over reward and punishment and children are looked upon as capable, responsible individuals, internalization of social norms ensues as a result (Buchbinder et al., 2006). With no reprimand or punishment involved, self-expressions are allowed to run its course. This allowance has the paradoxical effect of preventing behaviors to run havoc. Since the enjoyment of preschool life cannot be achieved when the children push through with their egoistical tendencies, the misbehaving children, through exploring the limits of such self-expression, will naturally come to contain their behaviors and desire for the good of others. They learn to set the boundaries and limits by experiencing the positives and negatives through interpersonal interactions within an *amae*-like social milieu that resembles

home. The resemblance enables children to acquire new social script necessary for successful integration into group-life without forgoing old, familiar patterns used at home.

Formation of student groups for classroom organization also consists of mixed elements of the home and society. For preschool children, the small groups with fixed membership in which they belong, serve as a surrogate family, where they participate the majority of their classroom activities together. The extended and intense experience children have with their peers enables the fulfilment of a sense of belonging and close intimacy parallel to those at home. However, the close bond they form has a paradoxical effect of breaking down the *amae* mentality of wanting to be indulged and accepted unconditionally. Children must learn to control their egoistical desires and accommodate to others' feelings and ideas while they work as a group. As Peak (2001) puts succinctly, "the group is both the unsympathetic force to which the child's ego must submit and a primary source of companionship and fulfilment" (p. 168). Therefore, student groups may be another possible manifestation of the zone of practicable adaptability. Its presence as the pseudo family serves the dual purpose of fulfilling belongingness and discouraging egoistic tendencies. This enables children to learn to accept group habits and internalize expectations that are required for success in group life through repeated practice and trial and error when working with their group members.

The hands-off *mimamoru* approach of teachers' delegation of responsibility to student groups is a feature of the Japanese preschool that reflects the various functions of the zone of practicable adaptability through the allowance of *amae*. This permits a behavior that is usually not socially acceptable to go unnoticed in order for one to learn through experiencing. Teachers' focus on strategies that elicit cooperation and voluntary compliance rather than the use of disciplinary systems of reward and punishment points to their intuitive understanding of looking at the present misbehavior as a learning process that the child is undergoing in

order to acquire the appropriate skills to self-express and relate to others. Additionally, providing children with a learning environment consisting of co-existing features of home and society is what enables children to link previous knowledge to new ones while children learn the appropriate societal rules through experiencing and exploring with the physical and social environment. Employment of such management strategies enables Japanese teachers to respect the development of each child's individual character while simultaneously socializing children towards life in the group. As Sato (1998) puts succinctly: "Individual development is both bound and enhanced by membership in mutual learning communities, and those communities, in turn, are strengthened by increased individual capacities; they complement one another towards reciprocal growth" (p. 121). This complementariness of seemingly opposing processes of individual development and socialization points to the zone of practicable adaptability as a change process that underlie the dynamic co-construction of knowledge as facilitated by the environment, which trains the individual to learn how to use such features for one's own development. The existence of such change process underlying Japanese socialization points to the possibility of its existence outside of Japanese culture, as depicted in Tobin and colleagues' (2009) classic ethnographic comparisons of preschools in China, Japan, and the United States.

2.4. Evidence of Strategic Non-Intervention in Preschools of Other Cultures

With smooth transition from the home to formal schooling being a prerequisite to the children's school success and achievement, helping children adjust to the new learning environment must be of utmost importance and priority for preschools of any culture. The examination of the ethnographic details from Tobin and colleagues' (2009) "Preschool in Three Cultures" illustrates how preschool teachers from China, Japan, and the United States

deal with disputes and misbehaviors. It sheds lights on how preschool teachers from other cultures may utilize similar strategies of non-intervention in assisting children to acclimatize to the new environment, albeit the interpretation and disciplinary approach towards misbehavior may differ from culture to culture.

In the ethnographic descriptions provided by this study, preschool teachers in Japan were criticized by their Chinese and U.S. counterparts for their non-intervention with fights. The typical American and Chinese reaction to Japanese teachers' *mimamoru* type non-interventionist approach towards aggression and misbehavior were labelled as being "spoiling," "irresponsible" and "a failure or a lack of concern for the child's well-being, and of attention to their social development" (Tobin et. al., 2009, p.110; Tobin et al., 1989). Teachers from both the Chinese and United States take distinct approach when faced with similar problems. When encountering disputes or aggressive behaviors, Chinese teachers take anticipatory measures of preventing dispute before they have a chance to develop (Tobin et. al., 2009). As for preschool teachers in the United States, they tend to take more directive measures, such as giving time out or missing recess time (Suzuki and Boomer, 1997). Despite contrasting views and approaches toward children's misbehavior, descriptions of interpersonal intervention strategies from both Chinese and U.S. preschools illustrate occasions of *amae*-like non-intervention.

2.4.1 Evidence of Strategic Non-Intervention in Chinese Preschools

Sociodramatic play in Chinese preschools is a time where teachers allow children more leeway than other classroom activities in exploring ways of interacting with other children. It is a time where teachers engage in the "artful and unobtrusive scaffolding of child-initiated activities" by becoming the children's playmates, acting as children would during play (Tobin

et. al., 2009, p. 70). During one session of sociodramatic play, where the teacher pretended to be a customer at a fast food restaurant, a child informed the teacher of a dispute that has occurred at the beauty parlor section. Instead of intervening, the teacher mindlessly asked the child reporting, “Why is she crying?” before returning to her eating and chatting. Two boys pretending to be police officers handled the dispute instead and the business in the beauty parlor returned to normal. After clean up time, the teachers gathered the whole class to start a group discussion initiated by the children, where they expressed their thoughts toward the incidents that occurred during the dramatic play.

When being interviewed by Tobin and colleagues (2009) as to the thoughts behind the lack of intervention, the Chinese teacher replied, “Imagine if after the policemen had facilitated the dispute in the beauty salon, we teachers stepped in anyway, as teachers. The effect would be unhelpful and the social play less satisfactory” (Tobin et al., 2009, p.70). Such explanation parallels those of Japanese preschool teachers’, who view non-intervention as opportunities for children to work out their own solutions to problems. Such strategy as a result, “work to raise the level of complexity” in the play which “created the opportunity for the beauticians and the police to work things out and the whole class later to debrief” (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 70). From the description of how disputes were handled, it can be said that although Chinese teachers were critical of Japanese teacher’s non-intervention approach, a similar strategy was utilized to a lesser extent by Chinese educators in providing children with latitude to work out their own solutions to problems.

2.4.2 Evidence of Strategic Non-Intervention in the Preschools of United States

With preschools in the United States as a place “where intervening in children’s physical altercations is the rule,” teacher’s non-intervention is less visible than in Japanese and

Chinese preschools (Tobin, et al., 2009, p.132). In fact, only one description of non-intervention was found.

Tobin and colleagues (2009) described an incident at the housekeeping area where five children were playing at the area when the classroom rule indicated only four are allowed. After being called by a child who complained of another child hogging all the play materials, the teacher approached the children, asking them what was bothering them before leaving the area saying, “Do you think that today maybe you all can play nicely? We’ll try it with five” (Tobin et al., 2009, p.174). The teacher made an exception of allowing five children to play together even though she knew disputes have previously occurred in the play area. Although some may question whether the teacher was really “non-intervening” since she did go to the housekeeping area to see what was going on, she did not push through with the classroom rule or reason with the children as she usually would. This is evident in the response of another American teacher from a separate preschool after watching the video clip of the housekeeping corner incident. The teacher criticized Fran, the teacher in the video, for “being too willing to bend the rules” stressing the lack of firmness in rule setting may cause confusion in the classroom (Tobin et al., 2009, p.220). Such interpretation of non-intervention proves that Fran was willing to give children a chance to try and work things out despite going against the rules, the essence of *amae* as evident in the usage of “try” in her speech.

2.4.3 Implications

The ethnographic descriptions of episodes found in Chinese and American preschools where teachers allowed experimentation through non-intervention point to the possible existence of *amae*-like zone of practicable adaptability operating as a common mechanism in the socialization processes regardless of culture. Although different terms were referred to

when describing the Japanese *mimamoru* type non-intervention, such as the “artful and unobtrusive scaffolding of child-initiated activities” witnessed in the Chinese preschool, the “strategic non-intervention” type of pedagogical approach indicates that the duration, form, tolerance level, and what is allowed and not allowed to take place during the period of adaptability may differ between cultures. However, its function of giving children latitude to work out solutions to problems on their own may be universal.

From analyzing the ethnographic details provided previously, at a glance, educators from the United States may seem to have less tolerance compared to the Japanese or the Chinese educators in allowing the period of practicable adaptability to take place. However, close examination indicates that the difference lies in the distinctive socialization goals of each culture and the difference in the cultural value as to what is allowed and what isn't. For instance, in Japan, non-participation in group activities is less tolerated than misbehavior, whereas in the United States, the opposite trend of more leniencies towards non-participation in group activity than misbehavior is witnessed. Therefore, the question lies not as to whether such a mechanism of practicable adaptation exists, but when and how such mechanism is used in different cultures. As evident from the meta-analysis of ethnographic descriptions, illustrating teachers' utilization of strategic non-intervention in educational setting, points to the intuitive understanding of educators regardless of culture as to the importance of giving children time and space to experience and learn from mistakes. Therefore, although learning can stem from the active guidance and support of adults through scaffolding, it can also be facilitated through the existence of a passive watchfulness of others. This in turn, provides a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere in the encouragement of self-exploration and acquiring through experiences, which spontaneously facilitates internalization of societal norms and adaptation to a new learning environment of preschool by the children

2.5 Discussion

The analysis of how the *amae*-like mechanism of practicable adaptability, as utilized by Japanese mothers and teachers through strategic non-intervention, points to the fact that changes need not stem from the external pressure exerted from the environment, such as constant surveillance and punishment. As suggested in the moral teaching of The North Wind and the Sun, “gentleness and kind persuasion win where force and bluster fail,” changes do not stem only from explicit teaching or direct instruction from social others but can result merely from the provision of an *amae* type of environment that is made possible through the *mimamoru* type non-intervention, accepting the individual unconditionally regardless of whether one performs or not performs to the expected level of competency. As evident in Japanese teachers’ non-punitive attitude towards misbehavior and conducts below the level of expected maturity, children are given plenty of time and space to acquire the appropriate mannerism through operating in both the *uchi* (home) and *soto* (outside) mode. This gives the ability to gain full confidence and mastery in skills of social navigation. Such permissive attitude may seem ineffective and inappropriate at a glance. However, as extensively explained by Tobin et al (2009), *mimamoru* type non-intervention is a pedagogical strategy that is intentionally deployed in providing children opportunities to deal with socially complex situations that can only be learned through experiencing. Thus, to allow *amae* does not mean “a passive absence of action but instead a strategic deployment of non-action” that is enforced according to the developmental goals of the child (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 133). The allowance of *amae* should end when, through constantly monitoring and assessment of the children’s behavior points to other pedagogical methods (i.e. direct intervention) as more effective in helping children to come to understand. Therefore, there are time limits to the utilization of such a mechanism and should the deployment of such a strategy become

inappropriate, extending beyond optimal period of intervention, such allowance of *amae* would be “negligent” or “spoiling” (*amayakasu*), which will bring about maladjustment or maladaptive changes in the individual.

From the analysis above, it can be said that when examining the zone of practicable adaptability, the focus should be on how the environment is structured to cater to the needs of the individual rather than how to train or alter the individual to fit in with the environment. This enables one to learn from experimenting and experiencing mistakes and success rather than performing out of extrinsic motivation. This also promotes adaptive disposition that enables individuals to more effectively utilize such environmental feature for one’s growth and learning, indicating that such developmental mechanisms should be a prerequisite condition before adaptive change or progress occurs.

Although the utilization of such strategic non-intervention, a feature of the zone of practicable adaptability, is most visible in the Japanese society, ethnographic details have shown that preschool teachers from China and the United States also operate in the zone of practicable adaptability in allowing children time to come to understand and internalize social norms and rules. As Marshall, Chuong, and Aikawa (2011) state, *amae* “might be best considered a fluid cultural representation that has different meanings and salience for different people” (p. 27). Therefore, although the patterns, characteristics, and conventions connected to the expression and usage of the zone may show cross-cultural variability (e.g. what is tolerated and not tolerated in the process of learning), the mechanism underlying developmental changes should be similar across culture. As indicated by Doi (1973), *amae* is a Japanese concept that characterizes Japanese mentality, which paradoxically describes a universal experience “that is basically common to mankind as a whole” (p.28). Although explanation as to how *amae* functions as a common mechanism underlying the functioning of

mankind is unclear in Doi's work, positioning *amae* as a manifestation of the zone of practicable adaptability helps to clarify its universal relevance.

As described in section 1.4, change processes of the zone of practicable adaptability can derive from an individual's operating either in the zone of current development (ZCD), the zone of proximal development (ZPD), or a combination of both. The cultural difference in the use of the zone reflects different degrees of usage and operations in the ZCD and the ZPD. From the Japanese example where strategic non-intervention is utilized majority of the time, children are placed in an environment where they are given greater leeway in experimenting with ways of self-expression. In such an environment, children learn to operate more in the ZCD than in the ZPD. This is where bridging is utilized both when one is engaged in self-exploration or when one works in student groups, where children come to understand appropriate ways of social interaction through bridging each other's knowledge during collaborative problem solving. As for the Chinese case, with teachers adopting a mid-ground between directive and non-directive intervention, the operation in both the ZCD and the ZPD should be witnessed depending on the mode of discipline undertaken by the teacher. In the American preschools, with children given explicit direction as to what is allowed and what isn't, children are more likely to operate in the ZPD, where external feedbacks are provided by the teachers through the disciplinary approach of reward and punishment that give children less space for self-exploration of limits.

Regardless of which mechanism is undertaken to facilitate changes, temporary periods of adaptability should exist as an important transitional mechanism in all cultures. The zone of practicable adaptability explains how individuals come to internalize social norms through the utilization of environmental features that allow both the element of home and society to co-exist in order for children to acquire novel behavior without completely discarding old,

familiar ones. Such insight on the adaptation process, as most evident in the use of *amae*, may have broader implications beyond the mere description of the regional characteristics of Japanese people. It provides insight to the understanding of developmental theories from a new perspective such as Bowlby's attachment theory, which is thought of as closely related to the concept of *amae*.

In the next section, the analysis of attachment from the perspective of *amae* as a possible mechanism in aiding the transferring of attachment functions to multiple attachment figures in relation to the internal working model will be examined to explain why the concept of transitional period and its function is a necessary perspective when examining adaptive changes in relational development.

CHAPTER 3. INTERPRETING CHANGE PROCESSES OF ATTACHMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *AMAE* AS THE ZONE OF PRACTICABLE ADAPTABILITY

As touched upon in the previous chapter, the strong *amae* relationship established with the mother is split and diversified in the school situation, leading to the child's smooth adjustment to the world outside home. This is made possible with the unobtrusive presence (*mimamoru*) of the Japanese mother and educator. The unobtrusive presence enables the child to explore new settings and try out new activities while simultaneously being protected and looked after, which coincides with the attachment relationship where the child learns to use the mother as a secure base from which the child explores.

In this chapter, to further probe the functional universality of the zone of practicable adaptability, the attachment theory will be reexamined from the perspective of *amae* in hope to clarify (1) how *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability functions as a transitional mechanism in the process of transferring attachment functions from the primary figure to social others, (2) how individuals learn to use *amae* as an extensive component of the attachment function for adaptation purposes, and (3) the role the environment plays in the adaptive formation of attachment.

3.1 Attachment Reconsidered: A Need to Consider Environmental Factors and Developmental Processes in the Formation of the IWM

Over the past few decades, Bowlby's attachment theory has had tremendous influence on psychologists' conception on close relationships. The theory has enlightened researchers on the paramount importance of the early mother-child bond and how such a relationship affects an individual's personality formation later in life, influencing thoughts, feelings, and

behaviors in adult relationships. The primary assumption of the attachment theory is that humans form intimate emotional bonds for survival purposes. These bonds facilitate the development and maintenance of mental representations of the self and the others, known as the “internal working models” (IWMs).

IWMs are a set of conscious or tacit expectations and attitudes with respect to oneself and one's attachment figures. They become the fundamental components of an individual's self-worth, subsequently regulating the individual's expectation of others, such as teachers and friends. Working models contain detailed knowledge of interpersonal experiences: the comprehensive who, what, where, when, why, and how, as well as the emotions associated with the experiences (Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). Furthermore, the models aid individuals to understand their surrounding environment, engage in survival promoting behaviors such as proximity maintenance, and establish a psychological sense of felt security. These representations consist information about whether the attachment figure is perceived as a person who responds to calls for support or protection (IWMs of other), and whether the self is worthy of receiving help from others (IWMs of self). Such representations also contribute to the individual's perception of human nature and the world as being more or less trustworthy and controllable (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999).

The concept of internal working models, as a mediator of the attachment-related experience reflecting individual differences in interpersonal experiences and attachment styles, serves as the foundation for understanding how attachment processes operate throughout the life course. Nonetheless, questions concerning the nature and structure of the working models remain unanswered (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000). In addition, despite the claim that attachment security foreshadows later psychosocial growth, researches have shown that

“differences in mother-child relationships do not link in a simple global way to differences in children’s other relationships” (Dunn, 1993, p. 115).

Thompson (1999) discovered that even though securely attached infants are more socially competent as preschoolers, longitudinal studies revealed tenuous associations between attachment security and peer interactions. Therefore, “the strength of the relation between infant security and later sociopersonality functioning is modest” since variables such as life events and the fluid nature of relationships impinge upon the quality of attachment (Thompson, 1999 p. 280). How attachment security in infancy predicts later psychosocial functioning is contingent on the subsequent quality of mother-child relationships, which changes with the emergent capacities of the child that often imposes new demands on the mother.

Primary attachment figures may also change as the one’s social network widens. Murakami and Sakurai (2010) positioned middle childhood as a transitional period where the primary attachment figure may shift from the mother to social others, including the fathers, grandparents, and friends. A survey of older elementary students revealed that only 64% of the participants named their mother as the primary attachment figure, whereas 12% of the participants nominated their close friends. The finding attested to the transferring of attachment functions during middle childhood as one’s social network expands. Although attachment to parents prevails throughout life, transferences may take place throughout adolescence and early adulthood where friends and romantic partners gradually replace parents as the preferred source of emotional support and proximity seeking, (Doherty & Feeney, 2004).

With evidence of the transitional period of attachment figures in place, valid explanations pertaining to the mechanism underlying such transition are lacking. As Thompson (2008)

concluded in his study, areas such as “the processes mediating the transition from the simple social expectations of infancy to the more complex representational systems of later ages, and their relevance to continuity or change in a child’s security relevant behavior” remains ambiguous and unexplained (p. 268). The findings above illustrate the need to clarify the underlying structure and processes of the working model concept, and the need to take into account of how environment and other factors interplay in the development of attachment security. Similarly, Coleman and Watson (2000) emphasized that attachment emerges based on a complex array of individual and environmental factors interacting in complex and often nonlinear ways. Henceforth, attachment is an interactional concept that is not merely a biopsychological process but is multidirectional in its processes and consequences (Sroufe & Sampson, 2000). In the following sections, the role of environment in attachment formation will be examined and the incorporation of *amae* may clarify unanswered questions concerning the underlying developmental process will be explained.

3.1.1 A Need to Incorporate Relationship with Social Others in the Formation of IWM

For many years the search for antecedent of attachment has focused primarily on caregiver’s sensitivity due to Bowlby’s emphasis on the strong, deep-seated tendency for infants to prefer a principal attachment figure for comfort and security. This view has led to the assumption that sensitivity and responsiveness of the primary caregiver is the most substantial factor in the formation of an infant’s internal working models. However, studies have shown that children become attached to a hierarchy of figures who fulfill attachment functions in different contexts (Howes, Rodning, Galluzzo, & Myers, 1988). Potential

attachment figures include fathers, grandparents, siblings, peers, and teachers (Doherty & Feeney, 2004).

For instance, Holmes (2005) recognized that the combined mother-father scores along with the multiple dimensions of attachment in childhood are far more predictive of security or insecurity of attachment representation in adulthood than those of either parent alone. In Dunn and Kendrick's (1982) study, mothers reported their children missing their siblings in their absence, implying that the children use the siblings as a secure base from which they happily explore novel places. Such findings support the paradigm shift in attachment theory, from attachment as a dimension of the caregiver-child relationship to a quality that may be present in a myriad of relationships (Dunn, 1993). Also, the earliest representations of the caregiving relationship, which leads to a secure or insecure attachment in infancy, consists largely of simple social expectations that do not provide the conceptual foundation for the more sophisticated and complex representations of self and relationships to emerge in later years (Dunn, 1993).

Doherty and Feeney (2004) observed that adults are likely to have a network of attachment figures, when past studies have focused solely on parents and romantic partners as full-blown attachment figures (e.g. Hazan & Shaver, 1987). By surveying over 800 adults of various ages and life situations, Doherty and Feeney (2004) found that adults embrace an intricate network of attachments consisted of a partner, mother, father, sibling, friend, and child that differ in relative importance. These networks are reorganized in response to life events where each of the six figures listed in the questionnaire have the potential to become a primary attachment figure fulfilling the functions of safe haven, secure base, and separation protest. Although the attachment functions tend to transfer from parents to peers or romantic partners, parents remain in the attachment network, coexisting with significant others where

their roles may alter depending on life situations. Thus, it is imperative to further scrutinize how the varied attachments are integrated into the representational models and how the underlying mechanisms operate. Doherty and Feeney (2004) concluded that “research into cultural and socioeconomic influences on adults’ attachment networks is needed, together with further investigation of the factors that trigger reorganization of the network” (p. 487), which again underscores the importance of examining environmental influences in the formation and maintenance of attachment relationships.

3.1.2 A Need to Take into Account of Culture in Examining Attachment

One plausible reason that has evoked the argument above may be the overemphasis of attachment theory on the evolutionary aspect of the construct. As a result, it downplayed the role the environment plays in the attachment formation. In particular, it has failed to capture certain dimensions of attachment that are salient in various collectivist cultural populations.

“Attachment theory can be a valuable framework for examining general questions about interactions between biology and culture during development, and cross-cultural research affords useful opportunities to study those interactions” (Posoda & Jacobs, 2001, p. 822). Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, and Morelli (2000) claimed that culture is not an overlay on biologically determined human nature, but an equally influential factor shaping the developmental pathway of an individual’s attachment. Despite the frequent use of key terms such as “ecology” and “sociocultural niches” in interpreting cross-cultural differences, attachment researchers have not explicitly examined or incorporated cultural theories into the attachment research until recently (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995). One theory of culture that has been closely examined alongside the attachment theory is *amae*, an indigenous

Japanese concept of relatedness described as “the feeling of attachment that is observable” (Doi, 2005, p. 164).

Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, and Weisz (2000) attempted to integrate indigenous approach to the psychology of attachment through exploring the possibility of *amae* as a concept in the developmental processes of relatedness. Although in agreement with the assumption that aspects of relatedness such as proximity seeking, contact maintaining, separation protest, and safe haven are rooted in biological predispositions and manifested in all cultures, they argued that these predispositions are modified and adapted through the values, practices, and institution of the culture or “cultural lenses”. Assimilation to a culture that is inclined toward accommodation or individuation will result in distinctive paths of development. The path of relatedness, whether it leads to symbiotic harmony (*amae*) or generative tension (secure attachment), are derived from biologically based predispositions and fueled by the culture’s need for both accommodation and individuation, albeit the strength of these influences differ in degrees across cultures (See Figure 3-1).

This finding indicates that culture and other environmental factors cannot be overlooked when examining universally assumed biological predisposition of relatedness; it also pinpoints to the possibility of *amae* existing as a key concept in the developmental process. Moreover, the finding confirms an undeniable link between attachment and *amae*, and hence an explanation in their conceptual relatedness is required in order to comprehend the role *amae* plays in attachment formation.

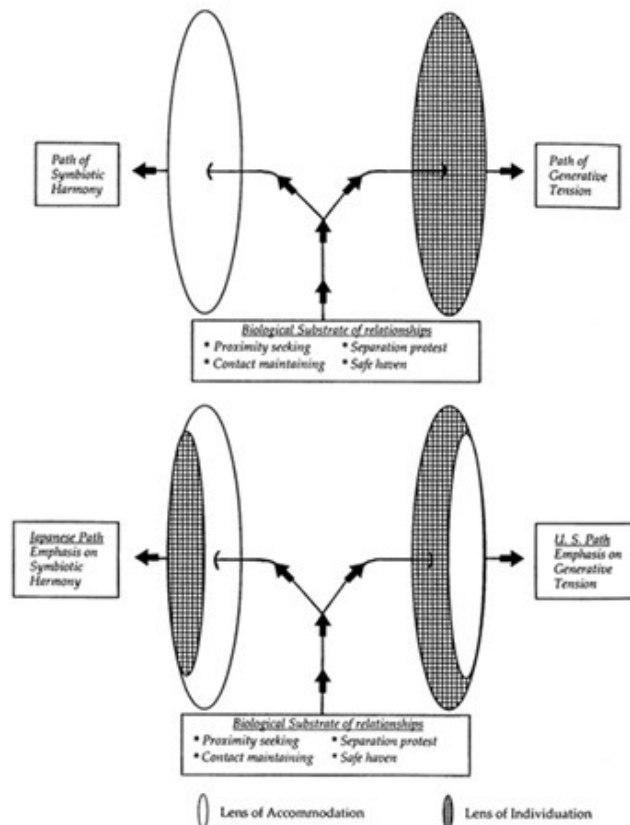


Figure 3-1. Cultural Lenses: Origins of the Paths of Symbiotic Harmony and Generative Tension (top), Japanese and U.S. Paths of Development (bottom)

Source: From “The Development of Close Relationships in Japan and the United States: Paths of Symbiotic Harmony and Generative Tension” (p. 1124) by F. Rothbaum, M. Pott, H. Azuma, K. Miyake, and J. Weisz, 2000, *Child Development*, September/October 2000, Volume 71, Number 5.

3.1.3 The Purpose of Incorporating *Amae* in Attachment Study

As delineated previously, the internal working models are dynamic representations that can be updated, elaborated, and replaced as life situation changes. The structure (that serves and provides attachment function) is likely to evolve from infancy to childhood and adulthood. Despite solid evidence of transference in attachment functions among attachment figures, the process and mechanism central to the understanding of the operation of attachment throughout one’s life is nonexistent and thus demands elaboration.

As an extension of Rothbaum et al.’s (2000) research, this chapter will be devoted to the

examination of attachment from the perspective of *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability. How the latter social functioning of attachment later in life is made possible with the mediation of the transitional mechanism of the zone of practicable adaptability will be discussed in depth.

First, a conceptual comparison between attachment and *amae* will take place, examining how the concept of *amae* is an overarching concept that includes both components of attachment and dependency. Second, an examination of empirical studies centered on *amae* in comparison to attachment and dependency will also be undertaken. *Amae* as a zone of practicable adaptability can exist as an extension of attachment function employed during transitions, where *amae* functions as a buffer as one expands his or her social network. Lastly, new perceptions of *amae* and attachment will be analyzed. Future researches taking in *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability will shed light upon the process underlying transference in attachment functions among attachment figures. How such approach is related to the internal working model will also be touched upon.

3.2 Conceptual Comparison Between Attachment, Dependency, and *Amae*

Doi (1973) defined *amae* as the ability “to depend and presume upon another’s love or bask in another’s indulgence” (1992, p.8). It is a relational and interpersonal concept rooted in mother-child relationship, which serves as a basis of human relationships that extends throughout a person’s life and characterizes other close relationships. The *amae* interaction involves two participants fulfilling the two complementary roles of *amaeru* and *amayakasu*. Mutually satisfying *amae* is achieved only when the *amae*-receiver who *amaeru* (to depend upon) and the *amae*-giver who *amayakasu* (to allow another to depend upon) are both in agreement (Kumagai, 1981). The giving-and-receiving relationship progressively evolves

throughout the course of one's life; as one matures, one moves from "infantile receptivity to becoming a giver of nurturance to others and to sharing in interdependent mutuality" which implies a continuous spectrum from early infancy to adulthood (Freeman, 2009, p.73). Moreover, *Amae* identifies closely to general theories of psychological development, such as Balint's concept of "passive object love." It plays a prominent role in understanding the development of the self and others, where one learns to complementarily balance the ambivalence that arise between autonomy and dependence.

Although *amae* is the most prevalently known indigenous term that describes and symbolizes the Japanese psyche and personality structure, Doi (2005) conceives that the "Japanese experience concerning dependency need, in addition to being an expression of Japanese culture, can claim universal validity. In fact, it is my understanding that such a view may release psychoanalysis from its culture-specific underpinnings and strengthen it as a universal theory" (p. 127). *Amae* suggests "an affirmative attitude toward the spirit of dependency on the part of Japanese" (Doi, 1973, p. 16) that contrasts with the attitudes in "Western societies where dependency need is looked upon as something that belongs to the child or the regressed patient and hence, usually beneath the dignity of a grown-up person" (Doi, 2005, p. 53). The concept is considered a basic human need and a "psychological phenomenon that is basically common to mankind as a whole" (Doi, 1973, p.28). It is an indispensable element in a healthy spiritual life that protects against the adverse effects of separation (Doi, 1973). It also has "an influence on subsequent stages of development" where the operation of *amae* initiates not only the process of personality formation but also the process of socialization (Doi, 2005, p. 20). Additionally, it "sheds light on and unifies many psychoanalytic concepts that are usually considered separately" (Doi, 2005, p. 140), bridging attachment and dependence, two discrete concepts in English (Doi, 1992).

Although Doi (1992) defined *amae* as an indigenous concept that bridges attachment and dependency, the relationship among the three constructs remains obscure. Doi (2005) stated that attachment “obviously covers the same area as *amae*” (p. 142) and described *amae* as “the feeling of attachment that is observable..[and] involves a certain psychological dependence” (Doi, 1992, p. 8-9). He further described *amae* as a dependency need within “a two-person relationship of an asymmetrical dependent type”. This is confusing since attachment and dependency are two distinct concepts in English, as defined in Bowlby’s attachment research.

3.2.1 Relationship Between the Concept of Attachment and Dependency

Bowlby (1958) introduced the term “attachment” in an attempt to distinguish the emotionally intense infant-mother connection from the more generalized relationship embodying “dependency.” Bowlby differentiated the two concepts because attachment quality was misunderstood as a measure of dependency due to the similarity in behavioral manifestations, such as crying, clinging, and seeking proximity (Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 1999).

However, unlike attachment, dependency is not limited to seeking contact with and proximity to other persons. It encompasses help, attention, and approval, where what is sought and received is significant but not the person from whom it is sought or received. Therefore, dependency in the mother-infant context reflects learned behaviors that have nonspecific implications, whereas attachment is innate in nature and is considered specific once acquired. Furthermore, the term dependency carries a negative connotation of a state of helplessness and immaturity. On the one hand, dependency related behaviors are regarded as characteristics only of the early years that need to be outgrown (Ainsworth, 1969). On the

other hand, attachment behavior of seeking proximity or physical contact with specific, targeted persons is highly durable over time even under the impact of adverse conditions (Johnson, 1993).

3.2.2 Doi's Interpretation of Bowlby's Distinction Between Attachment and Dependency

Despite Bowlby's argument that attachment and dependency differ fundamentally, Doi (1973) asserted that the two concepts cannot be distinctively categorized. He argued that Bowlby overlooked the fact that "attachment involves a dependence of its own, as one necessarily becomes dependent on the object as far as one is attached to it" (Doi, 2005, p. 142). He further claimed that *amae* has "an advantage over attachment" because *amae* enables the discussion of the innate desires and feelings experienced behind the attachment behavior. *Amae* signifies a form of non-verbal psychological dependence that can only be fulfilled in a close, attachment related relationship. Moreover, he claimed that without *amae*, formation of new relationships including those of attachment is rendered impossible. *Amae* is "instrumental in inducing the interpersonal relationship or object relations at infancy or even in later years" (Doi, 2005, p. 128). Doi's conjecture illustrates how human innate need for affiliation and love is affected and modified by cultural and societal factors.

Concurrent to Doi's viewpoint, many attachment related researchers believe the two concepts are not clear-cut distinguishable. For instance, Weinfield et al. (1999) interpreted attachment using the concept of dependence/dependency. "In Bowlby's term, it is not possible for an infant to be either too dependent or truly independent. Rather, infants may be effectively or ineffectively dependent (Weinfield et al., 1999, p. 76). Similarly, Sroufe, Fox, & Pancake (1983) examined the relationship among attachment, dependency, and

self-reliance of a child. They found that infants who could use caregivers effectively to meet their needs will lead them to believe that, as children, they could influence their surroundings to meet their needs and achieve their goals. Such confidence enables children to function autonomously, with the belief that they will be successful in their efforts. As Sroufe and his colleagues' (1983) findings demonstrated, preschool children with insecure histories were more dependent, seeking attention at the expense of peer relations and showing signs of extreme reliance on their teachers than those with secure histories. In short, individuals who are effectively dependent will become effectively independent.

Therefore, although autonomy represents one of the key elements of traditional attachment security, it can be argued that a certain level of psychological dependency as implicitly emphasized in the concept of *amae* is also a vital and necessary part of social adaptation. When studying Bowlby's work and those of other attachment researchers, despite the association of secure attachment with autonomy and independence, a certain degree of dependency is necessary during the developmental processes of human relatedness.–

3.2.3 Relationship Between *Amae* and Dependency

Doi's (1973) definition of *amae* as “an attempt psychologically to deny the fact of separation from the mother” (p.74) is often translated as dependency, dependency need, or indulgent dependency. However, he never suggested that *amae* is synonymous with all dependency experience. *Amae* and dependence have often been confounded in previous literatures due to their likeness. In reality, *amae* “is part of a larger domain of dependent and interdependent relationships” that needs to be conceptually sorted in order to thoroughly comprehend its function in the formation of attachment relationships (Johnson, 1993, p.200). According to Johnson (1993), *amae* is confined to the dependency based on the desire

and craving for closeness, security, and cherishment also known as “indulgent dependency.”

Vereijken, Riksen-Walraven, & Van Lieshout (1997) attempted to address the conceptual disparities among *amae*, attachment, and dependency by asking experts from both the United States and Japan to sort and extract the behavioral characteristics of these concepts using Attachment Q-sort cards. The cards contain descriptions of 90 different behaviors pertinent to children in a wide variety of settings. The experts’ descriptions were then used to derive scores on each of the three concepts for a sample of Japanese infants through observation. Vereijken et al. (1997) found that children’s *amae* behaviors correlated with their dependency behaviors, although neither *amae* nor dependency were found related to security. Similarly, Japanese mothers found the description of a securely attached child as desirable compared to those describing *amae* and dependency, indicating that *amae* and dependency are highly similar and that both concepts are unrelated to attachment security.

Although Vereijken et al (1997) aligned *amae* and dependency on the same theoretical platform, the study overlooked the fact that *amae* cannot be studied from a behavioral perspective per se since *amae* is defined as the psychological dependency of needs underlying the behavioral manifestations. Moreover, interpreting *amae* in terms of the zone of practicable adaptability where appropriate allowance of dependency is necessary during the process of autonomous and independent training, the Japanese mothers would view the behavioral descriptions of attachment security as more desirable. This is because a secure attachment is the goal that parents work towards, and *amae* is involved in the process of becoming securely attached. Unsurprisingly, *amae* would align with dependency when perceived from a behavioral perspective, for *amae* is used by the child repeatedly to learn the proper extent of dependency that feels “mutually comfortable” for the interactants (Okonogi, 1992). Despite

characteristic resemblances, there are stark differences between *amae* and dependency which renders close examination.

Yamaguchi and Ariizumi (2006) argued that there are important conceptual differences between *amae* and dependency, positing both concepts as representing two extreme and contrastive responses in terms of control. In *amae*, individuals control their environment by using someone who has more direct influence than themselves over a situation. Since *amae* presumes that one's inappropriate request or behavior is unconditionally accepted, one can afford to "test the others' limit". Therefore, in a successful *amae* interaction, the *amae* requester can control the outcome of the situation due to one's confidence in the others' unconditional acceptance of one's inappropriate behavior or request.

On the contrary, dependency is characterized by the relinquishment of control. A dependent person usually behaves out of the need to gain acceptance and approval of others, resulting in the individual lacking in confidences and a sense of control over the outcome. For instance, people with dependent personality disorder are described as being helpless, having difficulty making everyday decisions without an excessive amount of advice and reassurance from others. This makes them susceptible to the influence of their counterparts rather than the other way round (Yamaguchi, 2004).

All in all, the consequence of dependency contrasts greatly to that of *amae*. A dependent individual relinquishes control over the environment since he or she is under the influence of the other. Successful *amae* interactions affords the individual to control the environment and the other, who is often more powerful than the individual (Yamaguchi, 2004). Unlike a dependent individual, a recipient of *amae* is not helpless but is in a position of control (Freeman, 2009).

Another difference is the need for approval and guidance. Even though *amae* requires a generous partner to achieve satisfaction, an *amae* requester does not necessarily behave passively. On the contrary, the *amae* requester is presumed to possess the skill to elicit nurturing behaviors from others, thus requiring one to be psychologically independent (Doi, 2005). Unlike an dependent individual, who needs approval and guidance from others, *amae* requester assumes that his or her inappropriate behavior or request will be accepted by the other and thus does not need approval or guidance. As long as the *amae* request is accepted, the *amae* requester can bolster his or her self-worth and maintain self-confidence in terms of controlling the environment to their liking, whereas dependent individuals tend to lack self-worth and confidence. As a result, they seek constant approval and guidance. (Yamaguchi & Ariizumi, 2006).

The analysis above indicate a need to differentiate *amae* from dependency, where *amae* embodies more than what is conveyed in the concept of dependency. As Yahata (2004) stated, at the basis of *amae* lies the innate desire for proximity seeking and separation protest, two functions of attachment relationship. In the next section, the two concepts will be compared to clarify how *amae* may play a role in the formation and transference of attachment relationships.

3.3 Relationship Between *Amae* and Attachment

Even though most *amae* researchers postulate that *amae* and attachment are separate constructs, evidence indicates that the two are not convincingly discrete. According to Rothbaum and Kakinuma (2004), the two concepts are both alike and unlike with respect to four key dimensions: onset time, underlying motivation, behaviors, and association with mental health.

First, in terms of onset time, both *amae* and attachment emerge around 9 months, when the infant's ability to distinguish self from the other leads to separation anxiety. However, *amae* is more noticeable later in childhood (Kumagai, 1981), whereas attachment is more noticeable at 12-18 months (Behrens, 2004; Rothbaum & Kakinuma, 2004). Second, motivation is defined as a desire for increased closeness and security, particularly toward the primary caregiver that underlies both constructs (Rothbaum & Kakinuma, 2004). Both systems are triggered by stress when security and closeness are not attained (Mizuta, Zahn-Waxler, Cole, & Hiruma, 1996). The difference lies in the degree of stress; while *amae* is triggered by milder stress, such as feeling sleepy or tired, attachment is triggered by acute threats to safety or proximity with the caregiver (Behrens, 2004). Third, behaviors of proximity seeking and contact maintaining as well as the use of significant others as a secure base and safe haven are evident in both systems, albeit some differences in degree (Yamaguchi & Ariizumi, 2006). However, *amae* is focused on the desire for interdependence and learning to distinguish relationships with close others from relationships with more distant others, whereas attachment is focused on the use of the caregiver as a base for exploration and learning to cope with recurring separations" (Rothbaum & Kakinuma, 2004, p. 36). Fourth and final, concerning the association with mental health, both *amae* and attachment lead to later social competence. Positive *amae* is associated with *sunao* (willing compliance, cooperation, receptivity), and positive attachment is associated with autonomy, self-esteem, and self-assertion (Rothbaum & Kakinuma, 2004).

A comparison of attachment and dependency with *amae* reveals that *amae* is a unique construct irreplaceable by either attachment or dependency. It is a construct that holds characteristics of both attachment and dependency as reflected in the two definitions of *amae* defined by researchers in the following sections.

3.3.1 Two Types of *Amae*

According to Yamaguchi and Ariizumi (2006), there are two types of *amae*: emotional *amae* and manipulative *amae*. Both are characterized by an inappropriate behavior presumed to be accepted that differs in the underlying motivations and goals.

Emotional *amae* is defined as the prototype of mother-child relationship synonymous to Bowlby's description of attachment bond, where the goal lies in the confirmation of unconditional acceptance and love, which is essential for survival but also evident later in life. For instance, emotional *amae* is often observed in romantic relationships where the girlfriend requests her boyfriend to purchase expensive jewelry for her even though she knows her boyfriend lacks cash. She uses the inappropriate request as a mean to confirm his unconditional acceptance and love (Yamaguchi & Ariizumi, 2006).

Manipulative *amae* is employed with the intention to control one's social and physical environment for one's own needs. In the case of the girlfriend requesting jewelry, the girl would be considered engaging in manipulative *amae* if the fulfillment of the request is more important than the need to be accepted. The two types of *amae* are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

As explicated above, both the need for unconditional love/favor and the need for control can underlie an *amae* behavior or request. *Amae* is comprised of seeking both unconditional love/favor and a specific object or goal to different degrees, depending on the situation and the target of the *amae* request (See Figure 3-2). This interpretation adds a new dimension to the secure base hypothesis of attachment theory, which assumes that the secure base is used by the individual to gain the support necessary for adaptation of the outside world. From the perspective of *amae*, if an individual can gain the support from the attachment figure and use the figure as a proxy to obtain what he or she wants, the individual may well overuse the

secure base, which is utilized not necessary for the purpose of adaptation to the environment but to either confirm one's unconditional commitment or gain control of the situation (Yamaguchi & Ariizumi, 2006). Although each of the two motivations could lead individuals to engage in *amae*, with the previous one synonymous to attachment motivation and the latter pertaining to the dependency aspect of *amae*, a more specific categorization of *amae* type is necessary in order to distinguish the two as Behrens (2004) did in her studies.

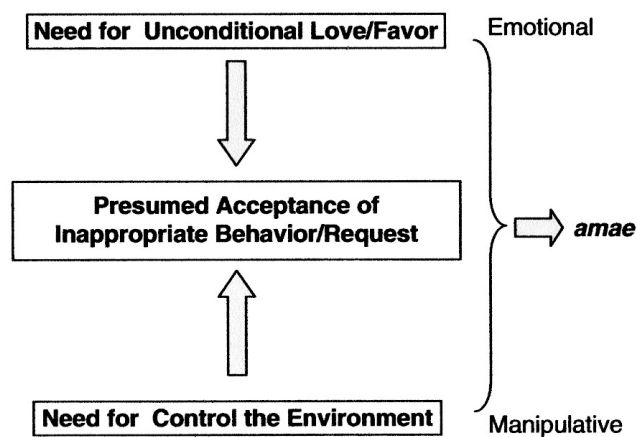


Figure 3-2. Motivations Underlying *Amae*

Source: From “Close Interpersonal Relationships Among Japanese: *Amae* as Distinguished from Attachment and Dependence” (p. 171), by S. Yamaguchi and Y. Ariizumi, in *Indigenous and Cultural Psychology*, U. Kim, K. Yang, Kwang. Hwang (Eds.), 2006, US: Springer

3.3.2 Relationship between Instrumental and Non-Instrumental *Amae* and Attachment

Behrens (2004) proposed a classification system for *amae* that distinguishes its positive and negative aspects and differentiates itself from attachment. She analyzed *amae* in terms of its behavioral manifestations and incorporated aspects of age, motivation, relationship, and interactants. Although *amae* and attachment are superficially similar, Behrens (2004) contends that the two constructs require separate categorizations, for “behavioral strategies that reflect internal states of individuals of a particular attachment classification...suggest its

link to only a particular category of *amae*” (p. 24). Furthermore, Behrens (2004) attempted to clarify the concept of *amae* by presenting a multifaceted view of *amae*, investigating how such phenomenon is manifested in different relational contexts and acquired through social experiences at different stages of development.

Behrens (2004) identified five categories of *amae* seen in three developmental phases of infancy, childhood, and adulthood. The five *amae* categories are divided into two domains, instrumental or non-instrumental. *Amae* I-Affective, significant for infants’ overall development, is non-instrumental. The other four categories of *amae* (*Amae*–II-Manipulative, III-Reciprocal, IV-Obligatory, and V-Presumptive) share instrumental motives in either intimate or non-intimate relationships (See Table 3-1).

Amae I-Affective, synonymous to Yamaguchi and Ariizumi’s (2006) emotional *amae*, refers to behaviors exhibited by infants, children and adults, primarily to enhance or renew emotional closeness with the underlying intention that one’s wishes will be fulfilled. *Amae* II-Manipulative, similar to Yamaguchi and Ariizumi’s (2006) manipulative *amae*, refers to the behaviors exhibited by children and adults, mainly to push their demands even when the request is unreasonable, expecting their demands to be granted. These two categories of *amae* are most often confused with attachment due to their occurrence in intimate relationships and likeness in their behaviors. For example, calling, following, crying, or clinging are displayed to induce caregiving behaviors and thus to increase a chance of survival (Bowlby, 1982). Although similar in behavioral manifestation, *Amae* I, unlike secure attachment, occurs in situation even when the child isn’t in a distressed situation. *Amae* II, unlike insecure ambivalent attachment, engage in similar behaviors of being excessively needy with the goal of manipulating their caregivers to grant their wishes rather than maximizing their chance of gaining caregiver’s attention and care. Therefore, the two categories of *amae* (*Amae*

I-Affective and *Amae* II-Manipulative) are comparable to two patterns of attachment (i.e. secure attachment and insecure-ambivalent attachment) for behavioral similarities but are functionally different (Behrens, Hesse, & Main, 2007).

The remaining categories are observed in less intimate relationships. *Amae* III-Reciprocal is evident in both childhood and adulthood amongst friends. *Amae* IV-Obligatory and *Amae* V-Presumptive are evident in adulthood amongst co-workers and acquaintances. The three types of *amae* observed in non-intimate relationships are not relevant to the attachment phenomenon, which proves that attachment and *amae* are not mutually exclusive.

In a follow up study, Behrens, Hesse, and Main (2007) interviewed Japanese mothers using excerpts from the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) to see if the term *amae* was spontaneously used to describe childhood relationships. They also examined how *amae* experience, or lack of it, affects the way the mothers perceive their childhood attachment relationships. The result of the interview showed nearly half of the mothers (46%) discussed their relationships with their attachment figures in their childhood, casually referring to *amae* when describing different attachment relationships. Aside from using *amae* to describe general relationships with their parents or to describe their own characteristics as a child, many mothers described those who let them engage in *amae* as a haven of safety where they would receive comfort when they were upset (Behrens, 2010). According to Behrens (2010), whether an individual has an *amae* figure as a haven of safety with whom he or she can depend on to fulfill one's *amae* will influence one's internal working model of *amae* relationships, drawn from the theoretical framework of IWM of attachment relationships.

Although the relationship between the IWM of the two concepts are not mentioned in details, Behrens's finding indicates that *amae* can be considered a tool for describing

attachment relationships. This points to the possibility of *amae* serving as an extensive function of attachment during transitional period, even though Behrens concluded that *amae* is a construct that is not limited to or even necessary to explain attachment relationships. She also suggested utilizing the *amae* concept as a possible predictor for individual differences in the quality of attachment relationships, which some researchers have started examining. The current focus is the relationship between *amae* and the internal working models of attachment relationships.

Table 3-1. Behrens' (2004) Five *Amae* Categories

	Noninstrumental	Instrumental			
	<i>Amae I</i> – Affective	<i>Amae II</i> – Manipulative	<i>Amae III</i> – Reciprocal	<i>Amae IV</i> – Obligatory	<i>Amae V</i> – Presumptive
<i>Infancy</i>					
Motivation	desire for physical and emotional closeness, oneness	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Behavior	snuggling, seeking to be held				
Relationship	intimate, affective, close				
Interactant(s)	parents (mothers)				
<i>Childhood</i>					
Motivation	desire for physical and emotional closeness, fun	get their way, benign manipulation	desire for emotional closeness, to reciprocate favors	N/A	N/A
Behavior	snuggling, seeking to sit on lap	clingy, act helplessly, temper tantrum	act desperate, deal making		
Relationship	intimate, affective, close	intimate, close	close, trusting		
Interactant(s)	parents (mothers)	parents (mothers)	school peers, friends		
<i>Adulthood</i>					
Motivation	desire for physical and emotional closeness, fun	get their way, benign manipulation	desire for emotional closeness, to reciprocate favors	take advantage of/ abuse power/ control situations	presume upon one's good will
Behavior	playful, childish, coquettish	act helplessly, selfishly, with little cues	act desperate, deal making	excessive, unreasonable demands	socially inappropriate, no <i>enryo</i>
Relationship	intimate, affective, close	intimate, close	close, trusting	nonintimate, unequal status	nonintimate, non-hierarchical
Interactant(s)	romantic partners	married couples	peers, friends	boss, client, subordinate	distant acquaintance

Source: From "A Multifaceted View of the Concept of *Amae* Reconsidering the Indigenous Japanese Concept of Relatedness" (p. 11), by K. Behrens (2004) in *Human Development*, Vol. 47, p.1-27.

3.3.3 Comparing *Amae* and Attachment from the Perspective of the IWM

Tamase and Imamura (2006) examined the relationship between *amae* and attachment, from the perspective of the internal working models of attachment. In their study, primitive (interdependent) and convoluted (distorted) *amae*, as mentioned by Doi (1989) were examined to understand how both types of *amae* are manifested and reflected in the IWM of attachment. Primitive interdependent *amae* is defined as good *amae* that is child-like, innocent and usually accepted by the *amae* giver. Contrarily, convoluted distorted *amae* is defined as bad *amae*, that is narcissistic, childish, willful, and demanding, and usually not accepted by the *amae* giver.

In their study, 153 undergraduate students were recruited to evaluate their *amae* and attachment status by filling in a questionnaire that rates factors in a multi-dimensional *Amae* scale and factors in an internal working model scale. Results showed that secure attachment and primitive interdependent *amae* as well as ambivalent attachment and convoluted distorted *amae* are positively correlated, while avoidant attachment and primitive interdependent *amae* are negatively correlated (See Table 3-2). Comparison of *amae* types with attachment classifications indicated that individuals with secure attachment are more likely to engage in healthy, interdependent type of *amae*, whereas those with avoidant attachment are less like to engage in the interdependent type of *amae*. Similarly, those with ambivalent attachment tend to engage in unhealthy, distorted type of *amae*.

With *amae* being an indispensable ingredient in the facilitation of psychosocial development where one learns to relate to other through social experiences, it can be inferred that those with secure attachment most likely engaged in plenty of *amae* experience in the past. Those with ambivalent and avoidant attachment most likely lacked sufficient experience of *amae* that is necessary in the formation of a positive mental representation. Thus, they have

difficulty engaging in healthy *amae* relationships. The results points to the possibility of *amae* playing a role in the formation of IWM of attachment, although the specificity of how it contributes to the developmental process is unclear from the study.

Table 3-2. Relationships Between Attachment Types and *Amae* Types

	Interdependent	Distorted	Secure	Ambivalent	Avoidant
Interdependent					
Distorted	+				
Secure	+				
Ambivalent		+	-		
Avoidant	-		-		

Modified from Tamase & Imamura (2006)

3.3.4 The Internal Working Model of *Amae* Interaction (IWMAI): Distinguishing the Usage of Emotional and Instrumental *Amae*

Kobayashi and Kato (2007), taking the perspective that adolescence is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, attempted to study how emotional and instrumental *amae* are manifested in the close relationships of college students. On the one hand, one engages in emotional *amae* for the purpose of maintaining close relationships and to enjoy the pleasurable feeling of mutual affection. Instrumental *amae*, on the other hand, serves the purpose of controlling others to fulfill one's desires, needs, or requests. Although the two types of *amae* serve different purposes, emotional *amae*, which is rooted in the mother-child bond, lies on the basis of instrumental *amae*, is thought of as an extension of emotional *amae*.

Kobayashi and Kato (2007) hypothesized that the two types of *amae* may be directed toward different *amae* figures. How strong both needs are expressed is determined by past *amae* experience, as reflected in the individual's internal working model of *amae* interaction (IWMAI). The IWMAI provides a framework which allows the *amae*-engager to plan,

evaluate, and engage in *amae* behaviors and interactions appropriately. The model is based on the knowledge compiled in the past concerning the self, others, and situations, where the degree to which an individual's demonstration of *amae* has been accepted or rejected leads to trait-like qualities that indicate how well one can utilize *amae* in various relational settings as shown in Table 3-3 (Kato, 2005).

In their study, 301 college students responded to a questionnaire looking at (1) how strongly one expresses his or her needs for emotional and instrumental *amae* toward 5 *amae* figures (romantic partner, best friend, friend, mother, and father) in different *amae* situations, and (2) how the 4 types of *amae*-engagers (Type A, B, C, and D) express emotional and instrumental *amae*.

Their findings revealed the following: (1) College students have higher needs for emotional *amae* than instrumental *amae* in all four types of *amae*-engagers. The differences in emotional *amae* for scores pertaining to the mother and father amongst C and D type (both with negative view of self) are statistically significant, while the differences in instrumental *amae* amongst the different types were not so. (2) The person college students engage in instrumental *amae* most frequently is in the order of best friend > romantic partner > friend > mother > father. Similarly, the person they engage in emotional *amae* most frequently is in the order of best friend = romantic partner > friend > mother > father. (3) Whether one holds positive or negative IWMAI of self and other also affects the number of *amae* figures one holds in the *amae* network. The *amae* engager type with most *amae* figures are in the order of A type > C type > B type > D type.

The results above demonstrate that emotional *amae* is more prone to individual differences than instrumental *amae*. It is an indication that emotional *amae* is affected by past *amae* experiences in the form of the internal working model of *amae* interaction (IWMAI),

whereas instrumental *amae* isn't. Moreover, instrumental *amae* are most frequently expressed exclusively towards a best friend, while emotional *amae* are expressed in equal frequency towards friends and a romantic partner. This implies that the transferring of attachment functions from best friend to romantic partner is already underway during adolescence and early adulthood with emotional *amae* preceding the transferring process. Such findings point to the possibility of emotional *amae*, which is affiliated with the effective use of dependency, exists as a mechanism for testing and transference of attachment function from family members and friends to lovers.

Although not mentioned in this study, Kobayashi and Kato (2002) stressed that since an *amae* interaction occurs between two individuals, one who *amaeru* (receives *amae*) and the other who *amayakasu* (allows *amae*), whether an individual accepts the *amae* request or not is also an important part of IWMAI. This is a perspective lacking in the current theory of IWM of attachment, which only mentions individual differences from the perspective of the individual engaging in attachment behavior as Pietromonaco and Feldman Barrett (2000) criticized.

[W]orking models of the self and others have been approached empirically as if they have independent effects on relationship-related thought, feeling, and action, yet they are clearly interdependent. ...Furthermore, working models of the self develop initially through experiences with specific others and how they respond... Thus, working models of the self are best seen as models of the self in relation to other (p. 159).

The existence of IWMAI in both the individual who *amaeru* (receives *amae*) and the individual who *amayakasu* (allows *amae*) is an important perspective that deserves mentioning, for it provides evidence that the secure establishment of attachment requires a warm responsive environment that unconditionally accepts and caters to the individual's innate need to connect to significant others.

Table 3-3. 4 Types of *Amae*-Engager (top) and *Amae*-Allower (bottom) as indicated in the IWMAI

Self			
Others		Positive	Negative
	Positive	Type A: Good at <i>Amae</i> (Appropriate use of <i>amae</i> , confident, enjoy <i>amae</i> interaction)	Type C: Hold Back on <i>Amae</i> (Guilty doing <i>amae</i> , anxious towards rejection, let others take initiative)
	Negative	Type B: Hard to <i>Amae</i> (Repress <i>amae</i> , reject <i>amae</i>)	Type D: Disorganized <i>Amae</i> (Extreme use of <i>amae</i> , lack of control in <i>amae</i>)

Self			
Others		Positive	Negative
	Positive	Type A: Good at Allowing <i>Amae</i> (Appropriate allowance of <i>amae</i> , enjoy <i>amae</i> interaction)	Type C: Extreme Allowance of <i>Amae</i> (Overly indulge others in <i>amae</i> interaction, difficulty in rejecting <i>amae</i> , have the need to be <i>amaed</i> to)
	Negative	Type B: Hard to Allow <i>Amae</i> (Allow <i>amae</i> unwillingly, reject <i>amae</i> interaction)	Type D: Disorganized Pattern of Allowance in <i>Amae</i> (Extreme allowance of <i>amae</i> , confused when being <i>amaed</i> to, inappropriate allowance of <i>amae</i>)

3.4 Discussion

Through comparing attachment, dependency, and *amae*, it can be concluded that although all three constructs are evident in close relationships and are similar in the behavioral manifestations, these constructs hold different functions. While dependency is characterized by the tendency to seek approval, guidance, and to yield control to others due to one's inability to function independently, *amae* functions as a form of control through the

active use of others either for unconditional affection or to fulfill one's request. This requires one to be psychologically independent. As for relationships between attachment and *amae*, attachment is considered a biological trait rather than a social one like *amae*, which evolves an aspect of learning as one's social network expands. As Freeman (2009) stressed, the "ability to participate in an *amae* experience arise once the child has established a stable internal image of mother, has a positive relationship with her, and can take a conscious active role in appealing for and initiating the interaction" (p. 74-75). Therefore, *amae* "is not so much about primordial attachment as it is about periodically revisiting the mother to whom one has an already established attachment" (p. 75). Comparison of all three constructs points to the important fact that these concepts are not mutually exclusive although they are linked intricately, especially in relations to the IWM of attachment, which plays an imperative role in the formation of human relationships.

As all the *amae* researchers mentioned in their studies, *amae* is motivated by both the emotional, non-instrumental need for unconditional love and affection, which reflects the biological aspect of attachment, and the manipulative instrumental need to control the environment, reflecting the social learning aspect of dependency. The coexistence of both attachment and dependency related aspects in *amae* (emotional and manipulative *amae*) points to its possible existence as a zone of practicable adaptability. This is where once a firm attachment bond is formed, the infant will learn to use *amae* to test, form, and expand their social network to establish multiple attachments. Therefore, *amae* may function as a mechanism that an individual can use to test and confirm if the potential attachment figure is available to fulfill the attachment functions and provide felt security when needed during different life situations throughout the lifespan (See Figure 3-3).

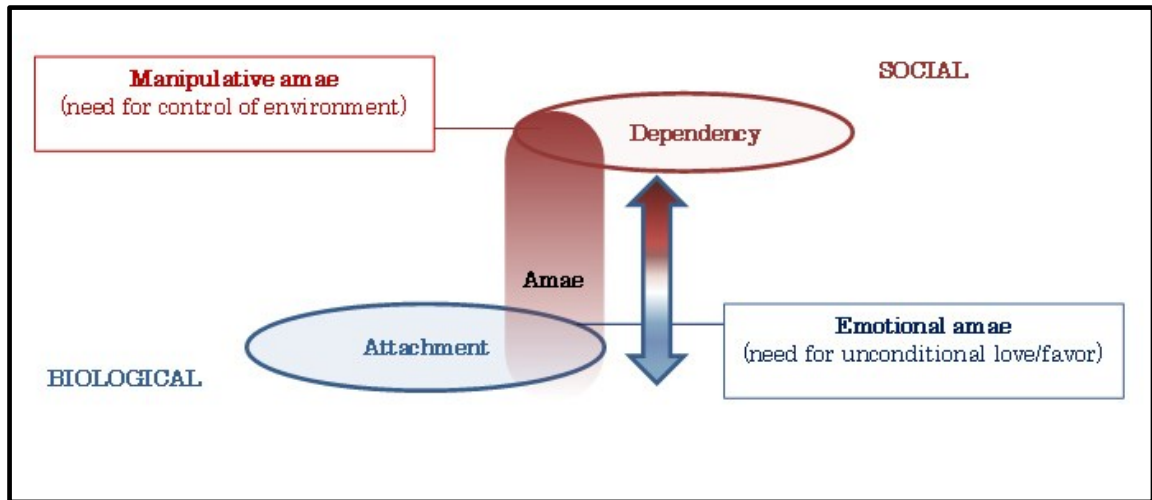


Figure 3-3. The Relationship between *Amai*, Attachment, and Dependency

While many attachment researchers focus on the exploratory aspect of attachment bond where the primary caregiver functions as a base that enables the child to explore unfamiliar surroundings, *amae* focuses on the reunion aspect of secure base. This is where a child may use the secure base for purposes other than exploration as Freeman (2009) described below.

Amai connotes an intermittent yearning, from time to time, for reunion and regressive indulgent pleasure. It is a derivative of one side of the biphasic alternating back-and-forth separation-individuation experience... The wish for *amae* is a derivative of feelings that are experienced in both Eastern and Western cultures when a child who has been curiously scrutinizing and exploring the surrounding world suddenly feels alone and feels an urge to check back and to reunite with the mother. The child seeks, at these times ... to be emotionally nurtured and replenished, and to regenerate feelings of well being, harmony, and safety” (p. 75).

With *amae* relating to emotional oneness and proximity maintenance, one can speculate that in order for an attachment figure to function as a secure base for exploration, the attachment figure must first serve as a haven of safety. This guarantees unconditional acceptance and affection that will lead to the establishment of a sense of felt security and basic trust (see Figure 3-4).

Although many researchers dissociate *amae* with independence, *amae* and attachment is inextricably linked where the *amae's* intermittent yearning for reunion and regressive

indulgent pleasure functions as a form of emotional replenishment that "contributes to the gradual development of stable internal symbolic representations of both the mother (object constancy) and of the refueling *amae* experience. As one matures, one comes to rely increasingly upon these stable internal representations, permitting progressive separation and autonomy. ...Thus, reassuring *amae* experiences foster no dependency but rather gradual detachment from "dependent" reliance on the external actual object" (Freeman, 2006, p. 75-76). Therefore, *amae* exists as "a transitional state of regressive merger" that fosters independence, which is "built upon and supported by dependable relationships with a highly differentiated network of reliable attachment figures, upon whom one can fall back (in reality and in fantasy) when necessary" (Freeman, 2009, p.76). It exists both as a universal trait characterized by the mother-child bonding and a culture frame that dictates to what extent dependency is allowed within the societal norm.

As a universal trait, *amae* allows a child to "try out" different methods of relating and applying one's own relational model (of mother-child relation) to other relationships. It functions as a buffer to cushion any detrimental experience one may face while undergoing this process of "trial and error." As a cultural frame, *amae* is regulated by societal rules or expectations that indicates how much indulgent dependency is allowed according to one's age, status, or role, which supports individual in forming mutually comfortable relationships and appropriately relate to other members of the society. Therefore, although the allowance or the limitations of *amae* expression varies depending on one's culture, the biological disposition of relatedness and the need to relate and depend on others is universal

Incorporation of the perspective of *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability maybe a useful perspective when understanding the transferring of attachment figure and functions during developmental transitional periods. It may also provide new insights concerning the

process underlying the reconstruction of the internal working models during therapeutic sessions. This is where the therapist provides the patient with a secure base from which he or she can explore the representational models of himself and his attachment figure. This will be explored in depth through meta-analyzing published case studies from the perspective of the zone of practicable adaptability in the next chapter.

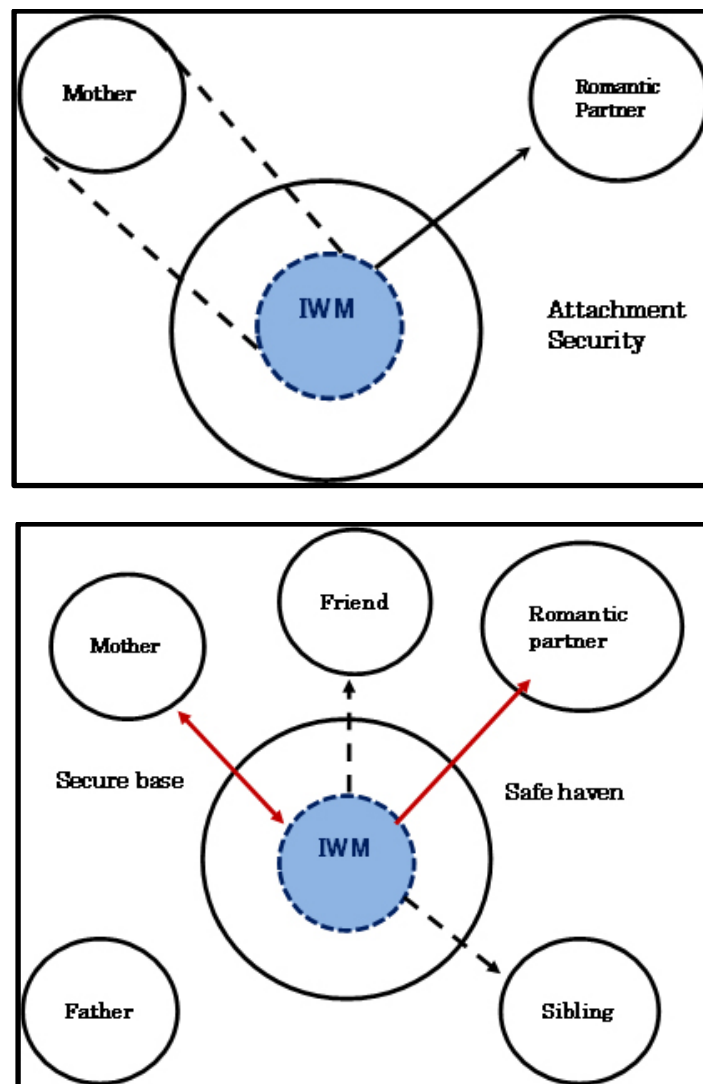


Figure 3-4. Establishment of Attachment Relationship Utilizing *Amae* as a Zone of Practicable Adaptability

CHAPTER 4. THE META-ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES: FUNCTIONAL FEATURES OF *AMAE* AS A TRANSITIONAL MECHANISM

The previous chapter illustrated how *amae* as the zone of practicable adaptability operates as a mechanism an individual can use to test and confirm if a potential attachment figure is available to fulfill the attachment functions as one's social network expands. The transferring process is most evident in therapeutic situations where the new experience one has in the therapeutic relationship brings forth reconstruction of the internal working models. In this chapter, how the establishment of the zone of practicable adaptability aids the recovery of troubled clients will be the main focus of analysis.

Method

Five published case studies featuring therapeutic and medical interventions of clients with adjustment issues of aggression, school refusal, and aging are meta-analyzed from the perspective of the zone of practicable adaptability. Cases found under the keywords of "*amae*" and "limit setting" are selected since both are "readily observed and applied to the understanding of therapeutic situations" (Johnson, 1993, p. 204). Cases selected for analysis feature clients from all ages since *amae* is a lifelong issue that should be evident and applicable to the developmental transitions between any two stages of development. Analysis will mainly focus on the therapeutic exchange between mother-child, teacher-student, and therapist-client during intervention rather than simply comparing static states of pre- and post-change behavioral patterns. Examining "what goes on during interventions" is effective in identifying change processes underlying successful treatment since therapy session is a "deliberately induced phase transition" where "the system is much more open to environmental shifts, and seemingly small changes have the potential to radically alter the

trajectory of relationships and individuals” (Granic & Patterson, 2006, p. 123). Therefore, I hope to understand the ingredients that brings forth successful intervention and how the existence or the absence of the zone of practicable adaptability affects the therapeutic outcome.

4.1 Aggression and Antisocial Behavior

In this section, two cases featuring the successful adjustment of clients with aggression control issues are analyzed to understand how old patterns are “shaken loose or destabilized to allow for new configurations to emerge or to be discovered” through the allowance of *amae*-like zone of practicable adaptability to operate during intervention (Granic & Patterson, 2006, p. 123).

4.1.1 The Case of Stephon

Stephon was referred to child centered play therapy by teachers and school administrators in the fall of his kindergarten year due to “severe and persistent patterns of defiant and aggressive behaviors markedly different from peers” (Cochran, Cochran, Cholette, and Nordling, 2011, p. 237). According to school staff and teacher reports, Stephon experienced abrupt changes, trauma, and stress early in his development and lived in a poor neighborhood under chaotic, stressful situations with little parental supervision. He was brought up in a single mother household with the a mother who felt overwhelmed, not knowing how to help her son with his problems.

4.1.1.1 Before Intervention

Prior to the participation in play therapy, Stephon was greatly feared by his teacher and

peers for throwing tantrums and disregarding school rules. He was constantly reprimanded and suspended from school due to the repetitive exhibition of problematic behaviors including, “Defiant, talking back to staff”, “disobedient at school”, “hot temper”, and “Doesn’t seem to feel guilty after misbehaving” (Cochran et al., 2011, p. 241). Disciplinary measures of office referrals, brief visits with school administrators or with the time-out resource teacher who implemented behavioral interventions all proved ineffective. This led to the play therapy referral as a last resort.

4.1.1.2 During Intervention

Stephon participated in twenty eight 30 minutes sessions of child centered play therapy scheduled twice a week for 6 months. The treatment model centered on setting structural limits through utilizing a limit-setting procedure known as “the empathy sandwich” (Cochran et al., 2011). The approach warranted the therapist to set limits in a firm, yet warm and nonthreatening manner conveyed through facial expression and open body posture while empathetically acknowledging the child’s motivation to engage in behavior under modification. Limits were specifically worded so to only restrict the smallest number of behaviors necessary.

During the first 11 sessions, the pattern of Stephon testing a limit, realizing the parameter, and rapidly pursuing other possible limits until returning to and becoming engrossed in more sustained and absorbed play was a dominant and recurring theme (Cochran et al., 2011). For instance, while wrestling with a stuffed dinosaur, Stephon would emit a few cuss words. Seeing no negative response from his therapist, he would blurt out a few more before moving to the art table where he would test the therapist by intentionally breaking the tip off markers. After another limit was set, Stephon would break another rule by painting on the walls. With

such behavior labeled as inappropriate, he would return to and focus on battling with the dinosaurs.

Stephon's persistence in vigorous, aggressive play often resulted in the play therapy to end earlier than scheduled. Instead of being banned from attending the play therapy, Stephon was always picked up for his next scheduled session, which he found surprising. Knowing that the only consequence to the persistence in inappropriate behavior was ending special play time early, Stephon was able to express and tested his behaviors under the watchful eyes of the therapist who helped Stephon set limits in a warm, empathic, and accepting manner. After 11 sessions of persistence in limit testing, Stephon acknowledging his therapist as a safe person to express himself, no longer felt the need to "choose to end" the sessions early.

As Stephon continued to work with limits, exploring the rules and boundaries of the playroom and his relationship with the therapist, subdued moments of regression gradually emerged during aggressive role-play. Fluctuation between aggressive-regressive play increased in frequency as the sessions progressed. When the therapist joined Stephon in battling the giant dinosaur, Stephon would first express the need for power and control through competition against his therapist. He would treat his therapist rudely by creating rules that would guarantee his win. As the play evolved, themes of rescue and nurturing would emerge where Stephon and his therapist would take turns rescuing each other from the dinosaur's deadly grasp. After several sessions of similar exchange, subdued moments of regression would emerged in more frequency, where Stephon would talk "like he was much younger than his age, sometimes in 'baby talk' and inadvertently referring to his therapist as 'mommy'" (Cochran et al., 2011, p. 243). The increased in the nurturant, regressive type of interaction with the therapist is a sign that Stephon felt comfortable enough to explore new ways of relating with the therapist. This exploring and testing of limits is what enabled

Stephon to acquire the appropriate relational skill as demonstrated in the last few sessions as described below.

4.1.1.3 After Intervention

During the last few sessions of play therapy, Stephon demonstrated signs of confidence and progress in school skills. He often showed his therapist what he can do, such as writing his first and last name. His attention span also improved, which was evident in his effort to finish drawing pictures that expressed his ideas and creativity. Although he still cheated in games, he also learned to give his therapist chances to win.

By the end of the treatment, Stephon's problematic behavior in the classroom decreased dramatically where he was able to gradually interact with his teacher and peers without constantly being feared and reprimanded. Stephon was able to maintain his progress even after advancing to first grade. While Stephon still had difficulties in transitions and needed redirection and patience, he settled in his classroom well and was no longer referred to specialized classes for students with behavioral difficulties.

4.1.1.4 Implications

Although Cochran et al's (2011) model was effective in describing how changes occurred in the play session, they failed to analyze what brought about the adaptive changes, especially why "empathic sandwich" was imperative in the successful intervention. This may be due to Cochran and his colleagues' (2011) use of a stage model to describe Stephon's progress. In the case report, Stephon's change in behaviors were sequenced into four stages of warm-up, aggressive, regressive, and mastery stages. However, Stephon's progress did not occur in such clean-cut manner. For instance, Cochran and colleagues (2011) noted that "Stephon's heavily

aggressive stage play began while he was still warming up, exploring the limits of the playroom and his relationship with his therapist. While he shifted away from limit testing, his work with limits continued, though less intensely and without the need to end sessions early” (p. 242). Regressive stage was also described in a similar fashion where “Stephon’s main regressive stage play began within his aggressive-regressive stage role-plays. He would pause within his more aggressive role-plays and go to the school desk to draw while instructing his therapist how and what to draw with him” (p.243). Dividing Stephon’s progress into stages failed to capture the mechanism of change that facilitated the emergences of socially appropriate demeanors.

The changing process as illustrated above can be more easily understood by positioning the therapeutic sessions as a transitional period in allowing the zone of practicable adaptability to function. Before the intervention, externalizing behaviors of aggression was the only way Stephon knew how to relate to others. With such self-expression interpreted as a violation of school rules and met with harsh reprimand, the only option Stephon had was to continue to behave in inappropriate manners. However, interpreting Stephon’s persistent demonstration of aggressive behavior as a way of testing the therapist to see if she could be trusted allowed Stephon to fulfill the need to explore new ways of relating. The therapist’s empathic understanding of Stephon’s need for self-expression during the therapy sessions is what enabled him to let go of the excessive worry over rejection, which in turn reduced the need to test limits. The warm and nonthreatening manner of the therapist instilled a sense of felt security that enabled Stephon to learn to use the therapist as an emotional maintenance resource in Bickard’s (1992) terms and to discover more appropriate ways of dealing with people aside from throwing tantrums and threatening others with aggression.

Although it would be farfetched to call the therapist an attachment figure by definition,

her presence served as a “secure base” which enabled Stephon to safely explore the boundaries of appropriate behavior as evident in the emergence of regressive behavior after Stephon stopped purposely ending the play sessions. The emergence of variation in Stephon’s behaviors seen in the constant fluctuation between testing limits, aggression, and regression, is an indication that the zone of practicable adaptability is in play. As Granic and Patterson (2006) propounded, “variability is not just an index of change but actually helps derive change” (p. 123). The provision of a *mimamoru* type of environment in allowing time and space to experiment with new ways of relating is what enables the variability in behavioral repertoire as mentioned by Granic and Patterson (2006) to take form. This makes the zone of practicable adaptability an imperative ingredient in a successful intervention as Stephon’s case demonstrated.

Table 4-1. Meta-Analysis of Cochran et. al. 's (2011) Case Study

	Before Intervention	During Intervention	After Intervention
Pattern of Interaction	Teacher and Peers: Feared and dreaded his presence in class Mother: Overwhelmed	Therapist: “Empathic sandwich” = Empathic acknowledgement and acceptance of Stephon’s aggressive behaviors and self expressions without resorting to punishments.	Teacher and Peers: enjoy and welcome his presence
Ways of Dealing with the Client	Punishment : Behavioral interventions with 8 office referrals and 2 suspensions	Limit Setting in Play Therapy: Unconditional positive regard toward accepting both positive and negative self-expression while setting necessary limits.	Limit Setting in Play Therapy: Unconditional positive regard toward accepting both positive and negative self-expression while setting necessary limits.
Client’s Response to the Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tantrums • Disregarded for all rules • Defiant and talked back to staff • Disobedient at school • Didn’t feel guilty after misbehaving • Broke school rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patterns of testing a limit, realizing the parameter, and rapid pursuit of other possible limits before going back to more focused play. • Chose to “end session early” by going beyond the set limit of the first 11 sessions • <u>Aggressive-Regressive play:</u> Aggressive role play, wrestling with stuffed dinosaur, competition with therapist while cheating, regressive play with themes of rescue and nurturance, baby talk, referred the therapist as “mommy” (12 sessions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to manipulate game rules but gave the therapist chances to “win” • Demonstrated to the therapist he could write his first and last name • Persisted in effort to complete work that represented ideas in his mind, showing pride in his own work, • <u>Learned to “set a limit” on himself :</u> “One of the things I may not do is ...”

4.1.2 The Case of Akira

Akira was brought to see a counselor after being suspended from high school due to his persistent act of misconduct, including inhaling paint thinner and riding a motorcycle without a license. According to Kobayashi (1996), the escalation in Akira’s delinquent behaviors was the result of an accumulation of frustration and anger towards his family and teachers for the

lack of acceptance and understanding of his feelings. The unsympathetic and authoritative ways in which Akira's parents and teachers treated him was what triggered the vicious cycle of misconduct as described below.

4.1.2.1 Before Intervention

Akira's distrust of adults started during his third year in middle school, where he was physically punished and blackmailed for talking back to his teachers at school. He was treated similarly by his parents, where the pressure to study and the constant comparison to his academically distinguished brother made home a very uncomfortable place to be at. The pressure to conform led to the escalation of his frustration and distrust towards adults after enrolling in high school where he was heavily punished for disregarding school rules. Harsh treatment like being told "A student like you have no right to come to school," triggered a chain of misconduct including smoking on school grounds. This earned Akira a three day suspension from school. Instead of showing remorse, Akira's misdemeanor escalated to the extent where he loitered in the street after dark to inhale paint thinner with motorcycle gangs. This earned him a prolongation of suspension period, which proved ineffective. Not knowing how to handle him, the teachers threatened Akira with school expulsion. At home, Akira's relationship with his parents also deteriorated where he constantly fought with his mother over money while his father coldly ignored him. With no resolution at hand, Akira's mother decided to consult a counselor to stop the vicious cycle.

4.1.2.2 During Intervention

Although Akira was initially wary of the counselor, he was able to disclose his true feelings and thoughts, such as his wish to quit school, during counseling sessions. Akira

trusted the counselor since unlike other adults, he showed empathic understanding towards his frustrations. Knowing that what Akira needed was the experience of acceptance, the counselor intervened by first visiting Akira's school teachers to persuade them to be more understanding of Akira's situation. However, with the teachers' refusal to cooperate, the counselor turned to Akira's parents next in hope to change their mindset and approach towards Akira. A perfect chance arrived when Stephon confided the counselor about wanting to get a motorcycle license. The counselor helped Akira persuade his parents to let him get the license after making sure that he understood the possible consequence his decision, which was getting permanently expelled from school. Akira acknowledging the consequences, got the license and continued riding with the motorcycle gangs. This led to him being officially expelled from school.

The counselor continued to work with the parents in helping Akira, especially during critical period of crisis. After getting expelled from school, Akira got into an argument with his father about wanting to buy a costly new motorcycle. The counselor worked to find a solution that satisfied both parties. He suggested to the parents to allow Akira to buy a second hand motorcycle under the condition that Akira work at the paint shop his mother suggested to pay back partial costs of the motorcycle. Akira agreed to their terms and worked at the paint shop every day. Despite showing signs of reform, Akira continued inhaling paint thinner with his gang friends after work. This led to the counselor's intervention once again when Akira assaulted his mother after being reprimanded for not stopping the habit.

Instead of suggesting Akira to quit, the counselor entrusted him with the decision of what to do by providing necessary information to make the judgment. The counselor informed him of the detrimental effects inhaling paint thinner has on his health and where to go if he decides to quit. He also suggested the parents to approach Akira in a similar manner, which led

Akira's parents gradually learned to accommodate to his needs. Akira's mother changed from working a full day shift to a half day schedule in order to check on Akira everyday. His father also softened his approach towards Akira. When Akira was arrested by the police for riding a remodeled motorcycle, instead of scolding him, the father apologized on behalf of Akira when being admonished by the police for the lack of supervision.

4.1.2.3 After Intervention

The change in the father's attitude was a turning point in Akira's recovery where he felt remorse over his misconduct for the first time. This brought about Akira's realization in the need to change, where he confided in the counselor of his wish to cut ties with the motorcycle gangs. The counselor contacted his parents and they immediately made an arrangement for Akira to stay with his aunt who lived outside the town. The aunt also found a job for Akira at an auto repair shop where he was able to pursue his interest in motorcycle and permanently sever ties with his gang friends.

4.1.2.4 Implications

Similar to the previous case, Akira's counselor accepted his inappropriate behaviors without being judgemental. He acknowledged Akira's need to express frustrations through externalizing behavior because he knew what Akira needed was the unconditional acceptance of "who he is". Unlike Akira's teachers who tried to change him, the counselor attempted to change the attitudes of those surrounding him by persuading both the teachers and the parents to be more understanding of his situation. When the counselor felt the need for Akira to change, instead of openly criticizing his beliefs, he left space for Akira to make his own decision by providing him with the necessary information to make the right decision.

The intuitive understanding of Akira's needs as well as his effort to build a supportive environment is what triggered the "reorganization of affective, cognitive, and behavior system" in both the parents and Akira, which is "a necessary and natural process that allows for growth and change" (Granic and Patterson, 2006, p. 123). This is evident in how Akira gradually learned to communicate with his parents through negotiating and agreeing to the conditions set by them when wanting a new motorcycle. Acceptance of decision other than his own was not possible when Akira was punished and blamed for all his actions before the intervention, where the coercive school environment and rigid family relationship hindered Stephon from developing the behavioral repertoire necessary for coping with adversary. However, the counselor was able to restore what Kobayashi (1996) called "inner resilience" or the ability to quickly bounce back from disappointments and set-backs, by persuading the parents to approach Akira with unconditional support in flexibly adjusting to his needs. The provision of such an environment ended the vicious cycle of "training" Akira to become aggressive and antisocial and naturally steered Akira towards making the appropriate choice of severing ties with his gang friends.

The provision of an environment where the intervention is catered to the needs of the individual rather than the other way round is an important factor that brings about positive changes. This is also an important feature of the zone of practicable adaptability which also plays a prominent role in the successful intervention of school refusal.

Table 4-2. Meta-Analysis of Kobayashi's (1996) Case Study

	Before Intervention	During Intervention	After Intervention
Pattern of Interaction	<p>Teacher: Reprimanded & reproached Akira (punishment)</p> <p>Parents: Constantly comparing Akira with brother and nudged to study more.</p>	<p>Therapist: Unconditional acceptance and empathetic understanding toward Akira's actions and feelings.</p> <p>Parents: Acceptance of reality and attempt to understand Akira's feelings</p>	<p>Parents: Instead of reproaching and blaming Akira, learned to consider his feelings and work around his needs</p>
Ways of Dealing with the Client	<p>Teacher: Blackmailed Akira using school report, suspension, physical punishments, and insults ("A student like you have no right to come to school.")</p> <p>Parents: Ignored Akira "Serves you right." (You are the one doing the bad deeds)</p>	<p>Therapist:</p> <p>(1) Guidance centered on empathetic understanding and acceptance that prompted self-reflection (In favor of Akira buying motorcycle while simultaneously discussed consequence).</p> <p>(2) Provided option to problems (Asked Akira to pay back the cost for his motorcycle by working)</p> <p>Parents:</p> <p>(1) Attempt to negotiate and accept request that goes against parents' value (Purchase motorcycle that led Akira to be expelled)</p> <p>(2) Intervene when necessary with therapist's support (Dissuade and stop Akira when he started inhaling paint thinner again)</p>	<p>Parents:</p> <p>(1) <u>Mother:</u> Act in the best interest of Akira (Worked half day so she can keep thinner inhaling friends away from home)</p> <p>(2) <u>Father:</u> Able to deal with crisis situation without the help of the therapists (Apologized to the police officer when Akira was arrested for riding a remodeled motorcycle)</p>
Client's Response to the Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension resulted in the escalation of anti-social behaviors where Akira loitered with friends and bike gangs at night, inhaled paint thinner, fought with parents, habitual tardy, early leave, and absence from school. • Expressed desire to drop out from school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarrelled with parents but learned to negotiate and compromise. (Bought a second hand motorcycle instead of a brand new one. Agreed to work at a paint shop to pay back partial cost of the motorcycle) • Repetitive use of thinner with friends at home and used aggression against his parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went to work and consistent paid back the cost of motorbike from his salaries • Consulted with the therapist his desire to sever relationship with bike gangs and thinner inhaling friends

4.2 School Refusal

School refusal or emotionally based school avoidance is one of the most common childhood behavior problems which occurs in approximately 2% of school-age children although some estimates are as high as 5% (Wimmer, 2004). Despite school refusal occurring at all ages, it arises more frequently during major changes in children's lives such as entrance to kindergarten, the change from elementary to middle school, as well as stressful events including moving homes, changing schools, the death of a loved one, and parental divorce (Wimmer, 2004).

In this section, two cases of school refusal will be examined to understand how a provision of an environment allowing gradual changes to occur help the client overcome school refusal and how the lack of the zone of practicable adaptability affects the process of recovery.

4.2.1 The Case of Aya

Aya underwent school refusal both in kindergarten and in elementary school. During her second year in kindergarten, Aya fell in a state of school refusal when her teacher and classmates taunted her for possessing a glue stick that they claim wasn't hers. She was able to overcome the problem after half a year of play therapy before the same problem relapsed immediately after enrolling in elementary school. Matsuo (1996) interpreted Aya's school refusal as a lack of *amae* fulfillment in early childhood, where Aya's mother spent more time with her brother who was often sick and in need of extra care and attention. The therapist felt that one way for Aya to "mature" is for her to spend significant amount of time with her mother to make up for the time she wasn't able to spend with her mother at a younger age. Taking the advice of the therapist, the mother was able to build Aya's confidence in going

back to school. This is a feat that she would not have been able to overcome had she continued the ineffective measure of forcing Aya to go to school as illustrated below.

4.2.1.1 Before Intervention

Aya's relapse in school refusal started when she stayed home for a week after contracting rubella. Trouble catching up with studies and not knowing how to interact with her classmates was her reasoning for not wanting to go. Unlike the situation in kindergarten where the mother allowed Aya to stay at home, she forced Aya to go to school everyday. However, the mother faced stiff resistance from Aya, where she would either refuse to let go of the iron pillar near the school entrance or reluctantly enter the school grounds before returning home with the excuse that she had forgotten her belongings. With Aya showing signs that she could drop out of school any moment, Aya's mother brought her to see a child therapist.

4.2.1.2 During Intervention

Aya's lack of interpersonal skill was exposed during the initial therapy session. She was unresponsive to both the therapist and her mother, where questions asked by the therapists were mostly ignored and the interaction with her mother seemed forced and distant. The strained mother-child relationship was evident in Aya's refusal to join her mother in drawing even after the therapist asked the mother to summon her. Instead, she walked around the therapy room restlessly, aimlessly glancing and touching toys until the mother started drawing pictures at the child-sized table. This was when she curiously peeked in and eventually joined her mother in drawing. After observing the mother-child interaction, the therapist suggested the mother to spend at least 30 minutes a day playing with Aya instead of forcing her to go to school. The suggestion was made because taking a break before summer break may be a more

effective way to help Aya return to school in the fall.

Freed from having to force Aya to go to school, the mother was able to interact with Aya in a more relaxed manner. She made clothes for Aya's dolls, which she carefully nursed and carried around the house. The mother also bought a pram for the dolls as Aya requested. Although Aya's behavior and play was immature for her age, where she often baby-talked and requested her mother to give her cuddles and piggybacks outside the house, she allowed Aya to behave as she liked. Despite the acquaintances' warning the mother of being too accepting of Aya's behaviors, Aya's mother believed that she was treating Aya in an appropriate manner. While allowing Aya to engage in child-like play, she also expected Aya to uphold age appropriate responsibilities, such as doing her summer vacation homework and house chores every day with no excuses. Aya also understood that asking for cuddles and piggybacks as well as carrying baby sized dolls around are activities that were immature for her age. This is evident in her requests to be taken outside to play at four every afternoon to avoid bumping into classmates and acquaintances.

After a month of "babying", rather than showing signs of continuous regression, Aya showed initial signs of being able to distance herself from her mother. Not only did she stop asking her mother to cuddle her outside the house, Aya also started playing with friends and went to pool with her father and brother every weekend. By the end of summer, Aya was also able to ride attractions alone when she visited a theme park with her family.

Although Aya was able to return to school when the new school semester started in September, her anxiety soon returned as she once again refused to go to school. However, instead of giving excuses, she was able to verbally express her anxiety, telling her mother why she wanted to study at home. Instead of physically forcing Aya to go, the mother empathized with Aya's anxiety and told her that she will go to school with her if going to school alone

seemed too much to ask. Starting the next day, Aya's mother went to school with Aya and briefly played in the school courtyard before heading home. Such a routine was repeated every day where they would extend the duration of their stay and play closer to her classroom each time. Several days later, while playing near the the classroom, Aya's teacher noticed Aya and her mother and called for them to join the class. After a week of gradual adjustment, Aya who initially preferred sitting either at the back seat or the front seat with her mother was able to sit alone at her own seat apart from her mother.

Attaining such achievement was not without struggles. This required the mother to patiently support Aya to overcome her anxiety. In several occasions, Aya refused to enter the classroom and requested to go home in the midst of playing with her friends. Aya's mother responded by telling her to go on, reassuring her that she will be there for her if she needed "*amaeruing*" anytime. The mother's constant presence and encouragement was effective in helping Aya readjust to school life. Each day, the need for her mother to stay in the classroom became shorter and shorter. By the end of September, she was able to leave her mother at the school entrance and join her friends at school alone.

4.2.1.3 After Intervention

Progress in both social and academic skills were evident after Aya overcame school refusal. Instead of giving up immediately, Aya learned to endure and persevere when faced with difficulties. When she had difficulties with her homework, she would either persist by repeatedly practicing how to read and write, or she would make phone calls to friends, asking for help. Although she still asked her mother to baby her, she also demonstrated maturity and self-initiative. She helped her mother with house chores, cleaned her bedroom by herself, and wrote letters to her mother, demonstrating the ability to distance herself from her mother.

During the last few therapy sessions, she was able to focus on drawing intricate pictures on her own without the mother having to initiate the activity.

4.2.1.4 Implications

Although Matsuo's (1996) reasoning behind Aya's school refusal as the lack of a close mother-child bonding during infancy explained why the allowance of Aya's regressive self-expression was a necessary step in her overcoming school refusal, explanation of the mechanism underlying the adaptive changes were missing and needed further probing.

Before the therapist's involvement, Aya clearly lacked the skill to identify, relate, and make connection with others. Aya's relationship with her mother was insecure and avoidant according to Bowlby's attachment classification. Spending sufficient time with her mother was a necessary part of the recovery process in reestablishing the attachment relationship, which was made possible with Aya receiving unconditional affection from her mother. This experience fostered a sense of felt security, a prerequisite to enable Aya to "use the mother as a secure base" to venture out in the unfamiliar school environment and eventually gaining confidence in solving problems on her own.

Such recovery would not have been possible without the mother's unobtrusive presence of *mimamoru*-ing. Instead of "trying to help" Aya get back to school, the mother served as a haven of safety where her mere presence functioned as "the availability of *amae* refueling" which gave Aya the courage to overcome the fear of being on her own. The success in intervention was brought about by the mother's intuitive understanding that adaptive change cannot occur abruptly through the use of force but through patiently working with the child in building small successes. This in turn, fosters the child's inner resilience and confidence in being able to make use of both the environment and personal resources as Aya demonstrated

after the intervention.

Another important aspect of the zone of practicable adaptability was reflected in the mother's strategic use of both intervention and non-intervention after Aya started going to school. *Amae* was utilized only when the child is in a need for support as Aya's mother gradually shortened the time she stayed with Aya at school. Aya's mother was also not all accepting of her behavior after she was able to enter the classroom. This was evident in her reaction towards Aya when she refused to go in the classroom in mid-September, where she patiently pointed out to Aya that there was no going back to the "school refusal state." Like Stephon's therapist, the setting of limits is an important aspect of the zone of practicable adaptability, which distinguishes the approach from being "permissive" and "spoiling". Therefore, the "temporary respite period" of allowing one to follow or not to follow social rules is effective only when it exists temporarily within a set limit. The timing in which the limit is set is an important ingredient in a successful intervention, where setting the limits too early may result in an unsuccessful intervention as reflected in the next case study.

Table 4-3. Meta-Analysis of Matsuo's (1996) Case Study

	Before Intervention	During Intervention	After Intervention
Pattern of Interaction	<p>Mother: Prioritized brother's needs over Aya's.</p> <p>Teacher: Blamed Aya for the glue stick incident</p>	<p>Therapist: Monitored and advised the mother how to interact with Aya during each therapy sessions</p> <p>Mother: Acceptance of Aya's self-expression while setting clear boundaries and expectations (Asked Aya to do homework and house chores)</p>	<p>Mother: Continued allowance of occasional self-expression but simultaneously set clear boundaries.</p>
Ways of Dealing with the Client	<p>School Refusal during Kindergarten: Mother didn't consult teacher about the glue stick incident until after a month and allowed Aya to stay home for 8 months.</p> <p>School Refusal in Grade School: Mother forced Aya to go to school.</p>	<p>Therapist: When Aya belittled her mother, she let her know that the mother was "pretending not to know" and suggested her to join her mother in drawing.</p> <p>Mother: Allowed Aya to stay home before summer break and accepted her "regressive behaviors." In September, she accompanied Aya to school and gradually decreased "school time." Scolded Aya when she refused to enter the classroom (Setting boundaries)</p>	<p>Mother: Stopped accompanying Aya to school after she told the mother "You can go home now."</p>
Client's Response to the Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reluctantly went to school but returned home during school hours telling mother, "I forgot something." <u>Reasons:</u> Couldn't keep up with school work and didn't know how to interact with friends 	<p>At home: Showed both nurturing and regressive behaviors (Baby-talked, asked for cuddles, took care of toy dolls and slept in doll's futon). Gradually stopped asking for cuddles and spent more time with friends and other family members.</p> <p>At school: Refused to go and wanted to stay home. Agreed to "play at the school yard" and entered classroom with teacher's suggestion but after a few day, refused to enter the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Went to school alone. Worked alone both in therapy sessions and at home without facilitation from the therapist and the mother. Occasionally showed regression but learned to keep more distance from the mother evident in her writing letters to her mother instead of sticking to her all the time.

4.2.2 The Case of Yoshi

Yoshi battled with school refusal for three years from second semester of second grade until fourth grade, when he transferred school due to his father's work. According to Kobayashi (1999), cases of school refusal in elementary school often resolve within a relatively short period of time when intervened in an appropriate manner. However, in Yoshi's case, the interventions were inappropriately administered where the rule-bounded and unforgiving approach of the school teacher resulted in the prolongation of Yoshi's school refusal. The measures taken by those surrounding Yoshi during his school refusal period and how he reacted to those measures are described in details below.

4.2.2.1 Before Intervention

Yoshi's school refusal started in the beginning of second grade where he had difficulty adjusting to a change in homeroom teachers and peers after a classroom shuffle. His refusal to go to school was triggered by an incident after school where he was reprimanded for not joining in the after school clean up. Once Yoshi refused to go to school, his homeroom teacher felt that it was his responsibility to bring him out of the situation. He strongly advised Yoshi's parents to force him out of the house every morning. Four days after Yoshi's refusal to attend school, Yoshi's parents took a forceful and rigid measure of dragging him out of bed every morning despite his strong resistance. As Yoshi's mother recalled, "Yoshi's body turned rigid, where he would curl in a ball, covering his head with the futon while biting it. As Yoshi's father pushed him out of his bed, he cried hysterically, hugging the leg of the bed. Realizing that resistance was futile, Yoshi gave in and followed his parents' commands" (translation mine, Kobayashi, 1999, p. 115-116).

Similar treatment was enforced at school where Yoshi was greeted by his homeroom

teacher every morning at the school entrance. He would resist vehemently and bite his mother's arm as his homeroom teacher forcefully locked his arms around his body as he dragged Yoshi inside the school building. At this point, Yoshi would cry uncontrollably until his parents' left. Then, he would recompose himself, enter the classroom, and go through the day as though nothing had happened. Observing Yoshi's behavior, the teacher told Yoshi's parents that his school refusal was a sign of laziness that needed to be corrected with strong disciplinary measures especially when he shows signs of resistance. At home, Yoshi's parents followed the teacher's advice and responded to his defiance and hysteric crying by telling him to "Be a man, don't cry!" At school, Yoshi's every move was monitored by his teacher where any inappropriate behavior, such as him "feigning stomachache before physical education class" would lead to harsh reprimands.

Remaining in the classroom became more and more stressful and uncomfortable, where he eventually went to the health office instead of his homeroom every morning. However, such behavior was once again interpreted by the teacher as another sign of laziness, where he was prohibited from entering the health office. The enforcement of such measure was what led Yoshi to completely stop going to school.

4.2.2.2 During Intervention

After school refusal became a permanent state, Yoshi's homeroom teacher continued his aggressive intervention of visiting Yoshi's home once every two days. During every visit, the teacher would tell him to stop playing video games and come back to school. Yoshi responded by shrinking lifelessly beside his desk, as though waiting for the storm to pass. Seeing her son becoming more and more emotionally unstable, Yoshi's mother became concerned and started visiting an empowerment group for families with school refusal children. Visiting the group

made her realize that forceful interventions were counter-effective and had worsened the situation. With the same homeroom teacher in charge of Yoshi's class as he entered third grade, Yoshi's mother asked the teacher to visit the empowerment group so that they could collaboratively help Yoshi go back to school. However, the teacher refused the offer, which made going back to school harder for Yoshi.

During the second semester of third grade, the homeroom teacher found out that Yoshi had kept in contact with several classmates. The teacher sent three of Yoshi's closest friends to visit him with the mission to persuade him to come back to school. However, the visit was unsuccessful. After the visit, Yoshi shut himself in his room for hours, later telling his mother that he will never meet with those friends again. As the school year progressed and with the current intervention not working, Yoshi's mother decided to seek counseling for both herself and her son.

Through conversing with Yoshi, the counselor found out that Yoshi felt close to the school nurse. He contacted the school to see if they could allow Yoshi to return to school by visiting the health office every morning as a start. The school administration and the homeroom teacher both agreed to cooperate and Yoshi was able to visit school in February, during the middle of third semester.

4.2.2.3 After Intervention

Yoshi's school visit was short lived as he once again resisted going to the health office. Yoshi's classmates' repeated visit to the health office, asking him to come back to the classroom was the reason behind the relapse. The counselor notified the school teacher to put an immediate stop to such visits so to allow Yoshi to proceed at his own pace. However, the peer pressure aggravated Yoshi's previously alleviated anxiety where he once again returned

to the state of school refusal until the the beginning of fourth grade. Due to his father's job transfer, Yoshi moved to a new school, where he was able to put what happened to him in the past two years behind and adjusted well to the new environment without any trouble.

4.2.2.4 Implications

The author pointed out three major factors that contributed to the prolongation of Yoshi's school refusal. The main issue Kobayashi (1999) brought up was the homeroom teacher's method of intervention. Although the teacher's approach may have been well-intended, the forceful measure did not take into account of Yoshi's feelings, which ended up wounding and aggravating Yoshi's anxiety, pushing him further away from school. The inability of both the teacher and the mother to stand in Yoshi's shoes was another factor that aggravated the situation. Both the teacher and the mother focused solely on bringing him back to school rather than attempting to work with Yoshi in finding a solution that is workable for him. The lack of social support was another factor that hindered Yoshi's recovery, especially when his friends at school could have been a support for Yoshi had they been unobtrusively present. Using Yoshi's peers to persuade him to come back to the classroom unfortunately only made Yoshi lonelier and more helpless when in fact, his peers could have been another resource of support aside from the school nurse had they been told to "just be there for him when he need a shoulder to cry on".

Although Kobayashi (1999) pointed out the factors that brought about the prolongation of Yoshi's problem, his interpretation did not answer why a provision of an environment that followed Yoshi's pace in the recovery process was necessary for a successful intervention. When viewing the teacher's intervention from the perspective of the zone of practicable adaptability, it can be said that the reason behind the unsuccessful intervention stem from the

goal oriented “must do” mindset where getting Yoshi back to school was set as an endpoint. This mindset made it difficult for him to approach Yoshi in a less rigid manner, where Yoshi not going to school can only be interpreted as a failure. This approach left no room for the opportunity to experience and experiment with possible solutions, which drove Yoshi further from developing the necessary coping behavior to overcome school refusal.

An approach taking into account of the zone of practicable adaptability on the other hand is process oriented, where a goal is set not as an end point but a mile marker that the individual can refer to during the process of change. This is made possible through the establishment of a *mimamoru* type environment as Aya’s mother demonstrated. Approaching a problem from a process-oriented perspective enables a more flexible intervention catered to the troubled individual, where both the individual and their supporters are given time and space to find a solution that is “mutually comfortable”, an option that was not given to Yoshi.

Table 4-4. Meta-Analysis of Kobayashi's (1999) Case Study

	Before Intervention	During Intervention	After Intervention
Pattern of Interaction	Rule-bounded and unforgiving	Teacher: Rule-bounded and forceful Mother: Showed understanding but didn't know how to deal with Yoshi	Teacher: Rule-bounded and forceful_ Mother & Therapist: Followed Yoshi's lead in the "rehabilitative process"
Ways of Dealing with the Client	Teacher: Advised Yoshi's parents to "force Yoshi to go to school" because it is the "right thing to do," labeling not going to school as "being lazy" and in need for discipline and "tough love" Parents: Physically forced Yoshi to go to school.	Teacher: Visited Yoshi once every two day and reprimanded him for not coming to school and playing games. Mother: Sought help from an empowerment group and joined counseling, collaborating with the therapist in helping Yoshi Therapist: Alleviated Yoshi's anxiety by listening to his thoughts and requests. Collaborated with the school nurse in helping Yoshi get back to school first by going to the health office	Teacher: Continued intervening by asking Yoshi's peers to visit him at the nurse's office every day, asking him to come back to the classroom.
Client's Response to the Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showed strong resistance by crying hysterically and hitting and biting his mother. • When he realized that resistance was futile, he stayed at school and studied with his friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolongation of Yoshi's refusal to go to school. Resulted in Yoshi to shut himself in his room. • Remained in contact with a few friends from school via e-mail but stopped meeting with them after his friends mentioned about school. • After started counseling sessions, told therapist he felt close to the school nurse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visited the nurse's office for a month before completely stop going due to returned anxiety. • After moving to a new school, Yoshi was able to go to school with no trouble.

4.2.3 Discussion

Although both Aya and Yoshi faced the problem of school refusal, the outcomes were affected by the way the parents and teachers dealt with the issue at hand. In Aya's case, the interventions were implemented according to her needs. She was afforded a temporary transitional period of practicable adaptability (a supportive environment that is tailored to her needs), which enabled her to "get back to school" at her own term. Yoshi on the other hand was expected to return to school immediately during the initial part of the intervention. The intervention was undertaken with the perspective that the problem lies in Yoshi's weakness in self-control rather than the lack of support in the environment. This led to an intervention that did not take into account of Yoshi's feelings and situations. Such mindset continued even after a zone of practicable adaptability was established with the help of the counselor, where Yoshi was able to take the initial step of getting back to school by visiting the nurse's office. Unfortunately, such an arrangement ended in failure due to the following factors: (1)Yoshi's inability to see that such opportunity was afforded to him; (2)Yoshi's school environment did not afford him the personal time and space he needed to work at his own pace. Being able to analyze intervention from both the perspective of the ability of the individual to perceive and utilize the afforded environmental resources and the appropriateness of the environmental affordance is an important parameter in judging whether the intervention is a successful one or not.

The analysis of the two contrasting cases points to two important ingredients for the zone of practicable adaptability to function effectively, which are (1)intervention focused on changing the environment rather than the individual and (2)whether the individual feels such environmental affordance is available. The zone of practicable adaptability focuses on how to set an environment that allows for process-oriented intervention to take place. This provides

the individual the time to act and adjust without bounded by the social rules of “what is right or wrong”, which is often goal-oriented. Putting the focus on “what the individual can and should do” only hinders the individual from finding a resolution to his or her problems. Instead, the zone of practicable adaptability suggests modifying the environment to cater to the needs of the individual, which in turn will naturally lead the individual to find the appropriate solution through experimenting and experiencing.

4.3 Aging Issue

Aging is often viewed as a product of decline and deterioration, a loss in both physical and mental functioning where dependency is considered an inevitable consequence of growing old. It is perceived as “the negative outcome of social forces that needed to be changed to allow elder people to age independently” (Baltes, 1996, p. xv). Being able to appropriately use dependency to buffer the process of aging is an important developmental tasks one must overcome. As Baltes (1996) argued, “dependency and autonomy present a developmental struggle as much for the elderly in their environment as for adolescents in their environment” (p. 23). Therefore, the coping process of where and when to accept and adapt to dependency is an integral part of successful aging. In this section, I hope to examine how the allowance of an *amae*-like zone of practicable adaptability to exist can play a role in aiding and buffering the process of aging.

4.3.1 The Case of Akiko

Akiko is a female in her seventies diagnosed with Schizophrenia. She has been hospitalized for 50 years and in recent years, has also shown a gradual decline in Activities of Daily Living (ADL), especially after she fell and broke her upper right humerus bone.

Although she may show flashes of anger when emotionally unstable, she resided in the open ward, moved around in a wheelchair and is in a mentally stable condition. The case below illustrates medical staff's attempt to help Akiko preserve her current level of ADL, especially focusing on maintaining Akiko's ability to go to the toilet without relying on staffs and diapers.

4.3.1.1 Before Intervention

Akiko's motivation in performing daily activities depended on her psychological conditions where on good days, she would move around the hospital using a transfer or wheelchair, walk a short distance from her room to the hallway, and talk to the staff. However, on bad days, she would ask the staff to assist her with tasks that she usually could do on her own, such as taking and putting on clothes and going to the toilet.

In hopes to maintain Akiko's motivation to perform daily activities, nurses have asked Akiko to utilize the portable toilet instead of wearing diapers at night. However, implementation of such measures were difficult since Akiko resisted the usage of a portable toilet where she protested by excreting on the bed and sleeping without underwear. Not knowing how to handle Akiko, the nursing staffs diverged from the original plans where some firmly insisted on Akiko using the portable toilet while others relented to her protest and allowed her to wear diapers at night. Such inconsistent dealings resulted in Akiko to rely heavily on those who yield to her request while refusing the help of others that encouraged her to use the portable toilet.

4.3.1.2 During Intervention

With the inconsistent handling of Akiko's behavior causing her great anxiety and distress,

the nursing staffs decided that consistency in approaching the issue is imperative in order to maintain Akiko's ADL. Therefore, all nursing staff agreed to handle Akiko's request for diaper by telling her, "It's hot so let's stick with the training pants" which she initially relented to. However, as time passed, Akiko resorted back to her exaggerated rejecting gestures of excreting on the bed, expressing her anger by throwing utensils or spitting at the nurses. This often occurred when the staff started lecturing and logically explaining to her why she shouldn't wear a diaper. Such an approach was deemed unsuccessful, hindering Akiko's progress as well as disrupting the rapport between Akiko and the staffs. Thus, a change of approach was judged by the team as a necessary step in order to motivate Akiko to want to do things on her own.

4.3.1.3 After Intervention

Realizing the aversive effect making Akiko conform to rules had on her mental condition, the nursing staffs decided to take a more flexible approach of assisting Akiko when the reasoning behind her request seemed sensible. At first, Akiko ignored the staff when being approached. However, as time progressed, instead of throwing temper tantrum and showing exaggerated protestation, she started verbally voicing her needs, explaining to the staff how and why she wanted to be assisted. Although she still requested for assistance in moving around the hospital, she was also able to do things on her own, such as shopping around the kiosk without assistance.

4.3.1.4 Implications

Similar to Yoshi's case, Akiko was put in a situation where the treatment plan prioritized the rules set by the nursing team over her needs for assistance. This resulted in a sudden

increase in maladjusting behaviors. However, unlike Yoshi's case, the nursing team recognized the importance of letting Akiko play a part in controlling the ADL by giving her time to work out what she can and cannot do on her own. Although it remains a mystery as to whether Yoshi would have been able to go back to school had he not been pressured, Akiko's case proved that when the zone of practicable adaptability is set right, the individual tends to fare better in terms of adjusting to previously aversive situation.

Akiko's case also demonstrated that a certain level of dependency or what Baltes (1996) called "self-regulated dependency" is necessary during the process of change. Although dependency is often viewed as something negative that needs to be sanctioned at old age, Akiko's case proved that dependency and other forms of performance reduction can have positive adaptive value. Strategic selection to increase dependent activities hampered by loss (controlling bowel) to free energy for the pursuit of other activities (shopping alone) is a necessary part of successful aging (Baltes, 1996). This process of "selective optimization with compensation" would not function without the implementation of a zone of practicable adaptability, where an environment that allows for a time to sort the function that one wants to selectively optimized are given. This was evident in the nursing team's decision to entrust Akiko with the decision of which activities to let go and which to maintain. Without been given time to come in terms with which part of ADL she wants optimize and which to give up, Akiko would have remained dependent in all areas of her ADL.

The existence of the zone of practicable adaptability reconfirms the important role dependency plays as an optimizing strategy in providing individual with control and access to social partners for the purpose of utilizing and maximizing usage of resources necessary for growth. It is a mechanism that functions not only in childhood and adolescence but in all life stages. The mechanism of change allow time for the balancing of dependency and

independency in developmental tasks as highlighted by Havighurst and Erikson to take place. It plays a crucial role in allowing individual time for the selective optimization process to take place to guarantee maintenance and optimization of both domains in growth and those in danger of decline.

Table 4-5. Meta-Analysis of Hamada's (2007) Case Study

	Before Intervention	During Intervention	After Intervention
Pattern of Interaction	Staff rejected or relented to Akiko's request based on one's judgment as to what was reasonable and what wasn't	All staff rejected Akiko's request for diaper and provided the same reasoning. "It's hot so let's wear training diaper."	Acceptance and acknowledgment of Akiko's feelings and requests
Ways of Dealing with the Client	Nurses: Labelled Akiko's request for diaper at night as a dependent (<i>amae</i>) behavior and set goals to lessen such behavior by encouraging her to use portable toilet instead of diaper.	Nurses: Questioned Akiko's motive in asking for diapers and provided logical explanation as to why diaper was not needed. (e.g. "Why aren't you doing it when you know you can" or "You will be bedridden if you wear diaper all the time")	Nurses: Listened attentively to Akiko's reasons, providing assistance that met Akiko's requests.
Client's Response to the Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling of rejection resulted in Akiko to act in an exaggerated manner of exposing her private area when sleeping and excreting on the bed • Continued to ask for diapers at night and requested for specific staff to look after her 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased expression of negative feelings such as anger and disgust accompanied by aggressive behavior of throwing dishes, constantly yelling for the nurse, kicking and spitting. • Ignored the nurses when being spoken to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbally expressed her wants and needs • Continued to ask for assistance but requested to be taken to the kiosk where she shopped on her own

4.4 Discussion

Close analysis of the therapeutic exchange that occurred during intervention highlight the important role the presence of the zone of practicable adaptability played in bringing about the adaptive change in the clients described in this chapter. Through meta-analyzing the case studies, the functional features of the zone of practicable adaptability were extracted where its presence as a temporary “grace period” in allowing trial and error to take place points to the importance of taking the perspective that adaptive changes occur gradually through the implementing of an environment tailored to the need of the client. The environment allows a temporary suspension of societal norm to take place, where the co-existence of existing and novel states serves as a mechanism that scaffolds the individual to move to the next level by learning through experiencing.

Before therapeutic intervention, all patterns of interactions were characterized by the tolerance-free attempts to correct the clients from deviating from what is considered socially appropriate at all cost. Such interactions featuring severe punishment and rejection that ignored one’s current states and needs, act as a hurdle rather than a scaffold to help the individual in trouble to change for the better. In dynamic systems terms, the individual involved in the interactions described are stuck in a dyadic attractor state, which contributed to the maintenance and escalation of the problematic behavior. However, the involvement of the therapist featuring unconditional acceptance of both positive and negative forms of self-expression, empathic understanding of the client’s needs, and complete trust in the inner resilience of the client, is what induced the destabilization of the old relational patterns. Such allowance is all undertaken strategically by the therapist acting as an “unobtrusive presence” in allowing the individual to try out new ways of interacting and behaving. Such discovery enables the individual to discredit old beliefs and ineffective behavioral patterns as well as

storing and applying knowledge acquired through experimentation in other situations, evident in the clients' mastery of social and academic skills after the intervention (i.e. verbally able to express one's thoughts and feelings, as well as the ability to study and play alone).

This patient waiting for the client's realization of error through experiencing is what paradoxically creates limits. According to Kumagai (1981), the allowance of indulgence in a normally unacceptable act, labeling of the act as "*amae*" also simultaneously labels the inappropriate act as something unacceptable. It serves as an invisible barrier that discourages changes to develop in the direction of "inappropriate act." Therefore, the highly tolerant attitude and unconditional acceptance and empathic understanding of the therapist is what encourages development of more optimal strategies that exist as a sort of catalyst for adaptive change to occur without the need for direct intervention. Such patterns of progress demonstrates that changes do not occur abruptly but gradually through repetitive, reiterative testing of existing and novel behavior, where one learns to behave in a socially appropriate way through experiential discovery. Therefore when the temporary respite period comes to an end, the novel, appropriate behavior will increase as the existing one decreases in frequency as featured in Figure 4-1. It can be said that the ability to recognize and use such "environmental affordance" on the part of the troubled individual coupling with the allowance of such experiment to take place on the part of the therapist is a prerequisite for a successful intervention.

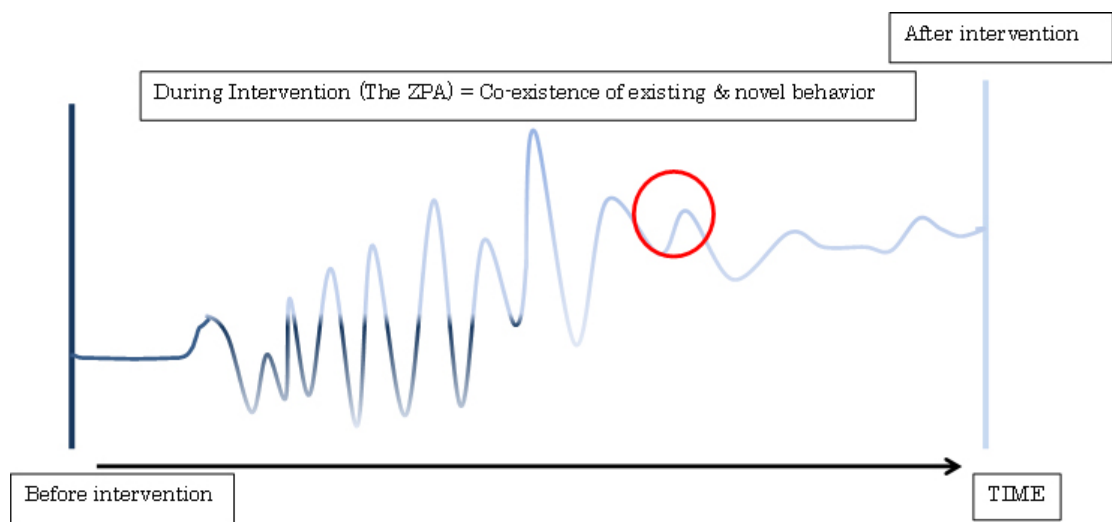


Figure 4-1. Features of the Zone of Practicable Adaptability

CHAPTER 5. THE ZONE OF PRACTICABLE ADAPTABILITY AS A TRANSITIONAL MECHANISM: ITS FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Summary

Throughout the dissertation, the mechanism of changes underlying developmental process of human relatedness was examined to understand the important role environment play in inducing adaptive changes. Review of major developmental theories of dynamic systems approach and sociocultural framework illustrated changes to occur gradually with various underlying mechanisms spontaneously emerge to assist in bringing about smooth transitions. The existence of these transitional mechanisms point to the possible existence of a temporary “grace period” or a zone of practicable adaptability characterized by the coexistence of two different states or levels that enable trial and error (experimentation) to take place even after one has acquired certain level of competency.

How the zone of practicable adaptability exists in the form of *amae* helps children internalize desirable social behaviors during the socialization process was also examined to understand its unique characteristics. How Japanese mothers and teachers serve as “unobtrusive presence” by creating a *mimamoru* type environment through the utilization of strategic non-intervention was analysed to understand how such mechanism of change operates. The results reveal that the zone of practicable adaptability provides children with opportunities to deal with socially complex situations that can only be learned through experiencing. The presence of such a mechanism shows that changes do not stem solely from the external pressure exerted from the environment, such as constant surveillance and punishment but can be induced through provision of strategic non-intervention. Evidence of strategic non-interventions were also captured through comparing ethnographic details of Japanese preschools to those of the U.S. and China. Although there were cultural specific

differences in the degree of allowance and the form of existence, it points to the universal existence of such transitional mechanism.

With the unobtrusive presence being most evident in attachment relationship where children learn to use the mother as a secure base from which to explore, reexamination of attachment theory from the perspective of the zone of practicable adaptability were undertaken to understand how the transferring process of attachment functions from primary attachment figure to social others take form. Comparison of *amae* to the constructs of dependency and attachment reveal that although all three constructs are evident in close relationship and are similar in the behavioral manifestations, *amae* serves a unique function that bridges attachment and dependency.

With *amae* being motivated by both the emotional, non-instrumental need for unconditional love and affection, reflecting the feeling of attachment, and the manipulative, instrumental need to control the environment, reflecting the social learning aspect of dependency, it's characteristic of allowing both attachment and dependency to coexist imply the possibility of *amae* existing as a form of process-oriented transitional mechanism that plays a role in the functioning of the IWM. This allows gradual transference of the attachment function from biological based attachment bonding to extend to other potential attachment figures as one's social network expands with age. The analysis of IWM of *amae* interaction with those of attachment patterns reveal that in order for an attachment figure to function as a secure base, the function of a safe haven, which guarantees unconditional acceptance and affection, must be established first. Such a perspective is an important one since it provides evidence that the secure establishment of attachment requires a warm responsive environment that unconditionally accepts and caters to the individual's innate need to connect to significant others.

With *amae* being readily observed and applied to the understanding of therapeutic situations, how the existence of a zone of practicable adaptability in allowing the client to use the therapist as a secure base during therapeutic interventions induce positive changes was examined through meta-analysis of 5 case studies concerning aggressive behaviors, school refusal, and aging issues. The analysis of the therapeutic interaction during intervention reveal the unconditional acceptance and empathic attitude of the therapist functioning as a catalyst in bringing about adaptive changes. This facilitates the individual's development through experiencing and experimenting in the form of limit testing. Findings also suggest that the ability to recognize the "environmental affordance" of the zone of practicable adaptability on the part of the troubled individual, coupling with the allowance of such respite period to take place on the part of the therapist, is a prerequisite for a successful intervention.

5.2 Structure and Mechanism of the Zone of Practicable Adaptability

The zone of practicable adaptability is a transitional mechanism featuring the span of time that allows the coexistence of both existing and novel behavior until an adaptive, dominant form takes precedence. Such a mechanism operates under the premise that changes do not occur abruptly as indicated by developmental stage theories but in a more continuous, graduate form, consisting of period of transitions that smoothen the transitional process from existing to novel behavior or patterns of interaction. Although most of the analysis in this dissertation is centered on the developmental processes of children, the zone of practicable adaptability is a transitional mechanism that functions "from the cradle to the grave" and is applicable to the developmental transitions at any life stage. Viewing the zone of practicable adaptability in terms of lifespan development is imperative since it assists one to overcome developmental tasks of adjusting the dynamic interplay between autonomy and dependency,

which according to Baltes (1996) changes according to life situations. Therefore, the use of environmental affordance in the form of indulgent dependency (relying on agency when needed or connectedness when asked for) should not be taken as a sign of regression or pathology but as an optimizing strategy that may bring about adaptive changes.

Unlike previous theories of development which are goal-oriented, describing development in terms of developmental milestones and endpoints that need to be met at certain age or stage in life, the zone of practicable adaptability suggests development to occur in a process-oriented fashion. The zone of practicable adaptability suggests developmental goals to exist as a mile marker rather than an endpoint, where the process of discovering how to achieve the goal is what brings about adaptive change and optimal growth. Therefore, with the provision of a *mimamoru* type environment under the watchful eyes of a supporter who is unobtrusively present, the individual undergoing a developmental task is allowed time to discover the optimal path that afford optimal adaptability through experiencing and experimenting. Working towards a goal through experiencing and experimenting plays an important role in facilitating growth since in the process of attaining one's goals, the individual through learning from their mistakes, may "overachieve" the mile marker originally set. They can become more competent than they were before they started, or "underachieve" the goal which renders a need to reevaluate the original set goal. Such flexible adjustment of goals catered to the individual's need in turn requires the environment to also flexibly adjust its strategy of assistance revealing the important function strategic non-intervention plays in ensuring adaptive change and growth to last.

With what is considered developmentally optimal differ depending on the culture one resides in, it can be said that the mechanism of change embodied in the zone of practicable adaptability is universal. However, how the form and content of such mechanism exist (e.g.

the duration of the respite period and what is allowed and not allowed) is culturally specific. To elaborate, the transitional mechanisms of practicable adaptability featuring the span of time that allows the coexistence of both existing and novel behavior until an adaptive, dominant form takes precedence is a universal phenomenon evident in all human activities. It is utilized by all people, regardless of one's age, gender, and nationality. However, the content and the form the zone of practicable adaptability exists, such as how strategic non-intervention is executed, may differ depending on the circumstance and culture one resides in (See Figure 5-1).

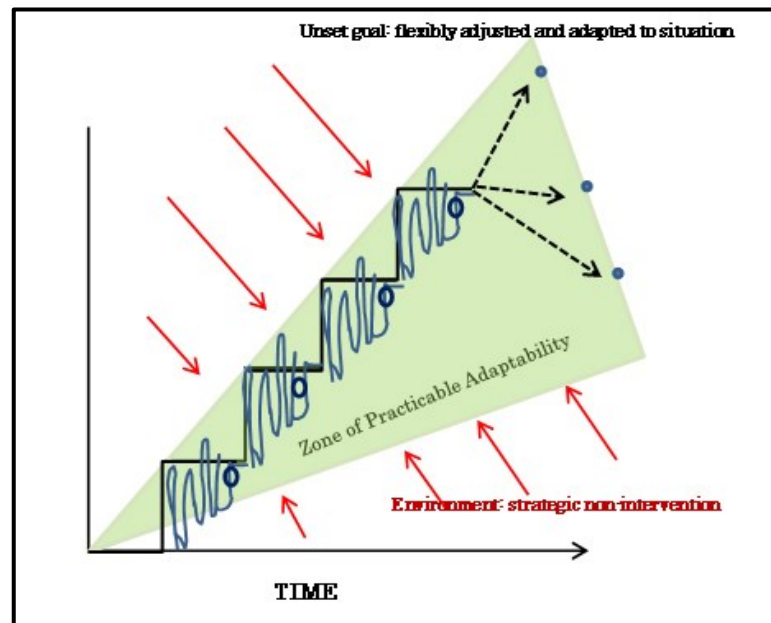


Figure 5-1. The Structure and Function of the Zone of Practicable Adaptability

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

This paper presented the zone of practicable adaptability as a new way of looking at the role environment plays in facilitating adaptive change during developmental processes underlying the individual-environmental interaction. Such mechanism of change, as facilitated by the *mimamoru* type environment that permits exploration and experimentation of existing and emerging skills/functions to take place through the allowance of *amae* or "intervene without intervening", provide new insights to current developmental models and ideas (See Table 5-1).

Table 5-1. A Taxonomy of Developmental Theories

Theory	Piaget (Cognitive Stage Theory)	Vygotsky (Sociocultural Theory)	Thelen & Smith/ Granott / Fogel (Dynamic Systems Approach)	Omichi (The Zone of Practicable Adaptability)
Stage or Transition	Stage > Transition	Transition	Transition	Transition
Individual or Environment	Individual > Environment	Environment > Individual	Individual & Environment	Environment > Individual
Experience (Role of the Environment)	No	Yes (Scaffolding)	Yes (Bridging)	Yes (Allowance of <i>amae</i>)
Biological Constraints (Role of the Individual)	Yes (Assimilation & Accommodation)	No	Yes (Bridging)	Yes (Exploration & Experimentation)
Mechanism of Change	Equilibration (Construction)	Internalization	Self-organization	Strategic non-intervention (<i>Mimamoru</i>)
Social	No	Yes	No	Yes

Source: From "Significance of *Amae* as a Transitional Mechanism: Function and Role of the "Zone of Practicable Adaptability" (p. 147), by E. Omichi, 2013, *Journal of Human Environmental Studies*, Volume 1, Number 2.

Unlike Piaget and Vygotsky's models that explain the mechanism of change as existing during the process of mastering a new skill, the zone of practicable adaptability suggests the possible existence of an adaptive process that functions after one has acquired a certain level of mastery. Acknowledging the importance of environmental factors, especially the role of social interaction as an important facilitator of adaptive change, the zone of practicable

adaptability takes a different stance in examining how the environment induces such change. In contrast to Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding, where adaptive changes and learning are induced through the provision of a learning environment with active, explicit instructions and guided participation in helping children reach certain level of competency (educational goals), the zone of practicable adaptability takes the stance that changes and progress do not necessary need to be induced through active guidance and instruction from the environment. The new model suggests that adaptive change can be prompted through the provision of a temporary grace period of non-intervention that allows the individual the freedom to practice and learn through repetitive experimenting and experiences. They can practice without being constrained and pressured to reach a certain educational goal or level of achievement. Such a temporary period, with the allowance for experimentation of both the existing and emerging function, is what enables the adaptive processes of assimilation and accommodation as conceptualized by Piaget to take place. Therefore, contrary to Piaget's belief that learning and growth stems from the child's independent, self-motivated explorations of the physical world, the zone of practicable adaptability takes the opposite perspective suggesting the provision of a non-intrusive, non-intervening environment is what prompts and encourages individual to engage in self-explorative behavior that enables change and progress to take place. The zone of practicable adaptability is unique in that it explains the phenomenon of self-exploration and adaptation from the viewpoint of the environment, elucidating the social others' role in constantly monitoring the child's non-discriminated self-exploration of the environment, and judging when and how to steer children toward the right direction without spoiling learning opportunities for the child by intervening too quickly. This perspective goes hand in hand with the child centered philosophy of allowing children to grow, to learn, and to develop on a natural timeline and provides a more convincing explanation than the current nativist

stage-oriented theories as to why children cannot suddenly grow to become a mature, competent individual without been given time to learn, to grow, and to experience and how such learning environment can be implemented.

Such a shift in perspective is an important one, since looking at changes solely from the perspective of individual adaptation not only identify and direct intervention towards altering the individual alone, but also overlooks how the environment can be altered to foster healthy, adaptive changes. As Lewis & Mayes (2012) stated, current studies of psychopathology, although recognizing the role environment play in causing disturbances and abnormal behaviors in an individual, prefers intervening by increasing one's coping skills or altering specific behaviors, rather than making changes to the environment. Researchers also tend to "look at weaknesses in self-control or poor understanding in the individual as singular or primary explanatory variables rather than more complex interactions of individual, society, and culture" (Lewis & Mayes, 2012, p 2). Therefore, adopting the perspective of the zone of practicable adaptability will enable both practitioners and researchers to perceive, approach, and intervene through altering the environment to allow clients to come to self-realization through reflecting upon one's problem at hand under a non-judgmental environment. This in turn may foster an intrinsic motivation to want to change for the better.

The existence of the zone of practicable adaptability as a mechanism of change that operates during developmental transitions points to the need to shift current research trends and methods from state-oriented to process oriented. Although the comparison of static states as yielded through past research approaches provide an understanding of a person's abilities at specific ages, such comparisons leaves significant gaps in understanding how change occur. Rather than adopting research designs focusing on the products of change like cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs, comparing knowledge and abilities at different ages, new

research methods involving direct observation of change as it occurs, such as the microgenetic research design, with the goal of uncovering the source of developmental processes, should be the new research trend in understanding developmental processes of change (Granott & Parziale, 2002; Lavelli, Pantoja, Hsu, Messinger, & Fogel, 2005; Fogel et al., 2006). The adoption of the research method that examines change process is a necessary one since the goal of developmental research is to widen application of conceptual and theoretical ideas in educational or therapeutic interventions. Therefore, instead of simply comparing pre- and post-change behavioral patterns, microgenetic research designs enable the observation of the change process unfolding through a selection of a case for observation to be conducted before, during, and after a period during which rapid change in a particular domain is occurring in real time.

In the case of the zone of practicable adaptability, cases relating to the period of developmental change arising from adaptation to new circumstances, such as the first semester of a school year, probation period at a new workplace, medical intern undergoing residency, or period of parole, can be selected for microgenetic studies to understand how provision or non-provision of the environment's temporary allowance of a period of adjustment affect the subject's acquisition of new skills and rate of adaptation process. As suggested by microgenetic researchers, observation should be conducted in time intervals that are considered shorter than the time intervals required for the developmental change to occur in order to identify the processes that give rise to change and the mechanism that underlie developmental transitions (Granott & Parziale, 2002; Fogel et al., 2006).

Undergoing such analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role environment plays in facilitating adaptive changes in individual development. In addition, identifying and uncovering the basic principles of change promoting desirable changes over

undesirable ones are useful in the application and enforcement of effective educational and therapeutic interventions and programs. Therefore, further examination of the change mechanism underlying *amae* or the zone of practicable adaptability through the use of microgenetic research design is a necessary next step in future research. This will enhance our understanding of how such important mechanisms bring about the successful functioning of how Japanese people can exist as a universal phenomenon that play an indispensable role in the functioning of all human beings. As Sameroff (2009) and many other theorists suggest, there is a need to focus on the role environment plays in facilitating changes in individual and how such facilitation in turn enables individuals to use environmental features afforded to them in promoting adaptive progress and changes. Understanding the mechanism underlying the zone of practicable adaptability will no doubt provide further discussion and facilitate new ideas that will shed light on the missing pieces concerning the dynamic interplay between the individual and the environment in influencing the course of human development.

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