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## The Career Pictures of Workers in Their 50s: Considering Adult Career Development Using the Life-Line Method

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In this study, a survey was carried out concerning the external-objective careers and internal-subjective careers of workers in their 50s when looking back at their own careers from their 20s to their 50s; in addition, consideration was given to the actual situation and challenges of adult career development in Japan. As well as gathering quantitative data by means of a normal questionnaire, the survey involved using the life-line method to gather qualitative data, and analyzing it. The results showed that the career pictures envisaged by workers in their 50s formed an S-shape, peaking in their 30s and reaching a trough in their 40s. Moreover, this trend was particularly strong amongst men. The results of this survey suggested that in Japan, in the future, more serious consideration should be given to medium-term career issues in workers' 30s and 40s, and that careers guidance for those in this age range should be enhanced.

### I. Issues of This Paper

What kind of awareness do people have of their own careers? After leaving school, during their subsequent working lives, people experience various peaks and troughs. While there are times when people are steadily promoted and earn large incomes, there are also times when they become embroiled in unexpected events and have to leave their jobs or change careers. People look back and recall that work was fun at that time, or, conversely, was really tough. Such peaks and troughs in their working lives can probably be said to exist in that person's consciousness as a type of picture formed by them. Ultimately, these pictures in each person's consciousness may form the true nature of their career when adults think back and take another look at their lives.

In particular, in adult career development, external-objective careers (represented by high wages, career advancement, and the like) become diverse. As a result, the need to reconstruct internal-subjective careers (such as finding one's work worthwhile and feelings of satisfaction) arises. For example, the term "mid-career crisis" coined by Schein (1978) is well known. A mid-career crisis is a conflict between the external-objective career and the internal-subjective career that people, who have led their working lives without incident in their 20s and 30s, become aware of when they reach their 40s. Understanding the stage at which this conflict begins to arise and the stage at which it escalates, and deciding how to deal (or not deal) with this conflict that has become apparent in the middle of one's career is the most important challenge in adult career development.

Consequently, in thinking about the issue of adult career development, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the external-objective career and the internal-subjective career. Clarifying what actions one can take for mid-career and what kind of attitude one



sitioned it as having a significant impact, stating that the origins of the life-line method are not known, but it can be done by both individuals and groups, enabling them to understand trends in their own careers of which they had not previously been aware, and to gain insights by recalling past events.

In this study, there are three reasons why this technique was used for this survey to consider adult career development.

Firstly, unlike surveys using more general questionnaire methods, in which researchers present questions and seek a rating, the author thought that the life-line method would enable the survey targets' feelings and thoughts about their adult careers to be understood more directly and visually. Secondly, as a method for measuring the internal-subjective career, the questionnaire method is generally used, but it only permits a measurement to be taken at a single point in time. Accordingly, the author believed that using the life-line method would make it possible to grasp the individual's overall "career picture." Thirdly, hitherto, the life-line method has been used primarily in the practical arena. Consequently, there has not been sufficient academic consideration of the life-line method before now. Therefore, the author wished to use the life-line method with a large number of respondents and, by gaining an understanding of trends in the responses, present fundamental research data concerning the life-line method.

Thus, the main objective of this study was to consider adults' internal-subjective careers by measuring the career pictures drawn by the individuals concerned using the life-line method; in this process, the author aimed to present basic research data concerning the life-line method, which is currently used primarily in the practical arenas of career counseling and career consulting. The author believed that it would be possible to use the life-line method to obtain new findings relating to adult career development by linking the individual's overall "career picture" to the external-objective career and making this the focus of analysis.

Figure 1 shows the actual explanation of the life-line method used in this study. In this survey, the explanatory paragraph and examples were presented and survey respondents were asked to draw curves depicting the peaks and troughs of their working lives from when they graduated from school until the present day. Figure 2 shows a number of examples of curves drawn as life-lines by respondents. The curves drawn in this study were converted into numerical values and analyzed.

This study was carried out in January 2009, targeting 2,043 respondents, who were workers in their 50s (1,526 men, 517 women). With regard to the distribution of workers, when compared with surveys such as the National Census and the Employment Status Survey, there were a slightly larger number of respondents in urban areas, respondents working in manufacturing, and men working in managerial positions, but apart from that, the distribution was more or less representative of the country as a whole.

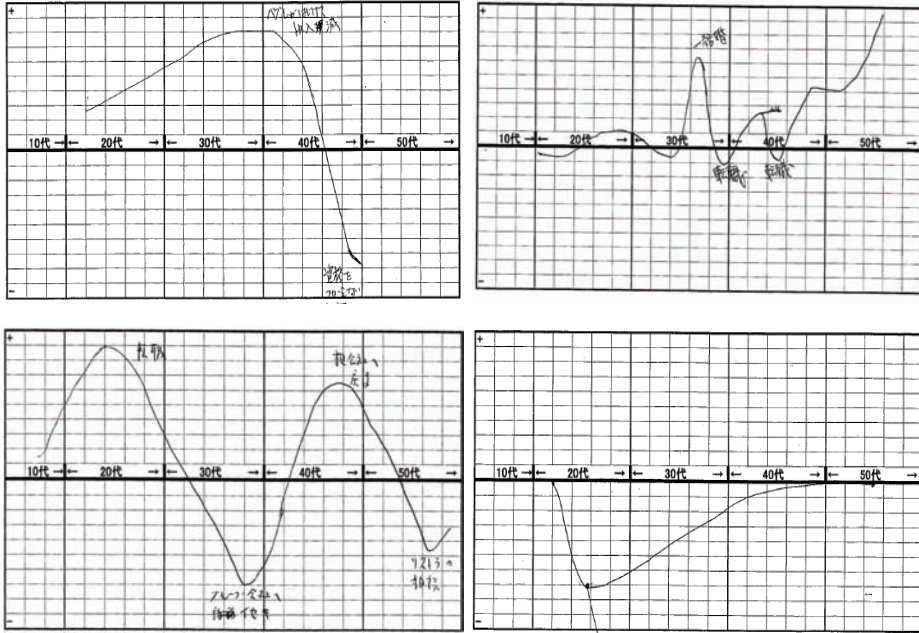


Figure 2. Examples of Responses Using the Life-Line Method in This Survey

## II. Overall Life-Line Trends and Relationship with Each Factor

### 1. Overall Trends

Figure 3 shows the mean values of the data by age bracket obtained after the curves drawn by all survey respondents were converted into numerical values. From Figure 3, the following three observations can be made.

Firstly, with regard to the shape of the curve, it rises from the 20s to the early 30s, peaking in the early 30s before falling to the late 40s, then rising again from the early to the late 50s. Secondly, in general, the lines were mainly drawn above the 0 value. Thirdly, although it is not very clear from Figure 3, as age rose from the early 20s to the late 40s, the standard deviation increased (the standard deviation was 2.87 for the early 20s, 3.18 for the late 20s, 3.49 for the early 30s, 3.78 for the late 30s, 4.14 for the early 40s, 4.50 for the late 40s, 4.39 for the early 50s and 4.29 for the late 50s).

In short, if we summarize the curves drawn by the targets of this survey, who were workers in their 50s looking back on their working lives, we can say that there was a tendency to draw an S-shaped curve with a peak in their early 30s and a trough in their late 40s. However, generally speaking, whereas people usually evaluate their own careers in a positive direction, the shapes of the curves envisaged by each person, which are similar for the younger age ranges, showed greater variations, with the difference becoming larger as age increased.

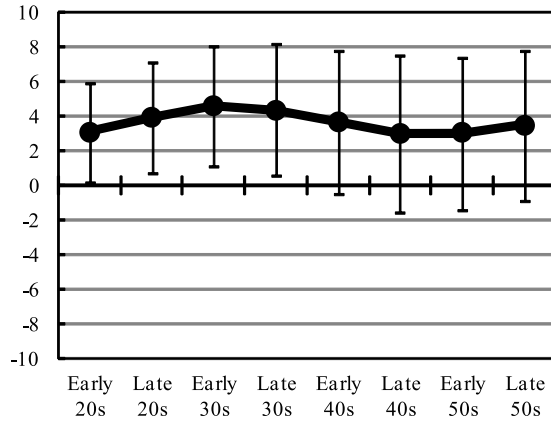


Figure 3. Mean Values and Standard Deviations in the Life-Lines of All Survey Respondents for Each Age Range

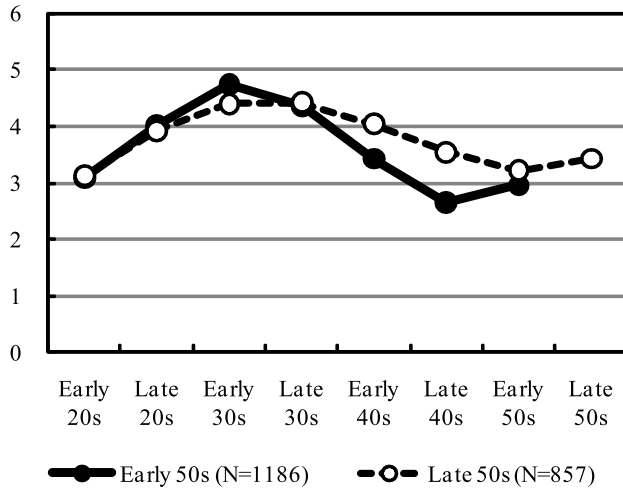


Figure 4. Differences in the Shape of the Life-Line According to the Historical Background (Comparison of Respondents in Their Early 50s and Those in Their Late 50s)

## 2. Relationship with the Historical Background

Naturally, the historical background, primarily the socioeconomic environment in which each person lived, is believed to have an impact on the curves drawn by workers in their 50s. Accordingly, in order to consider the relationship between the curves drawn using the life-line method and the historical background, the author compared the curves drawn by those survey respondents who were in their early 20s in the early 1970s and are therefore in their late 50s now, and those who were in their early 20s in the late 1970s and who are therefore in their early 50s now. The results are shown in Figure 4.

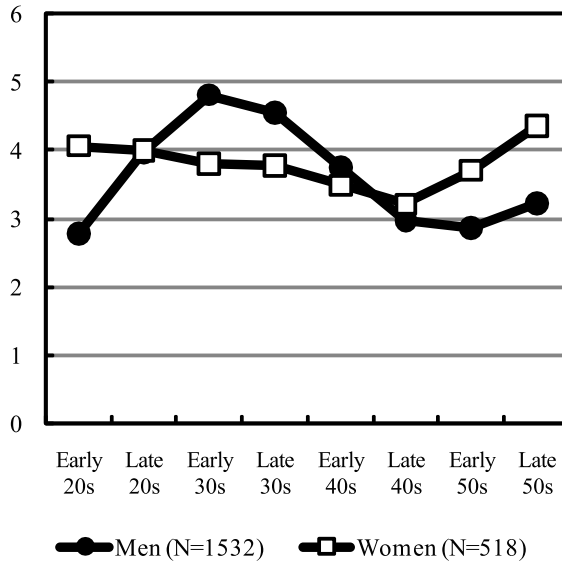


Figure 5. Differences in the Shape of the Life-Line According to Gender (Mean Values for Each Age Bracket)

At the time that the S-curves drawn by respondents in their early 50s were reaching a peak, during their early 30s, Japan was enjoying the boom of the late 1980s (the so-called bubble period), while during their late 40s, when their S-curves demonstrated a trough, Japan was going through the post-bubble recession (also known as the Heisei recession), so their S-curves were more extreme than those of respondents in their late 50s. From these results, at least if we are speaking of the respondents in their 50s who completed this survey and using the S-curves that we have just observed as the basis, we can tentatively surmise that the historical background did have an impact, given the pronounced shape of the curves.

### 3. Differences by Gender

The curves drawn using the life-line method differ according to various factors. Of these, the biggest difference was seen as a result of gender.

Figure 5 shows differences in the shape of the life-line according to gender. Whereas the curves drawn by men showed a clearer S-shape, with a peak in the early 30s and a trough in the late 40s as mentioned above, the shapes of the curves drawn by women differed and were flatter. In particular, the values were higher than those of men in their early 20s, and although they declined thereafter, the switch to rising again from their late 40s was statistically significant.

Behind the results for women is the fact that many women of this age basically begin working in their teens and spend their 20s in the workplace, then spend their 30s and 40s at

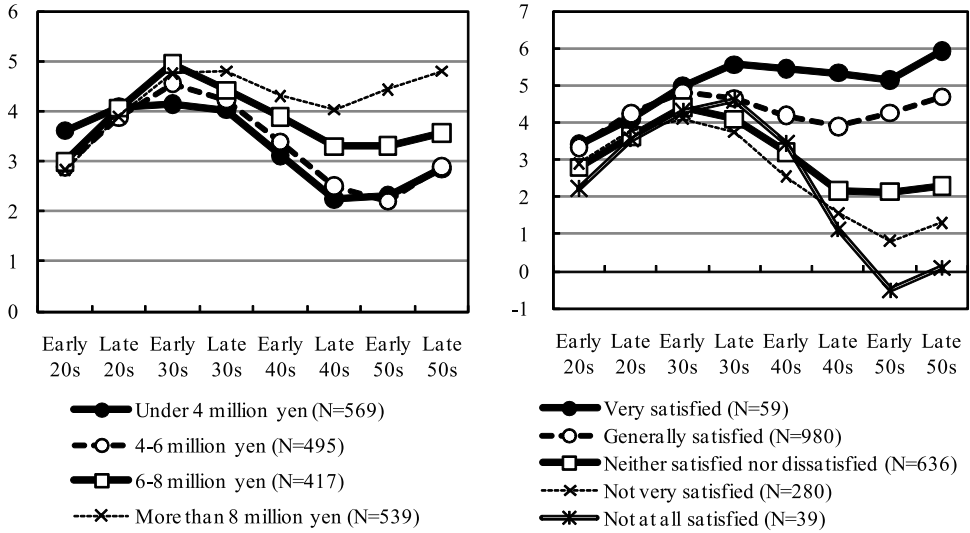


Figure 6. Differences in the Shape of the Life-Line According to Income (Pre-Tax) in the Last Year (Left) and According to Feelings of Satisfaction about “Working Life and Career to Date” (Right) (Mean Values for Each Age Bracket)

home, before returning to work in their 50s. Accordingly, in cases of “women without a period of absence,” who did not become homemakers and continued to work, a peak was observed, albeit not as pronounced as the peaks of the male respondents. The key characteristic is the fact that the peak is seen in the late 20s, at a slightly younger age than seen in the case of male respondents. Despite this result, one point common to the curves drawn by women, including those who continued to work, without a period of absence, was that the rise in the 50s was very pronounced. This point can be considered a characteristic of women in general, irrespective of whether or not they had a period of absence.

#### 4. The Relationship between Annual Income and Feelings of Satisfaction

After gender, the factors with the biggest impact on the curves drawn using the life-line method were annual income and feelings of satisfaction.

Firstly, the left-hand diagram in Figure 6 shows the differences in curve shape according to pre-tax income over the last year. If we put together the statistically significant results, we can see that the value for those responding “Under 4 million yen” in their early 20s is higher than all of the others, but as age increases, a gap opens up, with those responding “More than 8 million yen” > “6-8 million yen” > “4-6 million yen” and “Under 4 million yen.”

Moreover, the right-hand diagram in Figure 6 shows the difference in the shapes of life-lines by feelings of satisfaction about the respondents’ “working life and career to date.”

From the late 30s onwards, a statistically significant gap can be seen. The value for those responding “Very satisfied” for their late 30s onwards is higher than any other response, and as the respondents grew older, the gap in the values increases, with those responding “Generally satisfied” > “Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” > “Not very satisfied” > “Not at all satisfied,” with a clear gap opening up in the 50s.

The two factors of annual income and feelings of satisfaction can perhaps be interpreted as indicators representing the external-objective career and the internal-subjective career respectively, or indicators symbolic thereof. Consequently, the shape of the curves drawn using the life-line method can be said to be strongly influenced by both the external-objective and the internal-objective careers.

However, hitherto, in career psychology, even if one had to prioritize either the external-objective career or the internal-subjective career, there is the question of which to prioritize. There is a strongly-rooted opinion that the general approach, which emphasizes the external career as symbolized by annual income, is the best. The stance of emphasizing the external career is based on the simple reality that people work in order to earn a living for themselves and their families. Conversely, there is an approach which believes that emphasizing the external career is problematic and that it is best to emphasize the internal career, as symbolized by feelings of satisfaction. The stance of emphasizing the internal career is actually often asserted from the specialist standpoint of career psychology.

In order to consider this issue, the responses have been divided into two along the lines of the central value and classified into “high satisfaction – low satisfaction” and “high income – low income,” then the two have been combined to create four groups and the shapes of the life-lines have been compared; this is shown in Figure 7. From Figure 7, we can see that the shape of the life-line does not change, broadly speaking, until the late 30s, then a gap appears from the early 40s. The highest value from the early 40s onwards is seen for the “High satisfaction – high income” group, and there is almost no decrease from the 40s to the 50s. The next-highest is “High satisfaction – low income” group and a gap is observed between this and the next-highest “Low satisfaction – high income” group, particularly from the 50s. Looking at the situation just from the results of this study, we can surmise that the internal-subjective career as represented by “feelings of satisfaction” has a more positive impact on evaluations of one’s own working life than the external-objective career as represented by “annual income.”

In addition, a wide-ranging correlation was indicated between the external-objective career of respondents and the curve of the life-line, and this is introduced below as a list of points:

- (i) Those who entered their company as new graduates demonstrated higher values from their late 20s to their early 30s than those who entered their company mid-stream.
- (ii) With regard to feelings of satisfaction concerning the respondent’s first workplace, there is a close relationship with the value for their 20s, and those with markedly



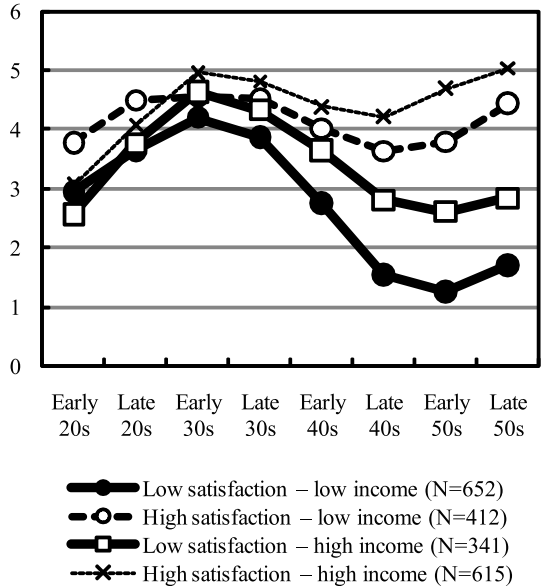


Figure 7. Differences in the Shape of the Life-Line According to the Four Groups Relating to Feelings of Satisfaction and Income (Mean Values for Each Age Bracket)

high values for their feelings of satisfaction overall demonstrated high values for their 20s. The correlation became weaker from their 30s onwards.

- (iii) Those with experience of changing jobs had values that were low for their late 20s and early 30s. Moreover, the values for those with no period of unemployment or other period of absence were higher across all age brackets.

Moreover, the following trends were seen with regard to the correlation with the attributes of their current workplace.

The values were high from the 40s to the 50s, without any significant decline in the 40s, for

- (i) those working in such industrial sectors as the “finance and insurance,” “medicine and welfare,” “education and learning support,” and “civil service”;
- (ii) those engaged in “managerial jobs” and “specialist and technical jobs”;
- (iii) those working for companies with “more than 1,000 people”;
- (iv) those whose annual income is in the range “more than 8 million yen” and “6 - 8 million yen.”

### III. Factors with an Impact on Life-Line Rating Scale Values

Various factors are related to the rating scale values for each age bracket using the

Table 1. Factors with an Impact on Rating Scale Values in Each Age Bracket  
(Results of Multiple Regression Analysis)

	Early 20s	Late 20s	Early 30s	Late 30s	Early 40s	Late 40s	Early 50s	Late 50s
Gender (1=men, 2=women)	.096		<b><u>-.110</u></b>	<b><u>-.108</u></b>		.085	<b><u>.167</u></b>	<b><u>.193</u></b>
Age (1=early 50s, 2=late 50s)					.078	.086		
Age at which first entered workplace	-.075							
Feelings of satisfaction about future prospects and stability in first job	<b><u>.163</u></b>	<b><u>.131</u></b>				-.072		
Feelings of satisfaction about working conditions in first job	.084			.076				
Feelings of satisfaction about contents of work in first job	.085		.064				-.081	
Feelings of satisfaction about workplace relationships in first job		.075						
Pre-tax income in the last year	-.072	<b><u>.107</u></b>				<b><u>.161</u></b>	<b><u>.235</u></b>	<b><u>.204</u></b>
Current employment "specialist/technical job"	.073							
Current employment "clerical job"	.050							
Current employment "sales-related job"			.061	<b><u>.120</u></b>				<b><u>-.113</u></b>
Current employment "manufacturing/processing/construction/light labor"				-.051	-.078			-.067
Industrial sector of current job "manufacturing"	-.059							
Industrial sector of current job "electricity/gas/thermal supply/water utility"	-.052							
Size of current company							.055	
Do you feel that your own professional skills would be acceptable at other companies?		.052						
Life is determined by luck		.051						
Life is determined by ability			.096	.057	.083		.054	
Life is determined by efforts						.054		<b><u>.125</u></b>
Feelings of satisfaction about working life and career				.057	<b><u>.108</u></b>	<b><u>.162</u></b>	<b><u>.262</u></b>	<b><u>.229</u></b>
Marital status (1: single, 2: married)					.067			.073
Experience of changing jobs (1: no, 2: yes)							<b><u>.122</u></b>	<b><u>.128</u></b>
Experience of unemployment or periods of absence from work (1: no, 2: yes)		<b><u>-.128</u></b>	-.050					
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.128	.047	.030	.040	.041	.072	.157	.186

Note: Multiple regression analysis using the stepwise method with dummy variables. Only significant coefficients at 5% standard are recorded. Significant coefficients at 1% standard are shaded, and coefficients whose absolute values are in the top 3 for each age bracket are underlined in bold.

life-line method. The author used the multivariate analysis method to give close consideration to the question of which factors have a major impact on these values. More specifically, multiple regression analysis was carried out, designating the rating scale values for each age bracket using the life-line method as explained variables, and each factor taken up in this chapter as an explanatory variable. With the analytical objective of narrowing down the factors that have a major impact on the rating scale values for each age bracket, the stepwise method was used for the multiple regression analysis. Table 1 shows the tabulated results

for statistically significant factors only.

The results showed that the factor with the biggest impact on values for respondents' 20s was feelings of satisfaction in relation to "future prospects and stability" in their first job. Moreover, in the late 20s, "experience of unemployment or periods of absence from work" was another factor that had a large impact. When the life-line method was used to draw a curve, whether or not the respondent was satisfied about the future prospects and stability of their first workplace had a particularly large impact on values for their 20s; in addition, we can see that respondents' evaluation of their late 20s differed greatly between those with experience of unemployment or other periods of absence from work and those without.

Gender was the factor that had the biggest impact on values for respondents' 30s. In this age bracket, there were not many other factors that had a large coefficient, and when respondents drew curves using the life-line method, there was a large gap between men and women in their 30s. Overall, the values for men were higher, while the values for women were low. This is because, for various reasons, including marriage, childbirth and child-rearing, women of this age cannot find a way of working that satisfies them sufficiently, so compared with men, women evaluate the values for their 30s as being relatively low. Moreover, it is difficult to interpret, but where the current job of the survey respondent in their 50s is "sales," the value for their late 30s was high. Those in their 50s working in sales can be said to have a tendency to look back on their 30s as the peak of their career.

Concerning respondents' 40s, the factor with the biggest impact on values for their early 40s was "feelings of satisfaction about working life and career." In addition, in their late 40s, "pre-tax income in the last year" was a factor that had a major impact. We can see that these two factors have a strong impact, with a high coefficient. Another characteristic is that, in respondents' 40s, factors other than these two only had a small impact.

In respondents' 50s, "feelings of satisfaction about working life and career" and "pre-tax income in the last year" were factors that both had quite a considerable impact. In addition, gender also had a major impact. One characteristic of respondents' 50s is that, in contrast to their 30s, the values for women were higher than those for men. One deeply interesting result is that the rating scale values for respondents in their 50s were high in both cases amongst respondents with experience of changing jobs. As a result of conducting detailed analysis, we can see that the share was high for those with experience of changing jobs who said that their work experience had been in "various fields." Moreover, in relation to this, there were many who answered that their own vocational skills would be acceptable at other companies as well. If we put these results together, we can interpret this to mean that those who have experience of changing jobs feel that they can be active in various fields, and that having that feeling has a positive impact on rating scale values for their 50s, if we control for the influence of various factors.

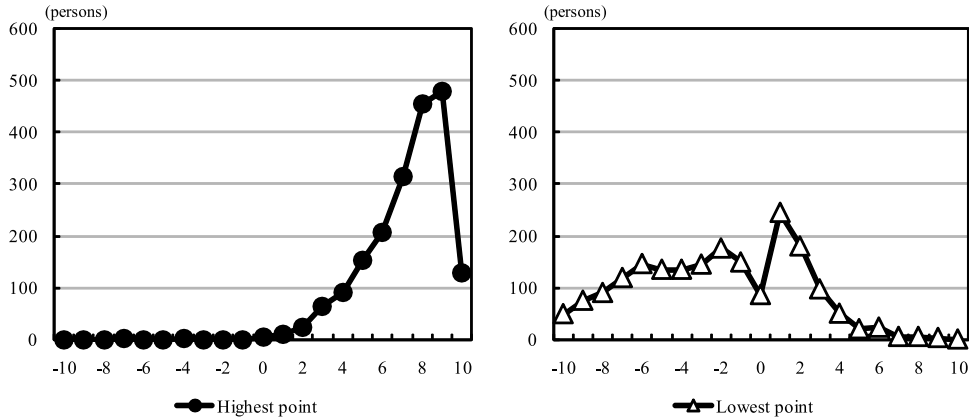


Figure 8. Mean Rating Scale Values for Highest Points (Peaks) and Lowest Points (Troughs) in Curves Drawn by Respondents

#### IV. Adult Career Development and What Is Required to Support This

As is clear from the results so far, there are three points that the author would particularly like to emphasize in relation to the peaks and troughs in the curves drawn using the life-line method.

Firstly, of the curves obtained from the results provided by the respondents, who were workers in their 50s, the highest point does not vary particularly according to the respondent, but the lowest point differs considerably depending on the respondent. As shown in Figure 8, most respondents rated their highest point as eight or nine, and the distribution is not that large. On the other hand, there is considerable variation in the lowest point, according to the respondent. One of the interpretations of this diagram is that there is not much difference between the peaks when people depict their careers, but we can say that people's evaluation of their troughs differs completely between each person. Consequently, for that matter, the career picture created by workers in their 50s looking back over their working lives can be said to be characterized by how deep the troughs were; in other words, how low the lowest point was.

Secondly, career pictures differ considerably according to whether the highest point or the lowest point comes later, from an age perspective. In this survey, if we take the example of annual income and feelings of satisfaction, with regard to which the biggest differences were seen, as shown in Figure 9, the higher the annual income and the higher the feelings of satisfaction, the greater the tendency for the age at which the highest point was experienced to be later than the age at which the lowest point was experienced. Conversely, the lower the annual income and the lower the feelings of satisfaction, the greater the tendency for the age at which the highest point was experienced to be earlier than the age at

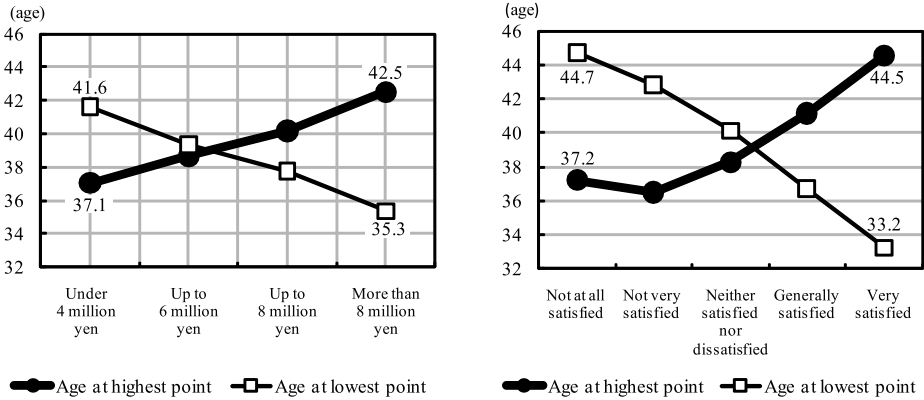


Figure 9. Age at Which the Highest and Lowest Points Are Experienced According to Annual Income (Left) and Feelings of Satisfaction (Right)

which the lowest point was experienced. To put it another way, respondents who depicted a career in which the highest point was later, can be said to have a higher annual income and greater feelings of satisfaction.

If we put these two points together, there are several patterns in the pictures of careers depicted by the respondents, but speaking generally, we can say that it is possible to gain a general understanding of a person’s career according to how deep a person’s career trough (lowest point) was, and whether their lowest point comes before or after their career peak (highest point). Consequently, in considering career development support, the key questions are (i) how to make their career trough shallow and how to ensure they overcome it quickly; and (ii) how to help them create a situation in which they experience their career trough at a young age and their career peak later in life.

Thirdly, the left-hand diagram in Figure 10 shows differences in the shape of the life-line according to the respondent’s own evaluation of their professional skills. With regard to the self-evaluation of respondents’ own professional skills, the values for the late 40s onwards were the highest for respondents who thought that, at present, their own professional skills “would be acceptable” at other companies. The values were also high for the early and late 30s for respondents who thought that their skills “would be acceptable to some extent.” Incidentally, the values were lowest in the case of respondents who thought that their skills “would not really be acceptable” in all age brackets. Furthermore, the right-hand diagram in Figure 10 shows differences in the shape of the life-line based on the question “How do you think your life so far has been determined?,” focusing on the degree to which the response “It is determined by the efforts of the individual,” regarding which a pronounced, statistically significant gap was observed. As shown in the right-hand diagram in Figure 10, the highest value was for those who responded “Applicable to a considerable degree,” and there was only a small drop in their 40s. In contrast, the overall rating scale

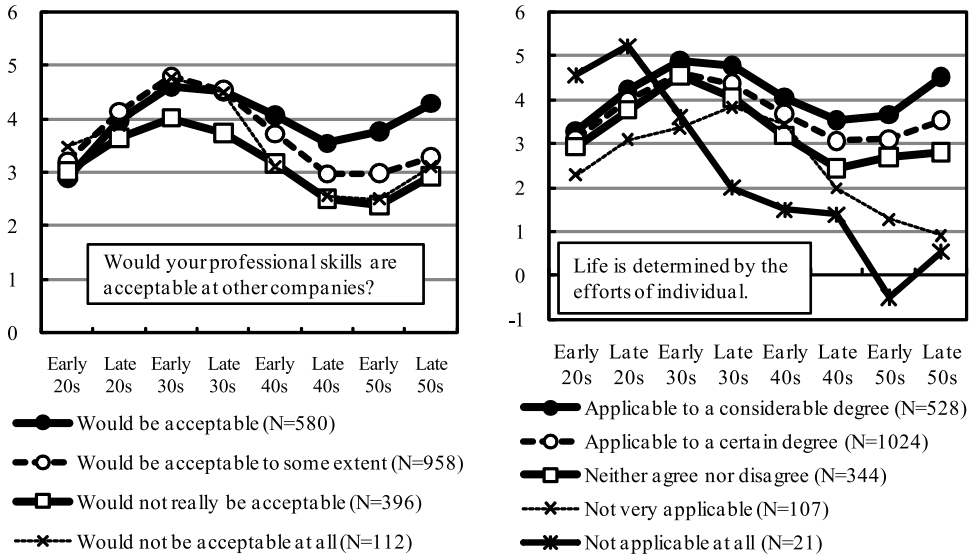


Figure 10. Differences in the Shape of the Life-Line According to Respondent’s Evaluation of Their Own Professional Skills (Left) and According to Whether They Feel That Their Life to Date Has Been “Determined by the Efforts of the Individual” (Right)

value was low in the case of those who responded “Not very applicable” and “Not applicable at all.” The results were particularly noteworthy in the case of the 21 people who selected “Not applicable at all,” that is to say, those who do not believe that one’s life is determined by the efforts of the individual, and their values were significantly lower than those of the others.

### V. Suggestions for Career Support That Can Be Derived from This Study

From the results of the analysis of this study, we can perhaps glean the following three suggestions about what is required for career development.

Firstly, the picture of their own careers depicted by workers in their 50s forms an S-shape, with a peak in their 30s and a trough in their 40s. This tendency was particularly strong amongst men. From the curves drawn by the respondents, the existence of a “mid-career crisis,” which has been pointed out for some time in adult career development, was confirmed once more. In this, the historical period had an impact, albeit only slightly. If the peak coincided with the bubble period, the rating scale value for that point was higher, while the rating scale value of those whose trough coincided with the recession was lower. However, on the whole, rather than the impact of the historical period, it is actually the external-objective career symbolized by annual income and the internal-objective career

symbolized by feelings of satisfaction that can be said to have a larger impact on the individual's career picture. This result can be said to demonstrate once more the necessity of achieving a good balance in considering both the external-objective career and the internal-objective career. However, if we also think about the reality of people's mid-career situation, it is necessary to consider the fact that the external-objective career is not always formed in the way that the individual concerned would desire. At the end of the day, mid-career problems converge with the problem of how to reorganize one's internal-subjective career if one realizes that one will not be able to follow the external-objective career that one desires in one's 30s and 40s. Consequently, as shown in Figure 7 of this paper, rather than a high income, it was those with high feelings of satisfaction who had the higher rating scale values for the curves drawn using the life-line method. The career challenge after experiencing the trough in one's 40s is how to enhance one's internal-subjective career; in other words, it is a question of how to feel satisfied with one's career.

Secondly, in the results of the analysis in this paper, there were major differences in the shape of the curve according to gender. Generally speaking, the curves of men formed a neat S-shape, with a peak in their 30s and a trough in their 40s, whereas the curves of the female respondents gradually declined after a high evaluation in their 20s, before taking an upward turn again from their late 40s through to their 50s. The main factor behind this is the nature of women's work in Japan, where they are compelled to leave the workplace in their 30s due to childbirth and child-rearing, returning to work again in their 40s. Moreover, this dislocation of women's careers in their 30s is a problem that requires further improvements in the future. However, this kind of career for women can provide suggestions for men. Women's careers are dislocated in a visible way by childbirth and child-rearing. Consequently, it is easy to see that, in their career development, it is necessary for them to update their professional skills several times. In contrast, we can see that, as long as they do not perceive any major changes in their working lives in their 30s and 40s, men's careers steadily develop with a focus on a peak in their 30s. In fact, there is a type of career peak out in their 30s, after which they enter a downward phase. Before they know it, they have reached a career trough, and a considerable amount of energy is required to achieve career resurgence and reconstruction. It is necessary to emphasize that men also experience a major inflection point in their careers in their 30s, so there is a need to update their own professional skills in some form.

Thirdly, the curves drawn using the life-line method in this survey are symbolized by the fact that each person's characteristics are expressed by the lowest point, which forms a trough. The degree to which the respondent could make their own career trough shallow had a major impact on the picture that the respondent envisaged of their career when looking back in their 50s. In order to overcome the trough period, it is necessary to undertake advance preparations from the career peak out stage during an individual's 30s. In particular, acquiring professional skills that are acceptable at other companies as well has a strong link to the shape of the curve from an individual's 40s onwards, and this also seemed to be re-

lated to an individual's sense that their life is determined by their own efforts. The results of this study suggest that, if it is possible to push out the career peak that one perceives to a later point, while sustaining this awareness, one can overcome one's career trough in one's 40s. However, there may well be cases in which it is not possible to overcome this career trough through the efforts of the individual alone. If one is thinking about the career development of mid-career employees within the company, it is necessary to create opportunities to promote insights among individuals after they pass their peak in their 30s, up to entering the trough in their 40s. Moreover, if there are no such opportunities within the company, it will be necessary to consider a system in which workers can receive some kind of public support, as required.

In any event, the career pictures of workers in their 50s suggest that what is actually more important in career development support is the mid-career stage in their 30s and 40s. During the last decade, career development support for young people, as symbolized by so-called "freeters" (job-hopping part-timers) and NEETs (the abbreviation for "not in education, employment or training"), has been the focus of attention in Japan. Of course, even now, it is not the case that the importance of this has decreased. However, as a result, the issue of the mid-stream careers of those in their 30s and 40s and support for workers at this point has been neglected, comparatively speaking. We can say that the peaks and troughs depicted in the curves drawn using the life-line method in this study have highlighted once more the challenge of mid-stream careers.

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