

Study of Prenatal Experiencing-Modality from Developmental Clinical and “Kansei” Psychology Perspectives

Daisuke Oshioka and Yumina Ozaki

Abstract: We retrospectively analyzed the different modalities of prenatal fetal experiences delineated in different picture books from the perspective of developmental and “kansei” psychology by utilizing the six characteristics of experiencing proposed by Gendlin (1961). The results suggested the possibility of experiences of emotions in unborn children that are elicited without clear emotional experiences. The study also indicated possible prenatal fetal experiences similar to internal working seen in the focusing process in which one refers directly to the felt-sense. These findings have implications for the experiencing theory advocated by Gendlin (1961), which could also be applied to unborn children. Furthermore, the results emphasize the importance of the mother’s voice and belly-touch for her unborn child because the unborn child might gain fundamental experiences for conceptualization and symbolization during the prenatal period. These results provide further support for the “experiential psycho-development theory.”

Keywords: prenatal period, experiencing, focusing

Daisuke Oshioka, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Faculty of Human studies in Seisen University who specializes in Focusing and Psychoanalysis. Dr. Oshioka works in Pediatrics, and in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The qualifications acquired by Dr. Oshioka’s the qualification of a psychotherapist as a national certification in Japan. Other qualifications include, Clinical Psychologist (Foundation of the Japanese Certification Board for Clinical Psychologists), Certified Focusing Professional (The Focusing Institute), Certified Focusing Trainer (The Focusing Institute), Certified Focusing-Oriented Therapist (The Focusing Institute), and Certified DISCO (The Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders) User (National Autistic Society) have already qualifications. www.seisen.ac.jp/gakubu/ningen/kyoin/oshioka; oshiok-d@seisen.ac.jp. **Yumina Ozaki, M.A.**, is a Clinical Psychologist (Foundation of the Japanese Certification Board for Clinical Psychologists) who works at the Shiga Support Center for Persons with Developmental Disabilities.

The “way of being” in the womb, which is the beginning of human life, has been studied and written about in various academic disciplines, including medicine, literature, and religious sciences. In the medical field, there have been summative findings on fetal medicine, such as the recent study on the continuum of development from fetal to neonatal brain functions by Kidokoro (2017), earlier research cited by Verny and Kelly (1981), and studies conducted by many other researchers. In literature, many picture books have been published, such as the non-fiction books, *Taiji no Kioku* (1995, *Memory of a Fetus*), *Nou, Taiji Kioku, Sei* (2008, *Brain, Fetal Memory, and Sex*), and *Mienai Jigen* (2011, *Invisible Dimension*) written by Takumi Manai, who herself possesses fetal or prenatal memories.

In religious texts, for instance, the keyword “womb” appears a total of 60 times or more in the Old and New Testaments of the *King James Bible*. In the Old Testament, Isaiah 49:1 reads: “LISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name,” (underlined by the author). In the New Testament, Luke 1:41, states: “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost,” (underlined by the author). Another passage from the New Testament, Luke 1:44 states: “For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy,” (underlined by the author). All these depict how unborn children are listening, sensing, and expressing in the womb and have an active and proactive existence during their prenatal period.

The practice of fetal education, referred to in Japan as “Taikyo,” is conducted in many countries. Moreover, the mental stability of a pregnant mother is believed to have a positive influence on her unborn child. In Japan, passing through a narrow fissure of a rock or a cavern sometimes signifies feigning death and rebirth. Of the “Tainai Kuguri” reincarnation, purification, or ablution initiation of Shinto rituals, one called “Chinowa Shinji” is suggestive of birth (or “Tainai Meguri”). Fulfilling wishes, as well as prayer are deeply integrated into the everyday life of Japanese people. This might be attributed to either human nature regarding the life-giving womb as a sacred environment, or the unconscious desire to stay within this divine environment.

This raises the question of how an average unborn human child grows and develops in the womb during the prenatal period. According to Sakurai and Okawa (2010), the prenatal period consists of approximately 40 weeks beginning at conception, when the sperm and egg unite to become a zygote, which then implants in the lining of the uterus and grows into a prenatate. Prenatal development can be divided into the following trimesters: the first is the germinal period (the period

of zygote division); the second is the embryonic period; and the third is the fetal period starting from nine weeks after fertilization until childbirth. In the germinal period, a zygote travels down and stably implants itself into the lining of the uterus where it differentiates to form all the major body organs by the end of the embryonic period, and appears to become more human-like. By the end of the fetal period, body tissues and organs of the fetus mature not only in form but also in function, to suit life outside the womb before the awaited birth (Sakurai & Okawa, 2010).

To date, for the most part, clinical and developmental psychology have investigated the way of being of the human mind from the neonatal period. The way of being of the unborn child's mind has not been proactively investigated as a major topic.

Two main obstacles clinical and developmental psychologists face when studying the way of being of the prenatal child's mind are the difficulties in making direct and chronological observations, and the lack of exophasia, or audible speech. To overcome these two obstacles, we analyzed the antenatal development and growth depicted by artists and creators through their artistic sensibility, by using the experiencing theory of Gendlin (1961) who coined the concept of "focusing," and explored the way of being of the prenatal child's mind.

Freud (1905/1953), who laid the foundation for theoretical psychoanalysis, analyzed artworks and myths and attempted to compile evidence proving the existence of human unconsciousness. Kitayama (1999-2002/2003, 2004, 2005) also analyzed "ukiyo-e" works which are representative of Japanese popular culture in the Edo period between 1603-1868 A.D. The works Kitayama analyzed depict mainly mothers and children, from the perspective of developmental and "kansei" psychology. Kansei psychology is "intuitive evaluation based on senses or feelings" (Amemiya, 2009). These works elucidated the universality of Japanese parenting culture by explaining the way of being of universal parent-child interactions, using categories such as "joint visual attention through physical contact." Thus, employing artworks as the subject for the ukiyo-e analysis of the way of being of the mind is a somewhat common technique in the field of clinical and developmental psychology.

One of the suggested characteristics of experiencing that indicates "experiencing is a pre-conceptual organismic process" has led to our use of the experiencing theory (Gendlin, 1961) for studying the way of being of an unborn child having no exophasia. In other words, even an unborn child who does not have exophasia and is considered incapable of symbolizing or conceptualizing might very well have abundant pre-conceptual experiences. Gendlin (1961) has compiled the following six characteristics of experiencing:

1. Experiencing is a process of feeling.
2. Experiencing occurs in the immediate present.
3. Experiencing is a direct referent.
4. Experiencing guides conceptualization.
5. Experiencing is implicitly meaningful.
6. Experiencing is a pre-conceptual organismic process.

Klein et al. (1970) developed an experiencing scale (hereinafter referred to as the “Exp-Scale”) as a tool for assessing the modality of experiencing. The Exp-Scale is used by researchers to rate experiencing based on the client’s statements. The key to the successful outcome of psychotherapy is the implicitly meaningful physical sensation called the felt-sense (Gendlin, 1981). In the Exp-Scale assessment, the depth at which the client contacts or attends to their felt-senses is rated on a 7-point scale (Nakata, 1999). The analysis using the Exp-Scale calculates the most frequently-occurring ratings, referred to as the mode rating, and the highest-level rating, referred to as a peak rating. The analysis also calculates the respective interclass correlation coefficient of the reliability coefficient (Ebel, 1951) by assessing the interrater agreement and consistency.

Ikemi et al. (1986) suggested that the mode score, in particular, is rated at experiencing either Level 3 or below, or Level 4 or above, as the baseline for analyzing the data obtained by using the Exp-Scale. This is because the experiencing Levels 1 to 3 concern statements on external experiences, whereas the Levels 4 and above concern statements about inward experiences. These baselines were applied to the current study to investigate whether the way of being of the mind of an unborn child has attained experiencing Level 4 or higher.

We assessed and evaluated the antenatal fetal growth and development depicted by artists using the predictions of kansei psychology regarding clinical and developmental psychology and the experiencing theory (Gendlin, 1961) to address the following questions:

1. Are there occurrences of experiencing in an unborn child?
2. Does an unborn child have feelings?
3. Does an unborn child experience a focusing process?

The study was also designed to demonstrate that the foundation of virtually all postnatal subjective and psychological experiences through the five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching) are constructed in the prenatal period, from the perspective of clinical and developmental psychology.

The objective of this study was to investigate prenatal experiencing and its different modalities by retrospectively assessing the antenatal fetal experiences depicted in picture books from a developmental and

kansei psychological perspective by using the six characteristics of experiencing (Gendlin, 1961). Kansei psychology is the “intuitive evaluation based on senses or feelings” (Amemiya, 2009), which is defined in this study as the attainment of prenatal experiencing modalities and their descriptions based on the felt-sense of the author and other raters.

Methods

First, we collected picture books describing antenatal life in the womb as their theme (hereinafter referred to as “the material(s).” The five picture books targeted for analysis were sold and available in Japan at the start of the analysis in this study. These picture books are depicted by artists and creators’ artistic sensibility, but some also include pictures of real stories of prenatal memories. The following five books were used in the assessment:

- A. *Boku, Umareruyo!* [I’m Gonna be Born!], by Katsumi Komagata, (1995), One Stroke.
This book describes the process from fertilization to birth from the fetus’ perspective. The story about growing in the womb to being born is depicted based on scientific understanding.
- B. *Oheso No Ana* [Inside the Belly], by Yoshifumi Hasegawa, (2006), BL Shuppan.
This book depicts what could be experienced by the fetus from inside the belly. Sight, voices and other sounds, and smells are expressed with the creator’s artistic sensibility.
- C. *Onaka No Naka Ni Ita Toki Wane* [When I was in the Belly], by Yutaka Kashiwagi and Naoko Ishimori, (2015), Shubunsha.
This book was edited by Dr. Akira Ikegawa. It is a summary of memories in the womb, such as playing in the belly, dislikes of parents’ fights, and being born dazzling.
- D. *Omoidashitayo* [Now I Remember], by Akari and Yumiko, (2016), Livre.
This book describes both a pre-fertilization memory and the memory of being in the womb of a 4-year-old girl.
- E. *Umareru tte tanoshiina* [Fun to Be Born], by Koutaro Warai and Nahoko Koori, (2016), Kyoto Kyoei Shuppan.
This book is based on interviews with children talking about prenatal memories. The authors of this book also interviewed pregnant women and described the way of being of these fetuses in multiple ways.

Each segment of descriptive texts was extracted from the materials and used as primary data. The extracted primary data were reviewed and categorized from the following six assessment perspectives provided by the author, who was the principal researcher, and the other two fellow researchers. Those texts that were deemed to fall within the purview of Perspectives 1 and 3, which were considered as immediate or retrospective expressions of direct experiences, were used as secondary data for evaluation by the Exp-Scale (hereinafter referred to as “segment”).

Perspective 1: Descriptions in which the primary unborn child depicted in the relevant material is considered to be representing his or her direct and immediate experiences.

(e.g.) material C: “When daddy and mommy were talking loudly to each other, my mouth got bitter, and I wanted to get out.”

Perspective 2: Descriptions in which the direct experience of the primary unborn child in the relevant material is considered to be immediately represented by another child from a third-person standpoint.

(e.g.) material A: “Small life gradually grows little by little, and eventually, its body becomes fuller.”

Perspective 3: Descriptions in which the primary unborn child in the relevant material is considered to be representing their direct experience retrospectively.

(e.g.) material E: “When mommy and daddy fought with each other and got sad, I became sad, too.”

Perspective 4: Descriptions in which the direct experience of the primary unborn child in the relevant material is represented retrospectively by another child from a third-party standpoint.

(e.g.) material A: “One becomes two; two becomes four, four becomes eight, just like that, it grows bigger and bigger.”

Perspective 5: Descriptions that do not fall within Perspectives 1 through 4 yet are not subjected to immediate exclusion from the assessment.

Perspective 6: Descriptions that do not fall within Perspectives 1 through 5, and are subjected for exclusion from the assessment.

(e.g.) material B: “twang, twang, twang, tumtum, tumtum, twaaaang”

We arranged all the segments that were created in random order to disrupt the storyline and handed it to the three raters, including the principal researcher/author. All distributed segments were evaluated by each rater independently, conforming to the Exp-Scale evaluation criteria of Ikemi et al. (1986). As to the evaluation results, the interclass correlation coefficient (Ebel, 1951) was calculated. The interrater agreement and consistency among the three raters including the author was then examined using the evaluation criteria in Table 1, described by Landis and Koch (1977), to confirm the reliability of the evaluations. Bell Curve for Excel by Social Survey Research Information Co., Ltd. was used for the calculation of interclass correlation coefficients.

Rated segments were tabulated as the results indicating its mode and peak ratings, which allowed reviewing the experiencing shifts. The proportion was calculated for the segments rated as experiencing Level 4 or above by the three raters. In addition, the mean was calculated as a representative of all the mode and peak ratings. One of our analysts was an accredited analyst of the *Focusing Institute*, who was specialized in focusing.

Table 1 The Evaluating Criteria for Reliability Coefficient
(Landis & Koch, 1977)

<i>Kappa Statistic</i>	<i>Strength of Agreement</i>
< 0.00	Poor
0.0 – 0.20	Slight
0.21 – 0.40	Fair
0.41 – 0.60	Moderate
0.61 – 0.80	Substantial
0.81 – 1.00	Almost Perfect

Results and Discussion

A. *Boku, Umareruyo!* [I'm Gonna be Born!]

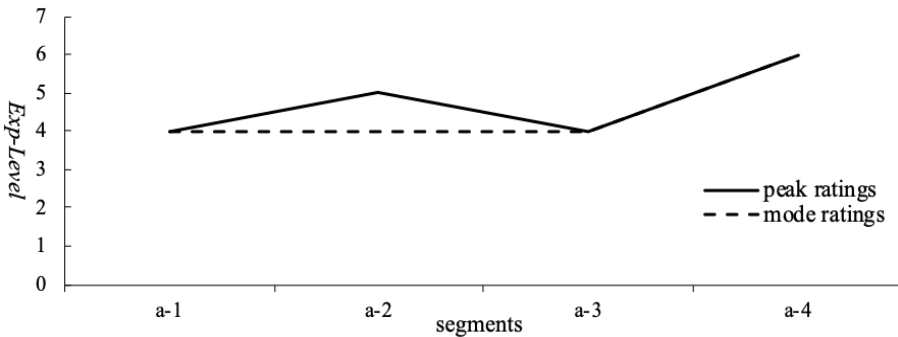
Twenty-eight primary data were extracted. We refined the extracted data by collating with the situations depicted in the picture books, which resulted in the final four segments. The Exp-Scale evaluation results of the four segments by the three raters are shown in Table 2. The interclass correlation coefficient was 0.88 for the inter-rater agreement confirming its nearly perfect agreement. Next, the mode and peak ratings were plotted to confirm the shifts in the experiencing of Material A, which is shown in Figure 1. Assessment of the mode and peak ratings with each shift confirmed that both ratings remained at the experiencing Level 4 or above. There were three segments rated as experiencing Level 4 or above by all three raters, with a proportion of 75%. The mean for all

the mode and peak ratings was 4.63 ($SD = 0.92$). The above results demonstrated the occurrences of experiencing in the primary unborn child depicted in Material A.

Table 2. Interclass Correlation Coefficient

Two-Way Mixed	95% CI			F test			p	* : $P < 0.05$ ** : $P < 0.01$
	ICC	lower bound	upper bound	F	df1	df2		
Single Measure ICC(3,1)	0.88	0.46	0.99	23.20	3	6	0.001	**

Figure 1. Shifts in Experiencing Level



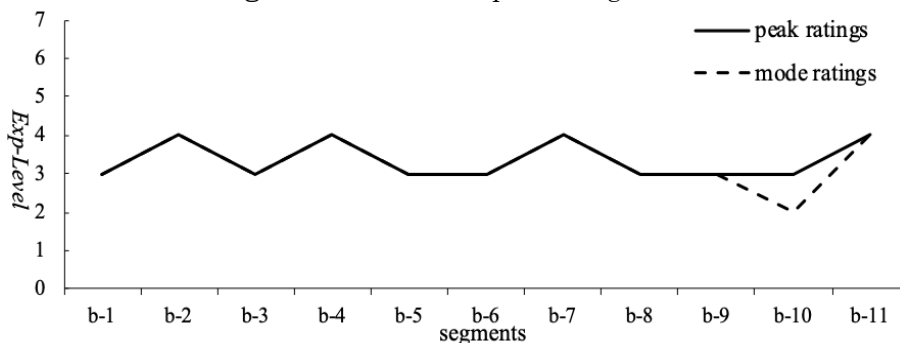
B. Oheso No Ana [Inside the Belly]

Forty-two primary data were extracted. Refinement of the extracted data by collating with the situations depicted in the picture books lead to 11 finalized segments. The Exp-Scale evaluation results of the 11 segments by the three raters are shown in Table 3. The interclass correlation coefficient was 0.92 for the inter-rater agreement confirming a nearly perfect agreement. Next, the mode and peak ratings were plotted to confirm the experiencing shifts in Material B, which is shown in Figure 2. Assessment of the mode and peak ratings with each shift confirmed that some of the mode ratings were partial at experiencing Level 2 in the latter half of the story, whereas most of the time, the ratings were shifting between Levels 3 and 4. There were four segments rated as experiencing Level 4 or above by all three raters at a proportion of 36.36%. The mean of all the mode and peak ratings was 3.32 ($SD = 0.57$). The above results demonstrated the partial occurrences of experiencing in the unborn child depicted in Material B.

Table 3. Interclass Correlation Coefficient

Two-Way Mixed	ICC	95% CI		F test			p	* : P<0.05 ** : P<0.01
		lower bound	upper bound	F	df1	df2		
Single Measure ICC(3,1)	0.92	0.79	0.97	34.00	10	20	P<0.001	**

Figure 2. Shifts in Experiencing Level



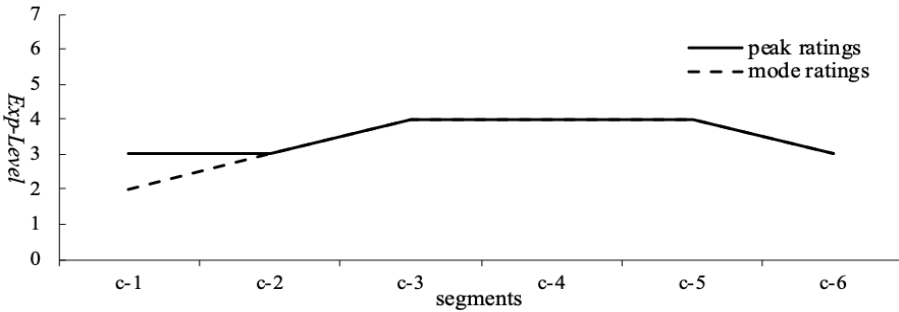
C. Onaka no naka ni ita toki wane [When I was in the Belly]

Fifteen primary data were extracted. Refinement of the extracted data by collating with the situations depicted in the picture books resulted in the final six segments. The Exp-Scale evaluation results of the six segments by the three raters are shown in Table 4. The interclass correlation coefficient was 0.84 for the inter-rater agreement confirming the near-perfect agreement. Next, the mode and peak ratings were plotted to confirm the experiencing shifts in Material C and as shown in Figure 3. Assessment of the mode and peak ratings with each shift confirmed that the mode ratings began shifting from Level 2, whereas the peak rating began shifting from Level 3, and both ratings eventually reached experiencing Level 4 as the story progressed. Subsequently, the rating dropped to experiencing Level 3 in the prenatal fetus. There were three segments rated as experiencing Level 4 or above by all three raters, with a proportion of 50%. The mean for all the mode and peak ratings was 3.42 (*SD* = 0.67). The above results demonstrated the partial occurrences of experiencing in the primary unborn child in Material C.

Table 4. Interclass Correlation Coefficient

Two-Way Mixed	ICC	95% CI		F test			p	* : P<0.05 ** : P<0.01
		lower bound	upper bound	F	df1	df2		
Single Measure ICC(3,1)	0.84	0.51	0.97	17.33	5	10	P<0.001	**

Figure 3. Shifts in Experiencing Level



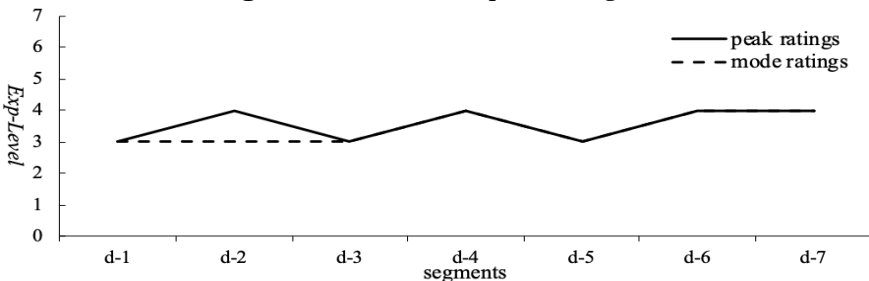
D. *Omoidashitayo* [Now I Remember]

Nineteen primary data were extracted. Refinement of the extracted data by collating with the situations depicted in the picture books leads to the final seven segments. The Exp-Scale evaluation results of the seven segments by the three raters are shown in Table 5. The interclass correlation coefficient was 0.76 for the inter-rater agreement confirming the considerably high agreement. Next, the mode and peak ratings were plotted to confirm the experiencing shift in Material D, as shown in Figure 4. Assessment of the mode and peak ratings with each shift confirmed that the specific mode ratings were shifting between Levels 3 and 4, and the rating reached Level 4 in the fetus. There were two segments rated as experiencing Level 4 or above by all three raters with a proportion of 28.57%. The mean of all the mode and peak ratings was 3.50 ($SD = 0.52$). The above results demonstrated the partial occurrences of experiencing in the primary unborn child in Material D.

Table 5. Interclass Correlation Coefficient

	95% CI			F test			p	* : $P < 0.05$ ** : $P < 0.01$
	ICC	lower bound	upper bound	F	df1	df2		
Two-Way Mixed								
Single Measure ICC(3,1)	0.76	0.37	0.95	10.43	6	12	$P < 0.001$	**

Figure 4. Shifts in Experiencing Level



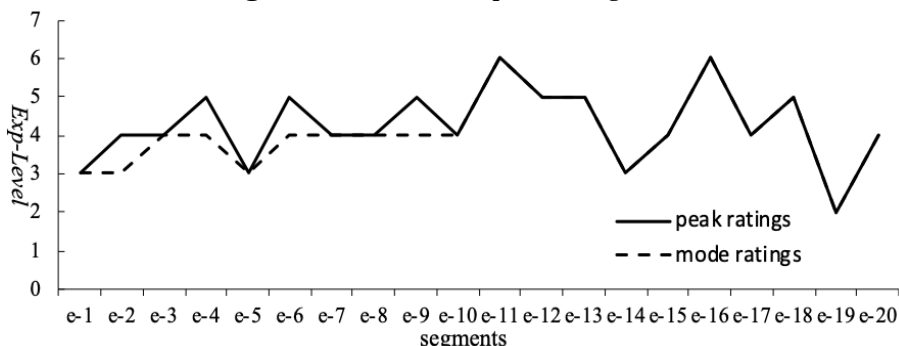
E. *Umareru tte tanoshiina* [Fun to be Born]

Forty-eight primary data were extracted. Refinement of the extracted data by collating with the situations depicted in the picture book lead to the final 20 segments. The Exp-Scale evaluation results of the 20 segments by the raters are shown in Table 6. The interclass correlation coefficient was 0.92 for inter-rater agreement confirming the nearly perfect agreement. Next, the mode and peak ratings were plotted to confirm the experiencing shifts in Material E, as shown in Figure 5. Assessment of the mode and peak ratings with each shift confirmed that both the mode and peak ratings began shifting from Level 3, the experiencing levels repeatedly moved up and down as the story progressed, and the rating reached Level 4 in the fetus. There were 13 segments rated as the experiencing Level 4 or above by all three raters, with a proportion of 65%. The mean for all the mode and peak ratings was 4.15 ($SD = 1.00$). The above results demonstrated the occurrences of experiencing in the primary unborn child in Material E.

Table 6. Interclass Correlation Coefficient

	95% CI			F test			p	*: $P < 0.05$ **: $P < 0.01$
	ICC	lower bound	upper bound	F	df1	df2		
Two-Way Mixed								
Single Measure ICC(3,1)	0.92	0.80	0.97	23.19	19	19	$P < 0.001$	**

Figure 5. Shifts in Experiencing Level



Discussion

This study analyzed retrospective fetal experiences delineated in picture books, from the perspective of developmental and kansei psychology to examine the occurrences of fetal experiencing and its different modalities by using the six experiencing characteristics proposed by Gendlin (1961).

The results demonstrated the occurrences of experiencing in prenatal children in the materials A and E with mean experiencing Level of 4 or above in all mode and peak ratings. On the other hand, the occurrences of experiencing in the unborn child were partially demonstrated in the Materials B, C, and D. The experiencing level shifted and at times reached Level 4 or above. However, the mean of all the mode and peak ratings did not reach the experiencing Level 4 or above. Based on the results of this analysis, we have discussed the three questions enumerated in the Awareness and Questions from the perspective of clinical, developmental, and kansei psychology.

(1) Are there occurrences of experiencing in an unborn child?

Gendlin (1961) states, "Experiencing occurs in the immediate present," which is reflected in the Experiencing Characteristic 2. He also states, "experiencing is a pre-conceptual organismic process," which is reflected in the Experiencing Characteristic 6. The results of this study indicated that means of all the mode and peak ratings in the Exp-Scale for Materials A and E had an experiencing Level 4 or above. Additionally, in materials B, C, and D, the experiencing level shifted and at times reached Level 4 or above. However, the mean of all the mode and peak ratings did not reach the experiencing Level 4 or above. Therefore, the results suggested the possible occurrences of experiencing in an unborn child as they are indeed a living organism.

Also, various responses to physiological and sensory changes in the womb have been evident in unborn children, from clinical and developmental perspectives. For instance, Van De Carr and Leher (1986) reported the way of being in an unborn child's mind at eight weeks gestation; when a mother poked her pregnant belly, the unborn child responded by kicking back the belly wall. Moreover, Verny and Kelly (1981) suggested that an unborn child might be expressing their feelings by kicking their mom's belly whenever they felt unpleasant or anxious about environmental changes in the womb. These findings illustrate that unborn children sense various changes in the womb with each passing moment and are responding to such changes psychologically and physically. However, we have not found any supporting studies conducted on the physiological or sensory responses of a child in the prenatal period, particularly during the germinal and embryonic period, which is the period that was the target of our study. Therefore, from the perspective of developmental and kansei psychology, experiencing a moment might be possible in at least unborn children after the fetal period. However, there is a need for further research on whether experiencing is occurring in the entire prenatal period, including the germinal and embryonic periods.

(2) Does an unborn child have feelings?

Gendlin (1961) stated, “Experiencing is a process of feeling,” in Characteristic 1. Based on the results obtained from Materials A and E as well as B, C, and D, it is possible that experiencing might occur as one of the feeling processes of unborn children according to the perspective of theoretical and kansei psychology. However, we cannot assert that an unborn child has feelings from these results because an unborn child does not have exophasia from the perspective of developmental psychology. I have further discussed this point by using the emotion of happiness as an example.

The emotion of happiness has an underlying mood of satisfaction and refreshment (Nakamura, 2010). A mood is a non-intentional and global, or diffused, emotion (Frijida, 1988), and elicits less physical arousal than an emotion, but only lasts for a specific period of time (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Emotions can be easily and clearly recognized, whereas mood is not necessarily clearly recognizable. Hence, although emotions might be a part of a mood, they are not identical.

We, having exophasia, chose the word happiness as a handle symbolizing a certain mood, which enables us to recognize a “vague mood” as an evident emotion, allowing us to relish the enjoyable moment and further share such experiences with others. On the other hand, an unborn child without exophasia is probably feeling a vague mood, as vague as it is. Gendlin (1981) named this seemingly meaningful physical sensation as a “felt-sense,” which is difficult to distinguish from feelings or a mere physical sensation. The results of the current study suggest that although an unborn child may not have clear emotional experiences, they are probably experiencing processes involved in the elicitation of emotions.

(3) Does an unborn child experience a focusing process?

So far, we have suggested the potential occurrences of experiencing in unborn children that are reached at least in the fetal period. Furthermore, we discussed the possibility that fetuses may be experiencing a process involving emotions, although their experiences might not be evident due to the lack of exophasia during the fetal period.

Now we would like to enlarge the discussion pertaining to the possibility that an unborn child might be experiencing a focusing process taking account of the above findings by presenting the Exp-Scale results and symbolic process. In particular, the segment A-2 of the material A had a peak rating of 5 while the mode rating was 4. The overall interclass correlation coefficient of the material A indicated an almost perfect inter-rater agreement, which lends credence to the discussion.

The description below is from the Segment A-2 of material A.

"I'm about to be born... I am about to be born... my body is pushed gradually... being pushed hard... not yet, not yet, a little more..."

This scene, depicted with images and writing, affirmed from a developmental psychological perspective that the mother's womb is contracting, and the baby is about to be born. In the warm but dark, narrow, and isolated environment, the baby is gradually but certainly experiencing the body being pushed. The ever-changing present moment might contain certain prospects of an upcoming change, one's birth, but it can also allude to nervousness, anxiety, or fear. Given the possibility that experiencing might be occurring in the unborn child, the findings suggest that the child might be feeling implicit meanings, as stated in the experiencing Characteristic 5.

For the unborn child that does not have conceptualized language or exophasia, the ongoing everlasting moment might be perceived as fearful in direct reference to the experiencing Characteristic 3. Given that an unborn child has not acquired exophasia from a clinical developmental perspective, ordinary focusing processes of direct references to felt-sense, verbalization, and symbolization are unlikely. At this point, we can only conclude that the results were suggestive of the possible prenatal experiences that were similar to internal working evident in the process of focusing on direct reference to felt-sense. However, the findings mostly supported the notion that experience is likely to be experienced as an organismic and pre-conceptual process enumerated in the experiencing Characteristic 6.

Personality changes in daily clinical practice achieved through focusing are believed to be induced by conceptualization and symbolization through experiencing in which a person is referencing directly to the organismic felt-sense. The findings of this study suggest that experiencing is occurring in the unborn child, at least in the fetal or later periods, and that they are also experiencing direct references. However, it is difficult to think that an unborn child with no exophasia is capable of conceptualizing, led by experience, as stated in the experiencing Characteristic 4. Nevertheless, the prenatal period might be the period for acquiring basic experiences for conceptualization after the acquisition of language.

In Japanese culture, language is believed to have certain mysterious powers known as "Kotodama" by which words can turn into reality. Not only in Japan, but all over the world, talking to the prenatal baby is ubiquitous. Particularly gentle externalized talk to the unborn child may not be comprehended in terms of the meaning of the words but conveyed

as Kotodama, which facilitates a mood of safety. Accumulation of such experiences might become building blocks for conceptualization after the acquisition of language.

The current study identified the possibilities of experiencing by an unborn child, at least in the fetal period, as well as the different modalities of the experience. Studies to date on the experiencing theory have mainly focused on subjects that are capable of using exophasia or conceptualization. As mentioned in the discussion on Characteristics 5 and 6, even children that are considered incapable of conceptualization because they have no exophasia might well be having rich and meaningful pre-conceptual experiences. Hence, the experiencing theory set forward by Gendlin (1961) may be applicable to the unborn child in the fetal period. Additionally, as mentioned in the discussion on the Characteristic 4, verbal communication and physical touch by the mother on their fetus through the womb might be essential because it is possible that the prenatal period is the time of gaining basic experiences for the development of conceptualization and symbolization.

Methodological Limitations and Future Prospects

First and foremost, we would like to remind you that the following suggestions on the methodological limitations are merely in terms of conducting this experimental study and never intended to question or deny the depicted context of the five picture books used, nor the sensitivity of the artists and creators involved in the creation of these picture books.

This study assessed and examined the way of being of unborn children's minds in the germinal, embryonic, and fetal periods, based on clinical, developmental, and kansei psychology by using picture books as the study material. Whereas the study demonstrated various possibilities about the way of being of an unborn child's mind, it also presented multiple topics for future discussion that require further investigation. We believe that continuous future investigation is necessary on the way of being of an unborn child's mind in germinal and embryonic periods using various materials to further refine the findings that we obtained from the current study. We also would like to further analyze and examine the occurrences of experiencing in postnatal infancy and each subsequent developmental stage along with its various relevant modalities to advocate the "experiential psycho-development theory" spurred by the findings of this study as one developmental possibility. It is a clinical and theoretical fact that the refinement of today's "psychoanalytical psychopathology" was achieved by advocating and refining the developmental theory in psychoanalytical clinical practice. Similarly, the adoption and refinement of "experiential psycho-

development theory” may also contribute to the development of diagnostic assessment theory by focusing on clinical practice.

Note

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