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**EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT AS THE BASIS OF TRUST  
AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP:  
PSYCHOLOGICAL, INDIGENOUS AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS**

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The word *trust* is an everyday term that has historical and socio-cultural antecedents. Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1976) notes that it is of Scandinavian origin and defines it as an "*assured reliance on some person or thing; a confident dependence on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.*" Although the meaning of trust varies as a function of culture, within a given culture people use the term in the same way since there are consensual agreements on what or whom to trust. However, across academic disciplines and cultures, there is great variation on both the conceptualization and categorical boundaries of trust and its related concepts (Bhattacharya, Devinney, & Pillutla, 1998; Hardin, 2002; Jones & George, 1998; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998; Yamagishi, 2000; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). This variation suggests that the conceptual umbrella that is commonly used to define and study trust may be inappropriate. Beyond the Western definition, it is important to examine how other cultures understand, interpret and use the concept.

A way to resolve this variation due to lack of consensual agreement and clarity is to examine trust in terms of how people use it and analyze it indigenously. We need to study how and in which contexts people use the term trust in everyday life. Because trust has been operationalized for experimental research, especially in the prisoner's dilemma model, the current literature is limited in shedding light on the meaning and use of the concept. The first problem is that there may be qualitative differences between how researchers conceptualize and study "trust" and how it is used in everyday life. Second, we need to distinguish between what is observed from what is inferred.

When a person discloses a secret to a friend, then it can be said that the person trusts his friend and that is why he has confided in her. The person may trust his friend based on what is observed (i.e., her behavior)

or what is inferred (i.e., her inner psychological state of mind). Although the person trusts his friend based on her previous behavior, he is confiding in her because he believes that she is a trustworthy person. In other words, we infer characteristics of a person as being trustworthy or untrustworthy based on past behavior and use her present behavior to confirm or disconfirm this belief. People use behavioral information to infer the inner state of another person, with the belief that the inner mind is controlling and directing behavior. This has been found in naive psychology (Kashima, McKintyre, & Clifford, 1998; Lillard, 1998; Wellman, 1990; Wertsch, 1998). People do not believe that there is behavior void of mind, except in unintended consequences such as accidents.

The problem in psychology has been to study a person's behavior, excluding the concept of agency, intention, meaning, and context (Bandura, 1997; Kim, 2000). Psychologists studied people in a laboratory setting, examining their response to an experimental stimulus. They infer subjects' mental state based on the observed response. We do not ask the subjects to articulate their inner state or the reason why they chose to take a particular course of action. In these experimental situations, we deny agency of the subject in controlling and directing their actions. Researchers interpret their actions based on a physical or biological science model. In other words, our behavior is a reaction to a given stimulus or driven by our biological instincts; hence we are not in control of our actions.

When we trust a machine, such as a computer, we trust that it will produce a given outcome (i.e., it is outcome based). We do not have to infer intention or agency since the outcome is based on mechanical cause and effect. We may not know the actual operations, but as long as the predicted outcome occurs, we trust the machine. Trust of machines is outcome based and knowledge based. Psychology, which has adopted the natural sciences model, studies human beings with the outcome-based model, as if we are machines (Kim, 1999). Existing studies of trust examine behavioral predictability, consistency and expectancy while ignoring the concept of agency (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998).

Unlike machines, without the concept of agency, there cannot be a concept of control, intention or responsibility. Without the concepts of control, intention or responsibility, there cannot be trust of people. Human behavior cannot be understood in terms of mechanical or biological cause and effect; we need to include the concept of agency, intention and mean-

ing into the equation (Bandura, 1997; Kim, 2000). We infer inner states of others; believe that they have intentions, and that they choose a particular course of action to achieve a desired outcome. We assume personal agency when we choose a course of action. We assume the agency of others when we observe their behavior.

When we trust other people, we assume that they have control over themselves, that they can produce a desired action, and that they will be responsible for their actions. Although we make exceptions for those who are not able to control themselves (such as young children or disabled), we assume that behavior is an outward manifestation of inner intention and agency and we use behavior to verify a person's intention. The concept of trust includes the idea of intended actions, that they had control over their actions and that they will be responsible for their future actions.

Researchers used the prisoner's dilemma model as a way of understanding trust. It focuses on the individual level, on situations when a person's interest is often in conflict with another person. As such, Hardin (2002) defines trust as "encapsulated interest." In other words, trust is individual-based and it functions to serve the self-centered interests of individuals. Second, the definition is outcome-based: What is in the best interest of one person can be defined in terms of the outcome that it provides to the person. Since trust is outcome based, the definition is circular and cannot avoid the problem of tautology. Second, the prisoner's dilemma model focuses on interactions among strangers, in which the interest of one person may be in conflict with another. Third, in the above experimental studies, interactions are short-term and individuals are unable to develop a long-term relationship based on face-to-face interactions. These studies conducted in laboratory settings are artificial and do not shed much light onto the development of trust in long-term relationships.

In Japan, Yamagishi (2000) has found people trust in-group members and do not trust out-group members. Even though it may be in their interest to develop the necessary skills in selecting those out-group members to trust and work with them, Japanese participants choose to work with in-group members who they trust. He has labelled such behaviors as examples of assurance-based security and not as trust. Although the in-group members provide assurance-based security, it is the out-group members who could provide new opportunities to benefit them. He suggests that such a closed system is a problem for Japanese society and calls for

emancipation from the assurance-based relationship and in developing the necessary social intelligence to function in an open society. He suggests that Japanese should follow the more advanced Western individualistic societies. This description of trust fails to provide a relational understanding of trust by affirming individualistic bias. Such an assessment affirms the individualistic view that is derived from the prisoner's dilemma model. This conclusion is reached because he imposes the Western and the social evolutionary approach to the results. Such an external imposition misrepresents the long-term relationship based trust and creates a distorted understanding of East Asian societies based on fragmented results. Indigenous or cultural psychological understanding is necessary to correct the distortion and provide a more accurate understanding of relational-based trust.

### Indigenous and Cultural Psychology Approach

Culture is an *emergent* property of individuals and groups interacting with their natural and human environment (Kim, 2000). Culture can be defined as "*a rubric of patterned variables*" (Kim, 2000). To use an analogy, painters use different colors to create their work of art. The different colors are like the variables that operate within a particular culture. These colors are used to create certain forms and patterns (such as a person, house, or tree). These patterns are then combined into a whole to provide an overall *gestalt* and coherence. The quality of a painting cannot be reduced to its parts, such as wavelengths of light. "*Culture is the collective utilization of natural and human resources to achieve desired outcomes*" (Kim, Park & Park, 2000).

Differences in cultures exist because we have different collective goals, and we utilize different methods and resources to realize these goals. We attach different meaning and values to them. In the West, self-actualization, personal achievement, and personal gratification are emphasized. People emphasize a rational individual's rights to freely choose, define, and search for self-fulfillment (Kim, 1994). The nature of the personal goal can vary from one individual to another and can range from hedonistic fulfillment to self-actualization. Individual rights collectively guarantee this freedom of choice. At the interpersonal level, individuals are considered to be discrete, autonomous, self-sufficient, and respectful of the rights

of others. From a societal point of view, individuals are considered to be abstract and universal entities. Their status and roles are not ascribed or predetermined, but defined by their personal achievements and preferences. They interact with others using mutually agreed upon principles (e.g., equality, equity, non-interference, and detachability), or through mutually established contracts. Individuals with similar goals are brought together into a group and they remain with the group as long as it satisfies their interest. Laws and regulations are institutionalized to protect individual rights; everyone is able to assert their rights through the legal system. Elected officials govern a society whose role is to protect individual rights and the viability of public institutions. Individual rights are of prime importance, and collective welfare and social harmony are considered secondary.

In Korea, however, family harmony and collective welfare are the most important values and effort and proxy control are used to attain their goals (Kim, 2001a; Park & Kim, 2003). Although the meaning of effort is often negative in the West, suggesting a lack of ability (Bandura, 1997), in Korea it has positive meanings. Koreans believe that ability is acquired through effort and a diligent and hard-working person is considered moral, ethical and a valued member of a group (Kim & Park, 2000; Park & Kim, 2000). As such, Korean students and adults are able to work hard, excel in school and the workplace to attain a high level of achievement (Kim, 1998; Kim & Park, 2000; Park & Kim, 2000).

### **East Asian Perspective: The Role of Confucianism**

Western cultures emphasize the rational, thinking, inner self. This is portrayed by famous quotes by Socrates ("Know thyself"), Shakespeare ("To be or not to be, that is the question") and Descartes ("I think, therefore I am"). The knowing, thinking and choosing self is the core of Western epistemology. In contrast, the Korean word for human being is *ingan*, which can be translated literally as "human between." It is the same Chinese character that is also used in China and Japan. In other words, it is not what happens within an individual that makes him or her human, but what happens between individuals that is important (Kim, 2001a). For example, Mencius stated that: "*If you see a child drowning and you don't feel compassion, you are not human being.*" It is compassion that helps us to relate to the child and propels us to take the necessary risks to save the

child. For this reason, interpersonal emotions and not physiology or biology is viewed as the basis of human psychology. Human essence is basically relational and it can be defined in terms of emotions that people feel for one another. In other words, the essence of self in East Asia can be stated as "I *feel*, therefore I am" (Kim, 2001a). Confucianism provides the philosophical basis for articulating and promoting the relational view of self, society and trust.

### **Confucianism**

Confucius (551-479 BC) saw the universe and all living things in it as a manifestation of a unifying force called the *Doe* (translated as the Truth, Unity, or the Way). *Doe* constitutes the very essence, basis, and unit of life that perpetuates order, goodness, and righteousness (Lew, 1977). It manifests itself in the harmonious opposition of *yin* ("feminine, gentle") and *yang* ("masculine, strong"), and in humans through *de* ("virtue"). Virtue is a gift received from Heaven (Lew, 1977). It is through Virtue that a person is able to know the Heavenly Truth and it is the "*locus ubere Heaven and I meef*" (Lew, 1977, p. 154). Virtue can be realized through self-cultivation. It provides the fundamental source of insight and strength to rule peacefully and harmoniously within oneself, one's family, one's nation, and the world.

There are two inter-related aspects of virtue: *in* ("Human-heartedness") and *ui* ("Rightness"). The basis of individual and humanity is the Human-heartedness. Human-heartedness is essentially relational and it involves loving, sacrificing and taking care of others. Individuals are born with Human-heartedness and experience Human-heartedness through the sacrifice and devotion of their parents. Figure 1 outlines the Confucian model of development in which the Human-heartedness is the essence and basis of the self (See Figure 1).

The second concept, *ui* ("rightness"), notes that an individual is born into a particular family with a particular status. Rightness articulates that individuals must perform and fulfil their duties as defined by their particular status and role. Confucius considered family and society to be hierarchically ordered, necessitating that everyone fulfil their duties: "*Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son*" (Analects, XII, 11). Fulfilling one's given role as a father, mother, child, elder, teacher, or politician is considered a moral imperative and not a

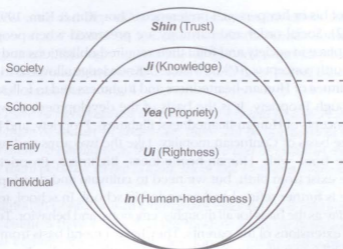


Figure 1: Confucian conception of self, family and society.

matter of personal choice.

Human-heartedness and Rightness are considered two sides of the same coin. For example, a father fulfils his duties because he loves his son, and he loves his son because he is the father. Through Human-heartedness and Rightness, individual family members are linked together. The primary relationship is the parent-child relationship as defined by *byodoe* ("filial piety"). Sacrificing for the children and being filial to parents is not a matter of a personal choice but a moral imperative. Relationships between parent and children (and also between spouses and among siblings) are not based on equality, but on Human-heartedness and Rightness. Parents demand love, reverence, and respect from children and children expect love, wisdom, and benevolence from parents. The parent-child relationship involves more than just two individuals. Parents represent ancestors and the past and children represent the progeny and future.

Confucius considered society to be socially ordered and that each person has *beun* ("portion or place") in life. Each *beun* had attached roles and duties, and each person must fulfil these roles and duties. Duties and obligations of each *beun* are prescribed by *yea* ("propriety"). Propriety articulates expectations, duties, and behavior of each individual according to his or her status and role. For example, *chemyon* ("social face") need to be maintained by a person of social stature defined by his or status,



regardless of his or her personal preference (Choi, Kim & Kim, 1997; Choi & Lee, 2002). Social order and harmony are preserved when people observe their place in society and fulfil their required obligations and duties.

The fourth concept is *ji* ("knowledge"). Knowledge allows us to understand the virtues of Human-heartedness and Rightness and to follow these virtues through Propriety. It is the basis of the development of wisdom. The four concepts of Human-heartedness, Rightness, Propriety, and Knowledge are the basis of Confucian morality. Like the two arms and two legs that we are born with, Human-heartedness, Rightness, Propriety, and Knowledge exist from birth, but we need to cultivate and develop them. Knowledge is further refined and extended in school. In school, teachers affirm morality as the basis for all thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Teachers are seen as extensions of the parents. They have a moral basis from which to provide children with education in order to further develop Knowledge.

Finally, as children mature they need to interact with a wider range of people, including strangers. As such, they need to develop *shin* ("trust"). Trust is a relational concept in Confucianism and it is based on and an extension of Human-heartedness, Rightness, Propriety and Knowledge. It is an important concept in society that allows individuals to function and contribute to society.

Trust is an important concept in society and for governance. For a ruler, earning the trust of the people is considered essential. When Tzu-kung asked Confucius about government, he answered as follows:

Confucius: *Give them enough food, give them enough arms, and the common people will have trust in you.*

Tsu-kung: *If one had to give up one of these three, which should one give up first?*

Confucius: *Give up arms.*

Tzu-kung: *If one had to give up one of the remaining two, which should one give up first?*

Confucius: *Give up food. Death has always been with us since the beginning of time, but when there is no trust, the common people will have nothing to stand on.*

For Confucius trust is the essential ingredient in governing people and society. It is morality and relational-based. Confucius considered all individuals to be linked to others in a web of interrelatedness. The fundamental principle for governing relationships among individuals, family, soci-

ety, the world, and beyond is best articulated in his piece entitled "Righteousness in the Heart" (in a chapter called the *Great Learning*, in *The Book of Rites*). Although he considered individual morality to be central, the individual is still situated in a web of interpersonal and social relationships. He states that:

*If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in character,  
 If there be beauty in character, there will be harmony in the home.  
 If there be harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.  
 If there be order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.*

Although Confucianism emphasizes emotions and relationships, Confucian cultures have evolved in the modern era from the traditional agricultural communities to rapidly developing industrialized nations. Many people think that East Asian societies have simply Westernized, but this is not the case. Although some aspects of Western cultures have been adopted, the more core value of interpersonal relatedness and emotional attachment remain strong. The emphasis has been transformed from the past to future orientation (Kim, 2001a) (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Transformation of Confucian Values*

<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Agricultural	Industrial, Informational
Past-oriented	Future-oriented
Extended-family	Nuclear family
Ancestor	Children
Status quo	Change
Conservatism	Progress
Harmony with nature	Control environment
Formalism	Pragmatism
Cooperation	Competition
Wisdom	Analytical knowledge
Sex differentiation	Equality

With modernization, the focus has changed from status quo, conservatism, and harmony with nature to change, progress, and controlling the environment. Traditionally, learning has been linked to Confucian classics and literature. Currently, success is defined not in terms of accumulation of wisdom or learning the Confucian classics, but acquiring scientific and technological knowledge obtained through formal education. The primary role of the parents has shifted from taking care of their parents to educating their children in a highly competitive world. Traditionally, women did not receive a formal education, but currently both men and women have to be educated to succeed and to raise their children. Even with modernization, maintaining the strong interpersonal relationship is the basis of self, family, and society (Choi & Choi, 2001; Choi, Han, & Kim, 2001; Choi & Kim, 1999a; Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2000). Koreans believe that formation of special and close relationships is the basis of interpersonal trust (Choi, 2000; Kim, Kim & Choi, 2002).

The ultimate goal of Confucianism is to promote a nation and society where people run their own lives peacefully and unselfishly in the state of harmony with others. According to Confucianism, to consider concerns and interests of others as if they were of one's own is prerequisite for development of trust between individuals and underlies the formation of intimate and harmonious relationships (Kum, 1998; Kim, 2000; Cho, 1998; Choi & Kim, 2001, 2003; Choi & Yu, 2002). In Confucianism, trust develops by overcoming one's own selfishness and taking care of others. The problem, however, is that it is often difficult to bring selfishness under one's own control. The formation of trust in interpersonal relationships needs to conform to the rule of reciprocity in which both persons in a dyad take care of each other. The perspective is not a short-term tit-for-tat exchange, but a long term perspective that is role-based and duty-based (Helgesen & Kim, 2002; Kim, 1998, 2001b).

Even in organizational settings, the long-term relational perspective has been verified (Kim, 1998; Kim & Lee, 2000). In an open-ended survey, Kim and Lee (2000) asked Korean employees: "What kind of superior is trustworthy?" The responses indicate that trustworthy bosses are those who have personal and benevolent concerns and considerations for their subordinates. Those superiors who maintain strong in-group solidarity and emotional bonds are considered most trustworthy. This strong in-group solidarity, personalized relationship and long-term commitment and sac-

rifice are responsible for the phenomenal economic growth in Korean companies (Kim, 1998).

Although strong in-group solidarity, personalized relationship and long-term commitment have been useful in maintaining family harmony, educational achievement, and economic growth, such a success has not transformed societal trust. In Korea, the level of trust is very low for public institutions, especially political institutions (Kim, Helgesen & Ahn, 2002). Less than 10% of Korean respondents trust the National Assembly and politicians. Similarly, a very low number of people trust public institutions, such as the educational and legal system. It is due to persistent corruption, nepotism, regionalism and factionalism that have become a major social problem in Korea (Kim, 1988, 2001b). The problem, however, is that East Asian societies have focused on harmonious family and have not placed enough interest and effort in promoting a harmonious society. Up until recently, East Asian societies were either colonized or ruled by kings or dictators. In modern East Asia, it is possible to develop a civil society that can promote societal harmony based on relational and long-term values, but it will take the involvement of all citizens to create a viable, effective, and trustworthy institutions.

### Conclusion

In East Asia, trust is a relational concept and not an individualistic concept. It is not to serve the self-interested person maximizing his or her personal benefits. Trust is a relational concept that provides security, harmony, and welfare for individuals, family members, and the whole community. It is first developed in the family, between the strong and intimate parent-child relationship. It is extended to other family members and close friends. The school is viewed as an extended family and the personalized parent-child relationship is extended to teachers (who are viewed as parents) and friends are treated as extended family members (who are brought into a close in-group system). Korean companies adopted the paternalistic model, treating and taking care of their employees as if they were family members. In return, they expect loyalty, sacrifice, and hard work from their employees. In society, the relational view has not been extended to society, as Confucius has advocated.

In Korean society, politicians have used their power to favor a particular group based on relational network (*yongjo*) such as family, educa-

tional and regional ties. Such exclusion of out-group members has resulted in non-effective societal institutions and led to corruption, nepotism, regionalism, factionalism and social discontent. As a result, when compared to other developed nations, Korea is ranked near the bottom of the Transparency Index and high in corruption.

Western societies focus on rational self-interested individuals and promote liberation from established, ascribed relationships. These societies may represent triumph of rationality over emotionality and individuality over groups. The solution that has been advocated by Fukuyama (1995) and Yamagishi (2000) for East Asian societies is to adopt the Western individualistic model. They argue for emancipation from long-term close relationship to create an open civic society. Western societies are relatively more open and provide greater opportunities to individuals. These are the benefits of an individualistic and open society. These societies, however, are experiencing numerous personal, familial and social problems. Many individuals living in the West experience emotional disorders and suffer from depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Some individuals become addicted to alcohol and drugs and even commit suicide. In Western societies, family breakdown is a major concern with the divorce rate around 50%. At the societal level, crime in the United States is the highest in the developed nations, threatening the security of its citizens. Moreover, many people do not trust their political institution, including the media and feel alienated from the system that supposes to represent them (Helgesen & Kim, 2002; Nye, Zelikow & King, 1997). Western societies emphasize individual rationality, freedom of choice and movement at a cost; sacrificing long-term relationships in which personal emotions can be shared.

For East Asian societies, a more appropriate solution is to develop a dual system to deal with the complexity of modern life: A role-based system for families and tight in-groups and a principle-based merit system for public settings. This idea is inherent in East Asian philosophy of separating the private from the public and having two separate rules for inside and outside (Kim, 1998). This dual system may be problematic for Westerners, but East Asians have traditionally incorporated the dual system, such as the opposing forces of *yin* and *yang*, and the need to balance and harmonize dual or multiple systems.

Similar to East Asia, Western societies may need to develop a dual system, one for the public setting and another for interacting with family

and in-group members. People living in Western societies need to develop the necessary skills in maintaining long-term relationships and in sharing their emotions. In contrast, people in East Asian societies need to develop a civil society in which opportunities are given to everyone, regardless of their personal relationship. Western societies did not solve all the subsistent and existential questions of the modern world. It will not be able to. It can learn from East Asian societies and the same is true of East Asian societies. It is up to the next generation to come up with new and creative solutions.

It is important to examine the role of psychology in providing solutions to the modern world. Although psychologists have increased in number and power, their influence in society is limited and skewed. The linear positivistic model adopted by General psychology does not shed much light into the individual psychological functioning and cultural variations. General psychology often ignores cultural variations and distorts psychological phenomena. It is up to indigenous and cultural psychology to articulate a new model of science and to shed insight into the inner workings of the mind.

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