

THE IMPACT OF CONFUCIANISM ON INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION PATTERNS IN EAST ASIA

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It is argued that East Asian communication patterns differ from those of North America because of the Eastern emphasis on social relationships as opposed to the North American emphasis on individualism. This East Asian preoccupation with social relationships stems from the doctrines of Confucianism, which considers proper human relationships to be the basis of society. The cardinal principle of Confucianism is humanism, which is understood as a warm human feeling between people and strongly emphasizes reciprocity. As a philosophy of humanism and social relations, Confucianism has left a strong impact on interpersonal relationships and on communication patterns. The five most important areas of interpersonal relationships influenced by Confucianism are particularism, reciprocity, the in-group/out-group distinction, the role of intermediaries, and the overlap of personal and public relationships. Confucianism has also contributed to East Asian communication patterns of process orientation, differentiated linguistic codes, indirect communication emphasis, and receiver-centered communication. In contrast, North American patterns of communication represent outcome orientation, less-differentiated linguistic codes, direct communication emphasis, and sender-centered communication.

THE FIELD of communication has reached a critical period, with an ever-increasing number of people studying communication, a proliferation of academic and practical journals, and Ph.D. programs in many universities. Much of this growth, however, has been within North America, and most research and theory is based upon Western philosophical foundations. As more scholars from Asia have entered the field of communication, there has been increasing dissatisfaction with the use of North American models of communication to explain communication processes in Asia, and even some aspects of communication processes in North America. Practitioners in developing countries and in applied communication areas, such as family planning, rural development, or health, have also voiced concern about the cultural bias in communication theory.

New communication technology has removed many of the physical barriers to communication between the East and West, but there remain philosophical and cultural barriers which are not well understood. The increased opportunity for interaction between different cultural groups, however, has sensitized some scholars to the need to study Eastern perspectives on communication.

Most cross-cultural studies of communication simply describe foreign communication patterns and then compare them to those of North America. Rarely do they go beyond the surface to explore the roots of such differences. This paper goes beyond these limitations and explores the philosophical roots of the communication patterns in East Asian countries. The basic assumption of this paper is that communication is a fundamental social process, and that, as such, it is influenced by the philosophical foundations and value systems of the society in which it is found.

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There is always a danger in generalizing certain cultural patterns to large geographical areas. Even though we often refer to "Eastern" or "Asian" perspectives, there are many, sometimes contradictory, patterns within the region. For instance, the popular notion that Asians are more spiritual than Westerners might apply to India (Dissanayake, 1987), but not to China, Korea, or Japan. Nakamura (1964) has maintained that the Chinese and the Japanese are much more non-metaphysical than Westerners. For this reason, the paper is limited to China, Korea, and Japan, East Asian countries that have been most influenced by Confucian philosophical principles. Other countries which have been influenced by Confucianism are expected to have similar characteristics. For instance, Viet Nam, the only country in Southeast Asia to be influenced more by China than India, also exhibits the strong emphasis on social relationships and devotion to the paterfamilias which are the essence of Confucian doctrines (Luce & Sommer, 1969).

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS vs. INDIVIDUALISM

If one has to select the main difference between East Asian and North American perspectives on communication, it would be the East Asian emphasis on social relationships as opposed to the North American emphasis on individualism. According to Hofstede (1980), individualism-collectivism is one of the main dimensions differentiating cultures. He defined individualism as the emotional independence of individual persons from groups, organizations, or other collectivities. Parsons, Shils, and Olds (1951) have suggested that self-orientation versus collectivity-orientation is one of the five basic pattern variables that determine human action. Self-orientation occurs when a person gives "priority in a given situation to his own private interests, independently of their bearings on the interests or values of a given collectivity" (Parsons et al., 1951, p. 81), as opposed to taking directly into account the values and interests of the collectivity before acting.

The individualism-collectivism dichotomy, however, is not identical to the difference between the East Asian's emphasis on social relationships and North American emphasis on individualism. In East Asia, the emphasis is on proper social relationships and their maintenance rather than any abstract concern for a general collective body. In a sense, it is a collectivism only among those bound by social networks. A recent study by the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) supports the point. They studied value differences in 22 countries with an instrument specifically designed to incorporate the Chinese value system. Four main value dimensions (integration, Confucian work dynamism, human-heartedness, and moral discipline) were found to account for most of the variance. Confucian work dynamism, which includes reciprocity and proper relationships, was not found to be correlated with Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension. Hui and Triandis (1986) have recommended that collectivism be treated in two different ways: (1) as a concern for a certain subset of people, and (2) as a concern for a generalized collectivity of people.

In the 1830s, the French social philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term "individualism" to describe the most notable characteristic of the American people. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) agree that individualism lies at the very core of American culture, contending that "individualism . . . has marched inexorably through our history" (p. vii), and that "we believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decision, live our lives as we see fit, is

not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious" (p. 142). According to Varenne (1977), there is but one system of principles regulating interpersonal relationships in America and that is "individualism."

Even though many Americans feel they must get involved, they are also committed to individualism, including the desire to cut free from the past and define one's own self. Thus, the primary mode of American involvement is choosing organizations that one can voluntarily join or voluntarily leave. Varenne (1977, p. 53) proposed that Americans perceive social structure "not as a system made up of different groups considered to be in a symbiotic relationship, but rather of different individuals who come together to do something." Hsu (1963) suggested that the primary allegiance in China is the clan, in India the caste, and in America the voluntary club. The mythical heroes in American popular culture are loners like the cowboy Shane who are not encumbered by obligations or commitments (Bellah et al., 1985).

Considering this cultural orientation, it is not surprising that the dominant paradigm of communication is an individualistic one. Each communicator is perceived to be a separate individual engaging in diverse communicative activities to maximize his/her own self-interest, usually by means of some form of persuasion. Rogers and Kincaid (1981) criticized the dominant communication paradigm as: (1) psychological rather than social, (2) goal-oriented rather than process-oriented, (3) linear rather than cyclical, and (4) most often, relying on the individual as the unit of analysis.

In contrast, the most notable characteristic in East Asia is the emphasis on social relationships. Hall and Beardsley (1965) have maintained that, compared to East Asian countries, North America is in the Stone Age as regards social relationships. Smith (1957) concluded that, generally speaking, the West accentuates the natural problem, China the social, and India the psychological problem. From the present discussion, it appears that North America accentuates the individual, East Asia the social, and India the metaphysical or spiritual. This East Asian preoccupation with social relationships stems from the doctrines of Confucianism.

CONFUCIANISM

In the philosophical and cultural history of East Asia, Confucianism has endured as the basic social and political value system for over one thousand years. One reason that Confucianism has had such a profound impact is because it was adopted as the official philosophy of the Yi dynasty for 500 years in Korea, and of the Tokugawa shogunate in Japan for 250 years, as well as of many dynasties in China.

Confucianism was institutionalized and propagated both through the formal curricula of the educational system and through the selection process of government officials. One example is the Imperial Rescript on Education promulgated in 1890, a generation after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate: "Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation" (Smith, 1983, p. 10). The content of the rescript is almost identical to the Five Code of Ethics of Confucianism, which regulates the five basic human relationships: loyalty between king and subject, closeness between father and son, distinction in duty between husband and wife, obedience to orders between elders and younger, and mutual faith between friends (Yum, 1987a).

Another reason why Confucianism has exerted a much stronger impact than the other religious, philosophical systems of East Asia (Buddhism and Taoism) is because it is a pragmatic and present-oriented philosophy. When a student named Tzu-lu asked Confucius about serving ghosts and spirits, Confucius said, "If one cannot yet serve men, how can he serve the spirits?" Asked about death, Confucius replied, "If you do not understand life, how can you understand death?" (McNaughton, 1974, p. 145). Max Weber commented, "Confucianism is extremely rationalistic since it is bereft of any form of metaphysics and in the sense that it lacks traces of nearly any religious basis. . . . At the same time, it is more realistic than any other system in the sense that it lacks and excludes all measures which are not utilitarian" (cited in Nakamura, 1964, p.16).

Confucianism is a philosophy of human nature which considers proper human relationships as the basis of society. In studying human nature and motivation, Confucianism sets forth four principles from which right conduct arises: *jen* (humanism), *i* (faithfulness), *li* (propriety), and *chih* (wisdom or a liberal education).

The cardinal principle, *jen* (humanism), almost defies translation since it sums up the core of Confucianism. Fundamentally it means warm human feelings between people. McNaughton (1974) defined it as natural human feeling for others, graded according to one's relation to them. According to Lew (1970), *jen* is like a seed from which springs all the qualities that make up the ideal man. In addition, *jen* refers to the possession of all these qualities to a high degree. The actual practice or embodiment of *jen* in our daily lives is closely related to the concept of reciprocity. Confucius said that practicing *jen* is declining to do to another man what you yourself don't want (Yoon, 1984). In his own words: "If there's something that you don't like in the man to your right, don't pass it on to the man on your left. If there's something you don't like in the man to your left, don't pass it on to the man on your right" (McNaughton, 1974, p. 29).

McNaughton (1974) suggests that Confucius himself once picked out reciprocity (*shu*) as the core of his thought. Confucius said, "There has never been a case where a man who did not understand reciprocity was able to communicate to others whatever treasures he might have had stored in himself" (McNaughton, 1974, p. 28). In fact, the Chinese character for reciprocity depicts "like-heartedness" (McNaughton, 1974). Therefore, practicing *jen* implies the practice of *shu*, which in turn means to know how it would feel to be the other person, to become like-hearted, and to be able to empathize with others.

The second principle of Confucianism is *i*, meaning faithfulness, loyalty, or justice. As the definition suggests, this principle also has strong implications for social relationships. Like *jen*, *i* is a difficult concept to translate. It may be easier to understand *i* through its antithesis, which is personal or individual interest and profit. *I* is thus that part of human nature which allows us to look beyond personal, immediate profit and to elevate ourselves to the original goodness of human nature that bridges the ego and alter (Yum, 1987b). According to the principle of *i*, human relationships are not based on individual profit, but rather on the betterment of the common good. The Korean concept of *uye-ri*, which is directly derived from *i*, describes a long-term, obligatory interpersonal relationship (Yum, 1987b). It is the binding rule of social interaction. According to *uye-ri*, reciprocity is not necessarily immediate, nor does it have to be promised since both parties understand that they

are bound by *i*. Sometimes obligation can be reciprocated by the next generation, by one's family, or in a completely different form than the one originally received.

If *jen* and *i* are the contents of the Confucian ethical system, *li* (propriety, rite, respect for social forms) is its outward form. As an objective criterion of social order, *li* was perceived as the rule of the universe and the fundamental regulatory etiquette of human behavior. It has been said of *li* that "heaven weaves things together with it, Earth measures things against it, and men model their conduct on it . . . *Li* works out the relations of high and low, like sorting silk threads" (McNaughton, 1974, p. 89). Mencius suggested that *li* originated from deference to others and reservation of oneself. Confucius said that *li* follows from *jen*, that is, from being considerate of others. Only when people overcome themselves and so return to propriety can they reach humanness. On the other hand, propriety without humanness was perceived to be empty and useless.

The Impact of Confucianism on Interpersonal Relationship Patterns

At least three of the four principles of Confucianism deal directly with social relationships. Under such a strong influence, East Asian countries have developed interpersonal relationship patterns that are quite different from the individualistic patterns of North America. Figure 1 illustrates these five differences.

Particularistic versus Universalistic Relationships

Human relationships under Confucianism are not universalistic but particularistic. As we described earlier, the warm human feelings of *jen* are exercised according to one's relation with another person. Ethics in Confucian thought, therefore, are based on relationships and situations rather than on some absolute good, and they are not applicable to the larger society as a whole. Instead of applying the same rule to everybody with whom they interact, East Asians differentially grade and regulate relationships according to the status of the persons involved and the particular context. The East Asian countries have developed elaborate social interaction

East Asian Orientations	North American Orientations
1. Particularistic Particular rules and interaction patterns are applied depending upon the relationship and context	Universalistic General and objective rules are applied across diverse relationships and context
2. Long-term and asymmetrical reciprocity	Short-term and symmetrical reciprocity or contractual reciprocity
3. Sharp distinction between ingroup and outgroup members	Ingroup and outgroup distinction is not as sharp
4. Informal intermediaries Personally known intermediaries Frequently utilized for diverse relationships	Contractual intermediaries Professional intermediaries Utilized only for specific purposes
5. Personal and public relationships often overlap	Personal and public relationships are often separate

FIGURE 1

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE NORTH AMERICAN AND THE EAST ASIAN ORIENTATIONS TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP PATTERNS

patterns for those whose social position and relationship to oneself is known, but there is no universal pattern that can be applied to someone who is not known.

From a North American point of view, applying different rules to different people and situations may seem to violate the sacred code of fairness and equality that accompanies the individualistic values. In North America, human relationships are not particularized. Rather, one is supposed to follow general and objective rules (Varenne, 1977). For instance, it is quite common in America for people to say "Hi" or "Good morning" to anybody they encounter during their morning walk, or strike up a conversation with another person waiting in line. If you said "Hello" or "Good morning" to a stranger in Korea, you would be looked upon as a rather odd person.

Long-term, Asymmetrical Reciprocity versus Short-term Symmetrical or Contractual Reciprocity

Reciprocity as an embodiment of *jen* is the core concept in Confucianism, just as individualism is the core concept of the North American culture. While people may voluntarily join together for specific purposes in North America, each individual remains equal and independent (Varenne, 1977). Thus, people join or drop out of clubs without any serious group sanctions. Commitments and obligations are often perceived as threats to one's autonomy or freedom of action. Relations are symmetrical-obligatory, that is, as nearly "paid off" as possible at any given moment, or else contractual, in which case the obligation is to an institution with whom one has established some contractual base (Condon & Yousef, 1975).

In contrast, Confucian philosophy views relationships as complementary or asymmetrical and reciprocally obligatory. In a sense, a person is forever indebted to others, who in turn are constrained by other debts. Under this system of reciprocity, the individual does not calculate what he or she gives and receives. To calculate would be to think about immediate personal profits, which is the antithesis of the principle of mutual faithfulness, *i*. It is very unusual in Korea, for example, for a group of friends, colleagues, or superior and subordinates to go "Dutch" and split the bill for dinner or drinks. The practice of basing relationships on complementary obligations creates warm, lasting human relationships, but also the necessity to accept the obligations accompanying such relationships.

Ingroup/Outgroup Distinction

North American culture does not distinguish as strongly between ingroup members and outgroup members as East Asian countries. Allegiance to a group and mobility among groups are purely voluntary, so that both the longevity of membership in and loyalty to a particular group are limited.

Mutual dependency as prescribed by the Confucian principle of *i*, however, requires that one be affiliated and identify with relatively small and tightly knit groups of people over long periods of time. These long-term relationships work because each group member expects the others to reciprocate and also because group members believe that sooner or later they will have to depend on the others. People enmeshed in this kind of network make clear distinctions between ingroup and outgroup members. For example, linguistic codes for ingroup members are often different from those for outgroup members (Martin, 1964). What is inside the group and what is outside it have drastically different meanings. Confucianism provides an elaborate moral code for relationships among known members, but it does not

provide any universal rules for others because Confucianism is a situation- and context-centered philosophy.

Informal Intermediaries versus Contractual Intermediaries

Because the distinctions between ingroup and outgroup members are sharp, it is imperative to have an intermediary to help one initiate a new relationship in East Asia. Confucian emphasis on propriety (*li*) also dictates that one has to follow proper rituals in establishing a new relationship, and an intermediary is part of such rituals. The intermediary has an ingroup relationship with both parties and so can connect them. One strategy is for the intermediary to bring up an existing relationship that links the two parties, for example, explaining that "you are both graduates of so-and-so college" or "you are both from province A." Alternatively, the intermediary can use his or her own connections with them to create an indirect sense of ingroupness, for example, explaining that one is "my junior from high school," and the other "works in the same department as I do."

Intermediaries in the United States, however, are mostly professional or contractual in nature: lawyers, negotiators, marriage counselors, and the like. The intermediary is an objective, third person who does not have any knowledge of the parties' characteristics other than those directly related to the issue at hand. Also, the intermediary deals with each party as a separate, independent individual. Using personal connections to attain a desired goal does occur in the United States, but such a practice may be frowned on as nepotism and may also be perceived as relinquishing one's own individual freedom.

Overlap of Personal Relationships and Public Relationships

The Confucian concept of *i* leads to a strong distaste for a purely business transaction, carried out on a calculated and contractual basis. Therefore, in East Asian countries there is a tendency to mix personal relationships with public relationships. Even though the obvious purpose of a meeting is for business, both parties feel more comfortable if the transaction occurs on a more personal, human level. According to the principles of social reciprocity, there are several steps to follow if you want to develop an effective business relationship in Korea (Lee, 1983): (1) have frequent contacts over a relatively lengthy period of time, (2) establish a personal and human relationship, (3) if possible, create some common experiences such as sports, drinking, or travel, (4) foster mutual understanding in terms of personality, personal situations, and the like, and (5) develop a certain level of trust and favorable attitude. The goal is to diminish the clear distinction between a personal relationship and a public relationship. It is implied that if one develops a warm personal relationship, a good public relationship will ensue, because it is based on trust and mutual reciprocity. Such qualities are expected to endure rather than be limited to the business deal of the moment.

In the United States, there is a rather sharp dichotomy between private and public life. Since the primary task of the individual is to achieve a high level of autonomous self-reliance, there is an effort to separate the two lives as much as possible. Since the notion of "organizational man" contradicts the idea of the self-reliant individual, there is a certain level of anxiety about becoming an organizational man (Bellah et al., 1985). Some also perceive private life as a haven from the pressure of individualistic, competitive public life and as such to be protected.

The Impact of Confucianism on Communication Patterns

Confucianism's primary concern with social relationships has strongly influenced communication patterns in East Asia. In general, it has strengthened communication patterns that help to build and maintain proper human relationships, placing them ahead of actual business transactions and the need to get things done quickly. Figure 2 compares East Asia and North America in terms of communication patterns.

Process- versus Outcome-Oriented Communication

Since the main function of communication under Confucian philosophy is to initiate, develop, and maintain social relationships, there is a strong emphasis on the kind of communication that promotes such relationships. For instance, it is very important in East Asia to engage in small talk before initiating business and to

East Asian Orientations	North American Orientations
1. Process orientation Communication is perceived as a process of infinite interpretation.	Outcome orientation Communication is perceived as the transference of messages.
2. Differentiated linguistic codes Different linguistics codes are used depending upon persons involved and situations.	Less differentiated linguistic codes Linguistic codes are not as extensively differentiated as East Asia.
3. Indirect Communication emphasis The use of indirect communication is prevalent and accepted as normative.	Direct communication emphasis Direct communication is a norm despite the extensive use of indirect communication.
4. Receiver centered Meaning is in the interpretation. Emphasis is on listening, sensitivity, and removal of preconception.	Sender centered Meaning is in the messages created by the sender. Emphasis is on how to formulate the best messages, how to improve source credibility, and how to improve delivery skills.

FIGURE 2

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE NORTH AMERICAN AND THE EAST ASIAN ORIENTATIONS TO COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

communicate personalized information, especially information that would help place each person in the proper context. Communication is perceived to be an infinite interpretive process (Cheng, 1987) which cannot be compartmentalized. It is presumed that each partner is engaged in an on-going process and that the relationship is in flux.

In contrast, when the main function of communication is to actualize autonomy and self-fulfillment, the outcome of the communication is more important than the process. With short-term, discontinuous relationships, communication is perceived to be an action which is terminated after a certain duration and then replaced by a new communication. Tangible outcomes in terms of friends gained, opponents defeated, and self-fulfillment achieved become the primary function of communication.

Differentiated versus Less-differentiated Linguistic Codes

East Asian languages are very complex and are differentiated according to social status, degree of intimacy, age, sex, and level of formality (Chao, 1956; Martin, 1964; Suzuki, 1978; Yum, 1987a). There are also extensive and elaborate honorific linguistic systems in East Asian languages (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Ogino, Misono, & Fukushima, 1985). These differentiations are manifested not only in referential terms, but also in verbs, pronouns, and nouns. They result from Confucian ethical rules which place the highest value on proper human relationships (*i*) and on propriety (*li*). McBrien (1978) has argued that language forms an integral component of social stratification systems and the hierarchical Confucian society is well represented by the highly stratified linguistic codes in Korea.

Martin (1964) has proposed that one of the main differences between English and Japanese and Korean is the levels of speech. In both Korean and Japanese, there are two axes of distinction: the axis of address and the axis of reference. The axis of address is divided into plain, polite, and honorific, whereas the axis of reference is divided into humble and neutral (Martin, 1964). An honorific form is used to refer to the hearer's action, while a humble form is used to refer to the speaker's action. The reverse would not be appropriate. The most deferential form of speech combines the honorific address form for the hearer and the humble form of self-reference.

The English language also employs different codes depending upon level of solidarity (intimacy) and status differences between the speaker and hearer (Brown & Ford, 1964; McIntire, 1972; Slobin, Miller, & Porter, 1968). In general, however, English forms of address are reasonably well described by a single binary contrast: first name (FN) vs. title plus last name (TLN) (Brown & Ford, 1964). Certain European languages also contrast *tu* and *vous*. The use of FN or TLN can either be reciprocal (both sides use the same form of address) or non-reciprocal (one side uses FN and the other side uses TLN). Status and intimacy also play a role in greetings. For example, "Hi" is more common to intimates and to subordinates while "Good morning" is for distant acquaintance and superiors (Brown & Ford, 1964). In contrast, Ogino et al. (1985), working in Japan, found 210 different word forms, from eight address situations, which can be classified into twenty different categories. Moreover, in modern American English practice the distance between the mutual FN and mutual TLN represents only a very small increment of intimacy, sometimes as small as five minutes of conversation (Brown & Ford, 1964). In East Asian communication situations, the distance between very honorific languages and very informal ones is quite large and more often than not cannot be altered even after a long acquaintance.

In English, the speech level is defined mainly by address forms, while in Korean or Japanese, pronouns, verbs, and nouns all have different levels. Thus, in English "to eat" is "to eat" regardless of the person addressed. In the Korean language, however, there are three different ways of saying "to eat": *muk-da* (plain), *du-shin-da* (polite), and *chap-soo-shin-da* (honorific). Different levels of verb are often accompanied by different levels of noun: rice may be *bap* (plain), *shik-sa* (polite), or *jin-ji* (honorific).

In English, the pronoun "you" is used to refer alike to the old and young, to the president of the country and to the child next door. In East Asian languages, there are different words for "you" depending upon the level of politeness and upon the relationship. There is also the compulsory or preferential use of a term of address

instead of the pronoun, as when one says: *Jeh sh Wang.Shin.shen.de shu .ma?*, literally, "Is this Mr. Wang's book?" instead of "Is this your book?" (Chao, 1956, p. 218). Actual role terms such as professor, aunt, student, and so forth, are used in place of the pronoun "you" even in two-person communication, because they clarify and accentuate the relationships between the two communicators better than the simple second-person reference. Since Confucianism dictates that one should observe the proprieties prescribed by a social relationship, the generalized "you" does not seem to be appropriate in most communication situations in East Asian countries.

This differentiation of linguistic codes in East Asian cultures bears out the familiar psycho-linguistic principle that for language communities the degree of lexical differentiation of a referent field increases with the importance of that field to the community (Brown & Ford, 1964). The importance of social relationships in Confucian societies has promoted the differentiation of linguistic codes to accommodate highly differentiated relationships.

Emphasis on Indirect Communication versus Emphasis on Direct Communication

Most cultures have both direct and indirect modes of communication. Metaphor, insinuations, innuendos, hints, and irony are only a few examples of the kinds of indirect communication which can be found in most linguistic communities. According to Searle (1969), indirect speech acts occur when the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he or she actually says by referring to some mutually shared background information and by relying on the hearer's powers of rationality and inference. Brown and Levinson (1978) have suggested that indirect speech acts are universal because they perform a basic service in strategies of politeness.

Even though the indirect mode of communication seems to be universal, the degree to which it is elaborated varies from culture to culture (Katriel, 1986). For instance, the Malagasy speech community values an indirect style (Keenan, 1974), while certain Sabra culture prefers a straight-talking (*dugri*) style (Katriel, 1986). In the United States, tough-talk has received attention as a literary style (Gibson, 1966). Rosaldo (1973) maintained that the Euro-American association of plain talk (direct talk) with a scientific and democratic attitude (Lanham, 1974; Perelman, 1963; Warnick, 1982) may not hold true in different cultural contexts. In Ilongot society, for example, plain talk is perceived as authoritarian and exclusionary while indirect language, language rich in metaphor and elaborate rhythms, is perceived as accommodating and sensitive to individual wishes (Rosaldo, 1973).

Brown and Levinson (1978) have suggested that politeness phenomena in language (indirectness is just one of them) derive from the notion of "face," the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself or herself. According to Katriel (1986), indirect speech acts are the result of a predominant concern for the other person's face, while a direct speech style reflects a predominant concern for one's own face.

The Confucian legacy of consideration for others and concern for proper human relationships has led to the development of communication patterns that allow interlocutors to preserve one another's face. Indirect communication helps to prevent the embarrassment of rejection by the other person or disagreement among partners, leaving the relationship and the face of each party intact. Lebra (1976) suggested that "defending face" is one of the main factors influencing Japanese behavior. She listed a number of concrete mechanisms for defending face, such as mediated communica-

tion (asking someone else to transmit the message), refracted communication (talking to a third person in the presence of the hearer), and acting as a delegate (conveying one's message as being from someone else), which are all indirect forms of communication.

The use of the indirect mode of communication in East Asia is pervasive and often deliberate. In comparing Japanese organizations and American organizations, it has been noted that American employees strive to communicate with each other in a clear, precise, and explicit manner, whereas Japanese often deliberately communicate in a vague and indirect manner (Hirokawa, 1987; Pascale, 1978). In compliance-gaining styles, North Americans were found to have greater preference for strategies that involve positive self-feeling, allurements, bargaining, and direct request, whereas the Japanese prefer indirect styles such as moral appeal and explanation (Shatzer, Burgoon, Burgoon, Korzenny, & Miller, 1988). The extensive nature of indirect communication is exemplified by the fact that there are sixteen evasive "maneuvers" which can be employed by the Japanese to avoid saying "no" (Imai, 1981).

It has also been suggested that there is a significant difference in the level of indirectness between North American and East Asian communication patterns (Okabe, 1987). An American might say, "The door is open," as an indirect way of asking the hearer to shut the door. In Japan, instead of saying, "The door is open," one often says, "It is somewhat cold today." This is even more indirect, because no words refer to the door (Okabe, 1987). Operating at a still higher level of indirection, one Japanese wife communicated her discord with her mother-in-law to her husband by slight irregularities in her flower arrangements (Lebra, 1976).

One of Grice's maxims for cooperative conversation is "manner," which suggests that speakers should avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity (Grice, 1975). This direct communication is a norm in North America, despite the extensive use of indirect communication. Grice's principle would not be accepted as a norm, however, in East Asia. Okabe (1987) has shown that in Japan, the traditional rule of communication which prescribes not to demand, reject, assert oneself, or criticize the listener straightforwardly is a much more dominant principle than Grice's maxim of manner.

Reischauer (1977, p. 136) concluded that "the Japanese have a genuine mistrust of verbal skills, thinking that these tend to show superficiality in contrast to inner, less articulate feelings that are communicated by innuendo or by nonverbal means." Thus, even though both North American and the East Asian communication communities employ indirect communication, its use is much more prevalent and accepted as normative in the former than the latter.

Receiver versus Sender-Centeredness

North American communication very often centers on the speaker, and until recently the linear, one-way model from speaker to hearer was the prevailing model of communication. Much emphasis has been placed on how speakers can formulate better messages, improve source credibility, polish their delivery skills, and so forth. In contrast, the emphasis in East Asia has always been on listening and interpretation.

Cheng (1987) has identified infinite interpretation as one of the main principles of Chinese communication. The process of such an infinite interpretation presumes that

the emphasis is on the receiver and listening rather than the sender or speech making. According to Lebra (1976, p. 123), "anticipatory communication" is common in Japan. In this mode of communication, "instead of ego's having to tell or ask for what he wants, others around him guess and accommodate his needs, sparing him embarrassment." In such cases, the burden of communication falls not on the message sender but on the message receiver. One of the common puzzles expressed by foreign students from East Asia is why they are constantly being asked what they want when they are visiting in American homes. In their own countries, the host or hostess is supposed to know what is needed and serve accordingly.

With the emphasis on indirect communication, the receiver's sensitivity and ability to capture the under-the-surface meaning and to discern implicit meaning becomes critical. In North America, an effort has been made to improve the effectiveness of speakers through such formal training as debate and public speaking, whereas in East Asia, the effort has been on improving the receiver's sensitivity. The highest sensitivity is reached when one empties one's preconceptions and makes one's mind as clear as a mirror (Yuji, 1984). When such same-heartedness is established, the ideal of communicating without using language at all follows (Tsuji-mura, 1987).

DISCUSSION

This paper compared the East Asian emphasis on social relationships with the North American emphasis on individualism. These two emphases produce very different patterns of interpersonal relationships and communication. The conclusions drawn in this paper are not absolute, however. Each culture contains both orientations to some degree. It is simply more probable that East Asians would exhibit certain patterns of communication, such as indirect communication, than North Americans.

The North American preoccupation with individualism and related concepts, such as equality, fairness, and justice, and its far reaching influences on the whole fiber of society are well documented. On the other hand, the importance of social relationships as a key to the East Asian countries has been recognized only recently. For instance, investigations of Japanese management styles have found that one of the fundamental differences between Japanese management and American management is the personalized, interdependent relationships among Japanese employees and between Japanese managers and employees (Pascale & Athos, 1981). These human relationships are grounded in loyalty and high productivity. It is not uncommon to explain such relationships away as merely a result of other organizational practices, such as life-long employment. If one looks under the surface, however, one will realize that they are derived from a thousand-year old Confucian legacy, and that similar human relationship patterns are found outside of large organizations. Consequently, attempts to transplant such a management style to North America with its philosophical and cultural orientation of individualism cannot be entirely satisfactory. The culture itself would have to be modified first.

There has been increasing concern in North America about the pursuit of individualism at the expense of commitment to larger entities such as the community, civic groups, and other organizations. It has been suggested that modern individualism has progressed to such an extent that most Americans are trapped by the language of individualism itself and have lost the ability to articulate their own need to become involved (Bellah et al., 1985). Although individualism has its own strength

as a value, individualism which is not accompanied by commitments to larger entities eventually forces people into a state of isolation.

If human beings are fundamentally social animals, then it is necessary to balance the cultural belief system of individualism and to satisfy the need to be involved with others. Americans have joined voluntary associations and civic organizations more than any other citizens of the industrialized world. However, such recent phenomena as the "me" generation, and young stock brokers who pursue only personal gain at the expense of their own organizations or the society as a whole, can be perceived as pathological symptoms of individualism driven to its extreme. Bellah et al. (1985, p. 284) have maintained that "social ecology is damaged not only by war, genocide, and political repression. It is also damaged by the destruction of the subtle ties that bind human beings to one another, leaving them frightened and alone." They strongly argue that we need to restore social ecology by making people aware of our intricate connectedness and interdependence.

The emphasis of Confucianism on social relationships is conducive to cooperation, warm, relaxed human relations, consideration of others, and group harmony, but it has costs as well. Under such social constraints, individual initiative and innovation are slow to appear, and some feel as if their individuality has been suffocated. Because of the sharp distinction between ingroups and outgroups, factionalism may be inevitable. Within such well-defined sets of social relationships, people have a highly developed sense of obligation but a weak sense of duty to impersonal social entities. Since the main criteria for proper behavior are the social relationships among the participants and the situation in which the interaction occurs, the Confucian tradition could open a door to double standards of morality and conduct.

There have been substantial changes in the East Asian societies since World War II. There has been an irreversible influx of Western values; imported films and television programs are ubiquitous. However, it is not easy to change several hundred years of Confucian legacy. In Japan, for example, a larger proportion of the young people than old preferred a boss endowed with the virtues of humanness and sympathy, as opposed to a more efficient boss who would not ask for extra devotion. The overall percentage who chose the Confucian ideal stabilized around 82 to 85 percent between the 1950's and 1970's (Dore, 1973). A similar finding was reported in Korea. When Korean workers, mostly in manufacturing plants, were asked their reasons for changing jobs, those who answered "a better human relationship and more humane treatment" still outnumbered those who answered "better pay" (Kim, 1984).

It seems inevitable, however, that the East Asian countries will see an increasing number of people who do not have traditional, binding relationships as the society moves further toward industrialization and higher mobility. The task will be to find a way for such people to cope with life without the protection of close ingroup memberships, and to learn to find satisfaction in expressing individual freedom and self-reliance.

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