

## Exploring the Interactions between Asian Culture (Confucianism) and Creativity

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**ABSTRACT** According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), creativity is a very complex interaction among a person, a field, and a culture. In keeping with this approach, a look at Asian culture in relation to its impact on creativity is in order. While people may vary in their native capacity for creativity, it is in the individual's interaction with the macrocosm where creative expression can be found. Therefore, this paper will explore the four principles of Confucianism, and how they compare to creativity research in order to discover how Asian culture influences creativity; and what we can do to enhance our students' creative capacity.

**INTRODUCTION** Common understanding considers creativity to be an inborn ability, but most research concludes that this explanation is insufficient (Torff, 1999). Although people may vary in their native capacity for creativity, it is in the individual's interaction with the macrocosm where creative expression can be found. Thus, a focus on enhancement of domain- and creativity-related skills is insufficient to enhance overall creativity if the cultural setting does not also accommodate creative growth and expression. Studies (e.g., Bond, 1992; Fielding, 1997; Kim & Michael, 1995; Kim, 2004, 2005, in press; Kim & Sergent, 2004; Rudowicz & Ng, 2003; Saeki, Fan, & Dusen, 2001) showing a tendency for people from Confucian societies to be less creative than people from Western societies may indicate that there are elements within Confucianism that inhibit creativity. Therefore, this study will explore the four principles of Confucianism and how they compare to creativity research, and to discover how East Asian culture influences creativity. Through making people aware of their belief systems and how they may

encourage or inhibit creative thinking, we can empower them to make choices for an environment that nurtures creativity.

**CONFUCIANISM** Confucius was born in China and lived from 551 until 479 B.C. His teachings are mainly concerned with the practical ethics of daily life without the addition of religious considerations (Chen & Chung, 1994; Millay & Streeter, 2004). Confucianism is the major cultural influence in Chinese-influenced societies including China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan (Chaves, 2002; Diriiik, 1995; Greer & Lim, 1998; Hahm, 2003; Kim & Park, 2003; Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). However, we cannot expect Confucianism to have the same status, function, or value among these countries when, even within one country, it is respected more in certain regions than in others (Hahm, 2003). In spite of these differences among countries and regions, the philosophy still unites the East Asian people today. The people have both been significantly influenced by the Confucian cultural tradition and by its core values, which serve as the ethical and moral foundation for business and social interactions, and for people's thinking styles (Chaves, 2002; Diriiik, 1995; Greer & Lim, 1998; Hahm, 2003; Kim & Park, 2003; Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996).

**CONFUCIANISM AND CREATIVITY RESEARCH** According to Chen and Chung (1994), the principles of Confucian teaching can be summarized as emphasizing education, family system, hierarchical relationships, and benevolence. These principles can be compared with studies that explored those traits' impact upon creativity. Therefore, relevant creativity literature involves the connections between creativity and the components of Confucianism. The macro-cultural element of Confucianism can then be combined with the smaller components.

**CREATIVITY AND THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF CONFUCIANISM: EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION** In Confucianism, the purpose of education is to help people develop ideal personalities (Liu, 1990, cited in Cheng, 1998). A Confucian gentleman is a person who consciously cultivates, practices, and displays his virtues (Zhang, 2000). The holistic and idealistic model of a human being is a well rounded person with a perfect personality who makes a positive contribution to society (Liu, 1990, cited in Cheng, 1998; Yao, 1999). These characteristics should be fostered in the citizenry through the educational system, and uniform virtues with regard to one's role in life are instilled.

The level of support within the home for homework activities (Henderson, Marx, & Kim, 1999; Kim, 1993; Yao & Kierstead, 1984), and efforts of cooperation between teachers and parents to match home and school environments to promote a consistent learning style for children are very high (e.g., Hong & Lee, 1999). Parents place special emphasis on education in early childhood, engage students in learning, and support their schools, (Haynes & Chalker, 1997; Haynes & Chalker, 1998; Henderson, Marx, & Kim, 1999).

Positive influences from Confucianism are that people are highly motivated towards the acquisition of an excellent education, including the strong desire to obtain higher degrees and diplomas (Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996; Sorensen, 1994). Emphasis on education has contributed to the economic growth of Confucian societies (Morris, 1996). Virtues attributed to the economic growth of the East Asian Five Dragons, the so-called East Asian economic miracle (Hahm, 2003), including Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Korea, and Taiwan, are skill acquisition, hard work, moderation, patience, perseverance, and education (Chen & Chung, 1994).

Even though enthusiasm for education was conducive for rapid recovery from poverty, it has also brought about negative consequences. These consequences are the extreme competition for acceptance into prestigious universities that result in many psychological and emotional problems including high levels of stress, anxiety (Sung, Lubin, & Yi, 1992), depression (Crittenden, Fugita, Bae, Lamug, & Lin, 1992), cigarette smoking for relief (Juon, Shin, & Nam, 1995), and sometimes suicide (Sung, Lubin, & Yi, 1992; Wollam, 1992). These unhealthy emotional and psychological conditions prohibit the development of students' creative potential. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a receptive and reinforcing creative atmosphere — one with psychological safety (Rogers, 1954/1976) and deferred judgment (Von Oech, 1983) where creativity is welcomed and encouraged. Maslow (1976) maintained that freedom, boldness, and self-acceptance lead people to realize their full potential, which seems to link creativity to healthy emotional expression. He concluded that children can experience creativity only when they feel free to play in their thinking, experiments, exploration, and imagination. In addition, competitive situations, restricted-choice situations, a demand for precise performance under time pressure, expectation of reward, (Hennessey, & Amabile, 1987) and evaluation (Amabile 1979; Rogers, 1954/1976; Parnes, &

Meadow, 1959) can undermine intrinsic motivation and creativity of performance.

Confucianism focused on learning in a mechanical way without thought or meaning, which has evolved to the extent that students in such cultures are considered to lack abstract thinking abilities, to over-emphasize concrete examples, and to lack originality and creativity (e.g., Chan, 1999). The society is based on an examination system where it can be said that the goal of schooling is to prepare students to pass examinations (Joo & Grow-Maienza, 1997). Such exclusive reliance on standardized testing for educational assessment forces administrators and teachers to emphasize rote learning and memorization which ultimately limit creativity (Jeon, 2000; Kim, 1999; Kim & Michael, 1995; Lee & Schallert, 1997; Wollam, 1992). Students are asked to repeat, memorize and remember textbook information for monthly exams, commonly referred to as Exam Hell both in Japan and Korea (e.g., Anderson, 1957; Foster, 1973; Wollam, 1992), leaving no room for creative growth.

The comparative values of memorization and ingenuity can be seen in the value society places on certain vocations. In old Confucian societies, even though the hard work ethic was extremely emphasized, commerce and manual labor were considered to be the meanest sort of work (Chaves, 2002, Kim & Park, 2003); which is a striking contrast to the idealized entrepreneur of the West. Western societies emphasize the development of abstract knowledge, the physical and natural sciences, and technical knowledge and skills. On the other hand, rote learning was idealized by Confucianism which upholds anti-vocational classicism that led to a deprecation of specialization, science, legalistic economic networks, and historical progress (Levenson, 1965). Without learning by doing something or without studying sciences of technology, how can we create original products and ideas?

Ancient Chinese society was known for its advanced inventions, including fireworks and paper. Later, because Confucian society did not value creative production, few people, if any, were encouraged to be creative. According to Confucianism, education is a much more important quality for a leader to have than technical competence or professional expertise. In this sense, education itself is an essential component of the virtues (Chan, 1999). Confucian education valued mostly abstract values from the classics as something to be memorized instead of developed. In addition, the Confucian educational

philosophy prioritizes the teaching of ethics. School curriculum still places great importance on subjects related to ethics, offering and emphasizing classes such as ethics, and manners (Chen & Chung, 1994) which, again, are to be memorized instead of explored.

Belief in Hard-Work  
and a Devaluing  
of Play

Related to the emphasis of education, East Asian educational philosophy teaches that a strong work ethic and devotion to learning are ultimately more conducive to achievement than an inherently gifted mind (Kim, 2005). East Asian parents believe that good grades come from hard work, effort, diligence, endurance, perseverance, and persistence (Haynes & Chalker, 1998; Henderson, 1990; Park & Kim, 1999; Taylor, Lichtman, Wasson, VanBrackle, & Ogawa, 1996). East Asian parents emphasize the importance of hard work to academic success, whereas American parents attribute academic success to differences in native ability (e.g., Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Thus, East Asian schools do not have tracking (Henderson, 1990). In addition, Japanese people believe that the best predictor of later success is Receptive Diligence, but, in America the best predictors are believed to be curiosity and originality (Henderson, Marx, & Kim, 1999). Furthermore, hard work is not an abstract credo, but a practical guide in Japanese and Chinese everyday lives (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992).

Legacies of Confucian tradition — Confucian work ethic (Chaves, 2002), collectivistic norms and authoritarian forms of organization and management (Kim & Park, 2003) — can be credited with the economic success of the East Asian countries. Even in the U. S., the work ethic leads to economic success for many Korean American families. However, with economic, occupational, and cultural stressors, the work ethic makes it difficult for many of them to maintain a healthy family life (Kim & Sung, 2000).

From early childhood, the students do not have time to play. In addition, the parents do not consider childhood as a period for play, and they force children into a formal educational structure at extremely young ages. Most children in Confucian cultures begin their education from such a young age, sometimes at only 2 years old, that many of them are able to read and write before they begin formal schooling (e.g., Chan, 1999). However, the use of worksheets which focus only on exercises to teach letter names, letter sounds, picture-word correspondence, and writing order, without focusing on reading comprehension is widespread (Lee, Park, & Kim, 2000).

There is no room for creativity, or for accepting childhood as a time for play or for having fun (e.g., Rudowicz & Hui, 1997; Fielding, 1997). Some researchers (e.g., Van Hoorn, Nourot, & Alward, 1993) suggest that play can be viewed as the cornerstone of imagination. Play can help a child adapt to a changing modern world through a valuing of curiosity, and the exploration of alternative situations. Bishop and Chace (1971) found that mother's restrictive attitude toward play has a negative impact on children's creativity. Thus, play can ultimately lead a child to creative expression and insights (Richards, 1996).

A work-play dichotomy limits the development and expression of creativity (Fielding, 1983; Torrance, 1963). When we see school as 'work' and free time as 'play,' it is easy to misunderstand creative children in school. In contrast to our notions of a work-play dichotomy, creative children are learning and thinking when they look like they are playing around. They can learn through creativity more effectively than through an authority (Torrance, 1962, 1977). If they undertake the activity for the enjoyment of engaging in it, they will consider the activity as more like play than like work (Amabile, 1979). Their work is also characterized by humor, playfulness, relative lack of rigidity, and relaxation (Torrance, 1962, 1964). However, the work-play ethic engrained in adults can be projected onto children. Thus, learning to read becomes work, and kicking a football becomes play. Finally, the combined force of a work-play dichotomy and the subjugation of creativity for production-oriented goals distort and curtail creativity to society's loss (Varma, 1993).

According to Vygotskian theory (Vygotsky, 1992), the limited value placed on play can stifle children's creativity. Play facilitates creativity because play gives children the opportunity to discover new properties of objects, and because play stimulates fantasy (Hennessey, & Amabile, 1987). Torrance (1964) was concerned that one of the most influential inhibitors to creativity during early childhood are premature attempts to eliminate fantasy. Fantasy is a way for children to act out impulses and to re-examine new ideas through playful combination with familiar ideas. Creative children are more likely to have parents who took part in fantasy play with them. Wade (1971) found that approval of fantasy behavior by parents has a positive relationship with creativity. However, many parents attempt to prematurely eliminate fantasy from the child's thinking (Torrance, 1962, 1964). Fantasy can also be stifled by a

person's fear of becoming the target of ridicule or condemnation (Kirschenbaum, 1989).

CREATIVITY AND THE  
SECOND PRINCIPLE  
OF CONFUCIANISM:  
FAMILY SYSTEM

Overemphasis on  
Loyalty and  
Obedience to  
the Company  
and the State

The second principle of Confucianism is the family system. Confucian teachings consider Confucian society itself as a large family, in which the father comes first and the son comes second. The unquestioned obedience of the son to the authority of the father is essential (Fah, 2002). Confucianism is like a social bond that fixes family members in the network of their hierarchical relationships. Furthermore, concepts such as filial piety, obedience, and loyalty practiced in the family are transferred to social organizations in which customs of disciplined subordination and acceptance of authority are cultivated. This sense of the family structure that is applied to social organizations is one of the main reasons for the economic success of the East Asian Five Dragons (Chen & Chung, 1994). For example, Confucian philosophy, which encouraged duty to the nation and to society as a whole, made it easier for South Koreans to accept the oppression for the sake of economic development of the country (Callahan, 1999; Chung, 1994; Dirlik, 1995; Kim & Park, 2003; Yao, 1999; Yi, 1993). With the extension of the emphasis on filial piety to parents into an obligation towards society, Confucianism also encouraged workers to make a lifelong commitment to their jobs (Chung, 1994). Filial piety was transformed into company loyalty; diligence for self changed into working hard for one's work-place, and domestic paternalism was used to control employees in modern industrial conditions (Kim & Park, 2003).

However, given the changing needs of today's organizations and the growing demand for flexibility in dynamic work environments, creative problem solving and decision making are more important than loyalty and obedience (Williams & Yang, 1999). Overemphasis on following rules and traditions at work creates organizational barriers to creative innovation (Van Gundy, 1987). Creative potential is only realized in work situations where employees can influence decision-making and communicate new ideas (Pelz & Andrews, 1966).

Overemphasis on  
Filial Piety and  
Dependence

The concept of filial piety is so specific to Confucian culture that no comparable concepts can be found in other cultures (Hwang, 1999). Filial piety, more generally speaking, consanguineous affection, is not only the foundation but also the supreme principle of human life (Liu, 2003), and is the most essential value in East Asian people's mind (Hwang, 1999). According to filial piety, obedience to parents is so important



that a son cannot even stop his parents from doing wrong, and also involves the offering of ancestral sacrifice after his parents' death (Fah, 2002). One of the present versions of filial piety is the mutual interdependence of family members, which is also found in Korea. Most parents consider educating and taking care of their children as their duty, while most children assume the obligation of filial piety, and are willing to repay and take care of their aging parents (Hwang, 1999).

However, overemphasis on filial piety and obedience leads students to avoid their original and creative thinking, and to automatically accept their parents' or elders' conventional thinking, which inhibits creativity. Positive influences on creativity that can be found within a family include room for autonomy (Datta & Parloff, 1967; Domino, 1969); independence by providing the freedom and the psychological safety to explore, experiment, and make decisions (Freeman, 1985; Harrington, Block, & Block, 1987; MacKinnon, 1961; Michel & Dudek, 1991); and where divergence is permitted and risks are accepted within the family (Getzels & Jackson, 1961). In other words, children will be most creative when allowed the freedom to be independent and explore the world and their thoughts, and to make mistakes.

The relationship between autonomy and creativity is further seen with the findings that emotional distance among family members (Drevdahl, 1964; Saxena & Kumar, 1985), open but not overly close family with little clinging or conformity (Weisberg & Springer, 1961), and a non-overly dependent parent-child relationship (Dewing, 1970) have positive relationships with creativity. Mild parental rejection might encourage a slightly rebellious attitude, leading to more independent thinking (Siegelman, 1973), although extreme levels of rebellion can hinder creativity. Encouragement of all family members to do all things together has a negative relationship with children's creativity (Hurlock, 1978). Thus, enjoying experiences separate from the family may help children develop their creativity (Hudson & Stinnett, 1990).

#### Strict Parenting

East Asian parenting practices are moderately warm, but very restrictive in what is acceptable behavior (e.g., Bond, 1992). In the home, the expectation of respect for the authority of elders is critical. Children must accept all advice and demands from parents without questioning. Parents are authoritative figures who enforce obedience and submissiveness from their children. Gardner (1989) indicated that Chinese child



rearing is like following a chapter in Pavlov, Skinner, or Watson. There is one correct way to do things, and that way is to be shown by an adult. Therefore, children develop a tendency to passively accept knowledge, to view things uncritically, and to avoid exploration. Finally, they become convergent thinkers (Fielding, 1997). East Asian parents sometimes physically punish their children in order to discipline them. The predominance of physical punishment to control children's behavior is one of the most distinguishing factors between Eastern and Western customs of child rearing (Englehart & Hale, 1990).

Parents' communication style towards children is one way — directive, vague, and rigid. This kind of communication hinders children's creativity. (e.g., Chung, 1993). Tegano, Sawyers, and Moran (1989; Runco & Nemiro, 1994) recommended that adults should provide a psychologically safe environment because children need freedom and security in order to explore and be creative. Albert (1994, 1996) found that families that have more creativity are usually more complex, varied, and expressive than other families. Positive influences on creativity that can be found within a family include parents who are less strict, critical, and punitive, but allow greater freedom (Halpin, Payne, & Ellett, 1973); these parents have an ongoing dialogue with their children instead of relying on the use of premature and excessive worksheets and academic material (Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997).

The family structure, including shifting dynamics, situations, and the degree of authoritarianism, also has an impact on creativity. Families that provide parental explanations of family decisions and rules, children a voice in establishing rules (Baldwin, 1949; MacKinnon, 1961), egalitarian child rearing (Dewing & Taft, 1973), and flexibility in guiding children's behavior instead of a reliance on rigid rules (Dacey, 1989) strengthen their children's creativity. In contrast, authoritarian child-rearing attitudes (Datta & Parloff, 1967; Dewing, 1970; Foster, 1968; Gardner & Moran, 1990), parental vigilance (Getzels & Jackson, 1961), and hostile, rigid, and controlling home environments (Halpin, 1973; Papalia & Olds, 1986) have negative relationships with children's creativity. In essence, the family environment can provide a framework and example for children to learn creative problem solving, or it can be a structure that imposes life-long rigidity, depending on the family's process for problem-solving both with individual and familial situations.

CREATIVITY AND THE  
THIRD PRINCIPLE OF  
CONFUCIANISM:  
HIERARCHICAL  
SOCIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS

According to Confucius, human relationships should be regulated by the Five Codes of Ethics, which are based on the five basic relationships: ruler/subject, father/son, husband/wife, older brother/younger brother, and between friends. These relationships are assumed to be unequal and complementary (Chen & Chung, 1994; Fan, 2002; Herr, 2003; Hwang, 1999; Hwang, 2001; Millay & Streeter, 2004).

Confucian culture has a history of being a rigid, age-hierarchical society, in which age is always a mark of personal prestige and social authority. A positive aspect of the hierarchical code is the respectful treatment accorded to elders. The older generation can exercise discipline and control over the young (Park, 1993). Confucius taught that age had a direct correlation with wisdom, regardless of other factors. Confucius said that when he was fifteen, he set his heart upon learning. At thirty, he planted his feet firmly upon the ground. At forty, he no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, he knew god's will. At sixty, he listened with a calm heart. At seventy, what he wanted to do aligned with what was right to do (Chaves, 2002; Hwang, 2001).

However, the principle of the hierarchical social relationships has brought about several negative situations in regard to fostering creativity due to formalized inequalities, including those between men and women, and as portrayed in silent classrooms. Silent classrooms prevent students from questioning material and seeking new answers. Within businesses, seniority outweighs merit. Families and schools reinforce the Confucian Patriarchy, encouraging women to be obedient and men to be leaders. A subordinate who generates new ideas and attempts to implement them would be seen as insubordinate and creative behavior would be discouraged.

Inequality between  
Men and Women

Hierarchy ingrains within people the necessity to limit their aspirations because of a set place in the social structure. The Confucian hierarchy also inflicts upon its subjects, especially women, a suffocating rigidity and a system of inequitable obligations, thus hindering human potential. Contemporary Confucians are embarrassed by the degree to which Confucianism has traditionally oppressed (Li, 2000). Although some contemporary Confucians argue that at least Confucius did not disparage women and Confucianism is nonsexist, historical Confucianism was definitely sexist (Herr, 2003). The Confucian bias against women dictates an inequitable status for women (Fah, 2002), which forces them into a submissive role as a servant to their husbands' family (Park & Kim, 1999; Chung, 1994). According to Confucianism, all women

are to be obedient. A woman is expected to be obedient to her parents in childhood, to her husband in marriage, and to her son in old age (Chung, 1994; Johnsrud, 1995). As a result, wife abuse is a common practice in traditionally patriarchal East Asian societies (Bui & Morash, 1999; Gallin, 1992). Kim and Sung (2000) found that the rate of violence by the husbands of the male-dominant marriages was over four times higher than that of egalitarian marriages even among Korean Americans.

The education of women has long been opposed by Confucianism, although higher educational levels for women are often regarded as a means of increasing their value as potential wives (Chung, 1994). The value systems and virtues of sexual division and patriarchy are reproduced in the overall school curricula. Male dominance emphasizes the development of leadership and skills for male students, but encourages females to be obedient (Chung, 1994). Many feminist scholars in Korea have criticized Confucian patriarchy (Callahan, 1999). In addition to working, a woman must still attend to her domestic duties (Johnsrud, 1995). Thus, gifted females have not achieved to their potential, and academic women's professional careers are limited, because of the expectations of their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law (Cho, 1997; Johnsrud, 1995).

In the last several decades, a subtle and progressive change in attitudes regarding the role of women in the household has taken place in Korea, leading to a higher level of labor force participation. However, devotion to Confucian principles has led to a lack of consciousness by women who are unaware of an alternate mode of behavior (Kim, 1990).

Rigid Gender Role  
Expectations

Parents who are open to non-traditional gender roles tend to have children who express greater creativity than those parents who have more rigidly set sex-typed views (Grant, 1973; e.g., Fielding, 1983). Jellen and Urban (1986) found that some environmental conditions such as sexual bias, organizational structure, and socio-cultural stratifications can hinder creative potential. Furthermore, Eriksson (1989) claimed that it is necessary to overcome inhibitions to creativity such as limiting ways of viewing the world, stereotypes, and a judgmental atmosphere.

Androgyny and  
Creativity

Creative children may diverge from sex role norms. Both sensitivity and independence are essential for creativity (Torrance, 1960, 1962, 1963). The primary creativeness described by Maslow, McPherson, and others requires that individuals be able to accept their softness and femininity as well as intellec-

tual autonomy (Torrance, 1962). Harrington and Anderson (1981) found positive relationships between androgyny and creative self-concept and the number of creative uses for mundane objects. Hittner and Daniels' study (2002) indicated that instrumentality, which includes the traditionally masculine traits of independence and assertiveness, is associated with business venture creativity and cognitive flexibility, and androgyny is associated with creative productivity in literature, theater, and video-photography. Norlander, Erixon, and Archer's study (2000) also showed that androgyny is related to creative performance. The conflict over gender roles' interaction with creativity arises from opposite sex-role ascriptions of the characteristics conducive to creativity: sensitivity is a feminine virtue, while independence is a masculine virtue. Torrance commented on this issue, stating that we need both sensitivity and independence in order to be creative, and noticed that some children sacrifice their creativity in order to maintain their masculinity or their femininity (Torrance, 1960, 1962).

#### Silent Classrooms

The schooling experience is a continuation of parenting practices for children in Confucian cultures (Fielding, 1997). After children begin their formal school years, the narrowing of their minds intensifies. Compared to children in U.S. classrooms, children in Korean classrooms speak less and are less frequently urged to participate in class activities (French & Song, 1998). A tradition based on a hierarchical society, teacher-centeredness, and total class instruction (Bathory et al., 1992) commits students to listening without speaking. People are supposed to respect hierarchical relationships between teachers and students so that students accept the information from teachers readily, rarely expressing their opinions or asking questions, which leads to passive and compliant classroom behaviors of the students (Chan, 1999). In addition, neither a teacher nor a student should be made to lose face (Park & Kim, 1999; Yook & Albert, 1998), so teachers are never contradicted, and students are not encouraged to debate among themselves. Students are not supposed to question teachers or challenge their statements, and they are to remain silent (Fielding, 1997). Thus, students expect the teacher to initiate communication, and they speak only when asked to by the teacher. Even if the teacher says something that the student does not understand, it is viewed as inappropriate to interrupt the teacher (Yook & Albert, 1998). This hierarchical rigidity even permeates peer interaction and the potential for collaborative group work. The hierarchy is such that, even among students, children will accept the commands of peer authorities

and even peers who do not hold official positions in the school (Kim, 1998). For example, the class president has the authority of the teacher at moments when the teacher is absent from the room.

The Confucian trait of showing respect for teachers is continued in the educational setting through the practice of memorizing and repeating great scholarly works (Fielding, 1997). The material itself was taught by the great teachers of long ago, so memorizing without question is a sign of respect for these ancient authorities. Rote learning is consistent with Confucian values, and is fundamental to the written Chinese language (Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). Sanctions against questioning and exploration limit the development and expression of creativity (Fielding, 1983). Teachers emphasize working on well-defined problems with clean results and getting good grades that can be compared to others. Therefore, little creativity or innovation is cultivated in the interactions between teachers and students in Confucian cultures (e.g., Albert, 1996; Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). This system only breeds conformity, the reproduction of knowledge and images in art, and a lack of independence and creativity (Fielding, 1997). Some researchers (e.g., Auh & Walker, 1999; Brooking, 1995; Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996) suggest violating expectations in teaching in order to enhance creativity by stepping outside of traditional comfort zones. Teachers should provide their own attitudes as safety nets so that their classrooms can become laboratories for experimentation (Brooking, 1995). Furthermore, experimentation helps students' creativity to manifest itself.

CREATIVITY AND THE  
FOURTH PRINCIPLE  
OF CONFUCIANISM:  
BENEVOLENCE

The last principle of Confucianism is benevolence. Benevolence includes the traits such as self-restraint, self-discipline, filial piety, brotherly love to elders, loyalty, personal duty, and positive interpersonal behaviors among society members (Chen & Chung, 1994; Fan, 2002; Herr, 2003; Hwang, 1999; Hwang, 2001; Millay & Streeter, 2004). The principle of benevolence has also brought about several negative consequences to creativity due to the suppression of emotion, minimization of verbal interaction, and conformity.

Suppression of  
Emotion

One of the guiding principles for human relationships in Confucianism is self-control of emotional expressions in all human relationships. Affectionate expression to loved ones is considered inappropriate and must be internalized to conform to collectivist ideals (Yi, 1993). This cultural value denies people natural freedoms of expression and individuality, and sentences

them to a life of duty and monotony. It is believed that one reason many Korean secondary school students suffer from stress is because of the suppression of emotional expression (Sung, Lubin, & Yi, 1992).

According to psychodynamic approaches, suppression of emotional expression can inhibit creativity. All ego defenses defend through distorting, repressing, and depersonalizing one's experience, and these defense mechanisms resist and corrupt the development and subsequent exercise of creative behavior (MacKinnon, 1978; Smith & Carlsson, 1990). The earlier in development the defenses function, the more likely they are to block, distort, or inhibit a child's creativity. The expression of feelings and impulses enhance young children's creativity (Lytton, 1971). Positive influences on creativity that can be found within a family include room for providing children the freedom to express both positive and negative feelings (Domino, 1969). Moreover, emotions and creativity not only interact but also emotions themselves can be products of creative change (Averill, 1999; Averill & Nunley, 1992).

Minimization of  
Verbal Interaction

Confucianism restricts verbal interactions, especially for males. Being a talkative man is considered to be inappropriate. A man's words hold more authority than women's, so restraint is taught to boys because talking too much would diminish the man's power. Boys are taught to say only what they need to say, not what they want to say. The parents discourage their children's exploratory activity such as showing or telling about their surroundings (Bond, 1992). A minimization of verbal interaction accounts for the verbal inhibition of the people in Confucian culture outside their family, and for lower performance in verbal tests of intelligence (e.g., Fielding, 1997). Finally, such a de-emphasis on verbal interaction and learning can depress creativity (Fielding, 1997).

Conformity

Collectivism & conformity: It is harder for Asians to think, feel, and act in a creative manner than for Westerners because Asian society is tightly organized, collectivistic, hierarchical, and face-conscious (Rudowicz & Ng, 2003). Researchers have reported an association between collectivism and social conformity (Crittenden, Fugita, Bae, Lamug, & Lin, 1992; Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). In Western societies, liberal moral-political values emphasize individuals' rights and self-determination. In contrast, Confucianism in East Asia emphasizes the collective good and harmony, along with self-cultivation and self-regulation (Park & Kim, 1999). In Eastern societies, the welfare of the group is seen as inseparable from that of the individual, while Western societies emphasize the

rights of the individual, even at the expense of the group (Averill, Chon, & Hahn, 2001). Confucianism emphasizes conformity and acting predictably within a situational context. Adherence to group interests for the sake of achieving harmony is often justified at the expense of individual interests (Chung, 1994). For instance, slow speakers are perceived as more competent than fast speakers because they are considering the needs of other people, whereas in the U.S., the opposite appraisal results (Lee & Boster, 1992). Students seek to avoid appearing different from others, individuals learn to restrain themselves in order to maintain group harmony, and the fear of making a mistake or embarrassment keeps many students silent. These expectations are related to their propensity for compromise and conflict avoidance (Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). Thus, Confucian ideals consider the emphasis on individual rights and creativity as secondary (Park & Kim, 1999).

Social pressures such as peer conformity, and avoidance of appearing 'too different' or eccentric limit the development and expression of creativity (Fielding, 1997). Conformity and uniformity conflict with the creativity and initiative that are required in scientific and technical work (e.g., Cummings, 1994). Rudowicz and Hui (1997) indicated that if the social systems are rigid and discourage independence and novelty, new ideas cannot be recognized as creative. Creative people's characteristics are initiative, independence, free play of imagination, joy in absorption, and nonconformity (Vince-Bakonyi, 1969). They are open to new information, are able to synthesize, and are flexible (Goldstein & Blackman, 1978), and are low in dogmatism (Mellou, 1995).

Nonconformity can become a drive in creative children with exceptional mental abilities who seek divergence more than convergence (Whitmore, 1980). Such creative behavior may be interpreted as aggressive or even hostile so that their ideas and questions are rejected (Torrance, 1962). Torrance (1981, 2000a, 2000b) noticed that children's creative behaviors are often punished and discouraged by parents and teachers who perceive creative behavior as inconvenient and difficult to manage. This can lead to the child's unwillingness to be creative, and eventually, to underachievement and rigid non-adaptive responses in the school environment (Seeley, 1984). Evidence of the anti-creativity effects of childhood socialization is found in Torrance's description of the "fourth grade slump" (1967, 1968, 1977, 2002; Torrance & Gupta, 1964; Davis, 1992; Kang, 1989; Marcon, 1995; Nash, 1974; Timmel, 2001; Walker, 1995; Williams, 1976), which is a large drop in



creativity at the fourth grade associated with the imposition of social demands, in the United States and other cultures. Axtell (1966) also found a significant decline of curiosity at the fourth grade among gifted students. Torrance and Dauw (1966) found that creative gifted seniors were high in freedom, achievement, recognition, and anxiety orientations, and low in control orientation, which indicates a lack of conformity among creative individuals.

The risks involved in ignoring the needs of creative students are great. If creative needs are not met, creative individuals often become underachievers. Subsequently, they may become acutely withdrawn into a more rewarding fantasy world through day-dreaming, drawing, and reading. In addition, they avoid unpleasant academic tasks and interaction with teacher or peers (Whitmore, 1980).

However, Crutchfield (1955, 1962) noted that both excessive conformity and excessive nonconformity hinder creativity, and Amabile (1989) said that nonconformity for its own sake is insufficient for creativity. The results of Van Hook and Tegano's study (2002) indicated a curvilinear relationship between social conformity and creativity. In other words, conformity or nonconformity for its own sake may in fact hinder creativity, but the ability to move beyond either realm in pursuit of a creative vision will ultimately lead to greater creativity. Within a collectivist society, it is impossible for a person to continuously rebel for the sake of rebellion. Therefore, the focus within Confucian societies must be on those who are trapped by conformity and find their creativity stunted.

Negative  
conceptions of  
creativity

Because of conformity, social responsibility is very critical in Confucian cultures. Any degree of narcissistic attitudes, alcohol consumption, and eccentricity are considered as irresponsible. However, these have positive relationships with creativity.

Negative association between narcissism and conformity: The people in Confucian culture have a fear of losing face (dignity, prestige, and self-respect) among peers. This is called self-effacement and is linked to the Confucian value of modest behavior, a highly respected virtue. Thus, in Confucian cultures, people are not supposed to be narcissistic (Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996). However, healthy narcissism is related to creativity. Solomon (1985) found that creative people have a greater degree of normal narcissism than less creative people.

Negative association between eccentricity and conformity: By the time of Aristotle, the view that creativity is related to madness appeared, and reappeared during the nineteenth and

the first half of the twentieth centuries (Albert & Runco, 1999). After a historical review, Neihart (1998) concluded that creativity is associated with madness, especially within the sub-population of writers, poets, and visual artists. More creative people suffer from certain mental disorders than are found in the general population (Andreasen, 1988; Jamison, 1989; 1993; Richards, 1989; see also Kaufman & Baer, 2002), and higher suicide rates appear among prominent creative people than among the norm (Neihart, 1998). Barron (1969) found high MMPI psychopathology scores for eminent creators. There are some researchers who argued that creativity is related to schizophrenia (Barron, 1969; Eysenck, 1983; Getzels & Jackson, 1962; Torrance, 1962).

Negative association between alcohol and conformity: A review of the literature regarding creativity and alcohol (Gustafson, 1991, 1996; Gustafson & Norlander, 1994, 1995, 1996; Hajcak, 1976; Ingvar et al., 1995; Koski-Jannes, 1985, Norlander, 1999; Norlander & Gustafson, 1997, 1998; Wendt et al., 1994) suggests that a moderate intake of alcohol can obstruct secondary phases of creativity such as preparation, illumination, and verification, but can facilitate primary phases such as incubation and restitution. Restitution was added to Wallas' (1926) model by Koski-Jannes (1985) as a period between creative cycles that enables a creator to continuously create in a sustainable manner. Alcohol may inhibit creativity at times of active production, but during the moments when a creator must step away from the work, a moderate amount of alcohol may, in fact, help with overall creativity.

Conception of  
creativity in terms  
of conformity

Ironically, consistent with those studies related to creativity research on narcissism, madness, and alcohol, in Confucian cultures there has been a negative notion about the social responsibility of creative persons even without influence of the research above. Lim and Plucker (2001) found that although Korean conceptions of creativity are similar to Western conceptions, Koreans emphasize negative behaviors and personality characteristics such as: creative persons are indifferent to other's opinions; do not pay attention to other's evaluation; make conflicts when working in groups; and are headstrong and rude. These results are consistent with those studies across several Chinese cultural contexts (Chan & Chan, 1999; Rudowicz & Hui, 1997; Rudowicz & Yue, 2000).

Because people in Confucian cultures tend to view creativity as having little relationship with social responsibility, this can be a critical obstacle to creative activity because in this culture the social responsibility of conformity is a substantial

value (Lim & Plucker, 2001). The environment works as an external source to suppress people's creative impulses while simultaneously creating internal barriers as well. The societal stigma placed on those who are different extends to people's views about creative behavior and ideas which enforces a self-limitation of creative expression

**CONCLUSION** Seo, Lee, and Kim's study (2005) found that Korean science teachers' understanding of creativity appeared to emphasize only the cognitive components, while they ignored environmental components. Although a person needs cognitive ability to be creative, if the culture either does not value or discourages creative growth and expression, then the person's creativity cannot flourish. In order to encourage creativity, we should remove cultural blocks that inhibit creativity.

A quick review of the four principles of Confucianism and the ways they conflict with creativity is in order. The first principle of Confucianism is the Emphasis on Education, which inhibits creativity through rote learning, extreme competition, a work-play dichotomy, and a devaluation of play. The second principle of Confucianism is the Family System, which blocks creativity through strict gender role expectations, rigid parent-child relationships and an overemphasis on obedience, filial piety, and loyalty. The third principle of Confucianism is the Hierarchical Relationships, which decrease creativity through unequal relationships, rigid social structure, gender role expectations, and authoritarian relationship between teachers and students. The fourth principle of Confucianism is Benevolence, which stifles creativity through suppression of emotion, the silence ethic, an extreme value of humility, conformity, and stigmatized eccentricity.

The best creative techniques, or the strongest creative personality, cannot compensate for a culture that crushes creativity. Only through a self-evaluation of our culture, the elements that are blocking our populace, and the construction of more fertile creative soil can we lead our students to new levels of creative achievement.

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Kyung Hee Kim, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology, Department of Teacher Education, 313 E-1 Porter Building, College of Education, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197. aEmail: kkim7@emich.edu, kyungheekim556@hotmail.com.

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