

The Concept of Self in Korea: Indigenous, Cultural, and Psychological Analysis*

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This study examines the concept of the self, using indigenous, cultural and psychological analysis. The self is viewed from four aspects: 1) concept of the self as an entity (the self in general, the self as a unique entity and the self when alone); 2) concept of the self in the context of family (the self when with one's father, mother, children and spouse); 3) the self within the context of close and working relationships (the self when with friends, teachers, work superior and work subordinate); and 4) the self in the context of the larger society (the self when with strangers and foreigners). A total of 1,465 respondents (623 elementary, middle, high and university students and their parents=842) completed an open-ended questionnaire developed by the present authors. The results reveal two overall patterns of results. First, the concept of self in Korea is influenced by one's role. Second, the concept of self is influenced by relationship and context, and there is an emphasis on the flexibility and adjustment of the self to relationship and context. Implications of the concept of the self in the context of relationships, roles, and contexts are discussed, along with the importance of indigenous, cultural, and psychological analysis.

Keywords: *Self, Indigenous Psychology, Objective and Subjective Self, Consistency, Flexibility of the Self, Role-Fulfillment, Korea*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Who am I? People often ask this question in their lifetime. Human beings differ from other animals because they ask this fundamental question about themselves. Although animal behavior is driven by instinct and influenced by a particular ecological context, human beings can transcend their instinct and view themselves objectively and subjectively. It is not only the present self that exists, but also a self that can be viewed through a mirror of consciousness.

In the late 19th century, William James distinguished the objective self and the subjective self, between the known and the knower (James 1912). Psychologists were not the only scholars searching for the understanding of the self; philosophers raised the question much earlier. Socrates emphasized *know thyself*, and it became the starting point of numerous philosophical discourse that sought to understand the self.

Confucianism has shaped the East Asian worldview and emphasized introspection and cultivation through self-discipline. In order to realize one's virtue, it is important for a person to cultivate oneself and pursue perfection by seeking unity between the heaven and self, through constant self-cultivation. A learned person continuously seeks to improve the self. For Buddhism, perfection, and unity with heaven is achieved through the dissolution of the self, where an individual's mind appears, stays, changes, and disappears (Seung 1997). The foundations of the self in East Asia differ qualitatively from Western perspectives.

Even those who are not philosophers or religious look inward in their daily lives to confirm themselves, to behave like themselves, to cultivate themselves, to try to realize their ideal self and abandon their former self in pursuit of other goals. The cumulative effect of this process results in one's own self-perception and life goals. This is the reason why people's self-awareness is not fixed, but is continuously rediscovered through environmental factors and experiences, is restructured, and constantly changing and created.

II. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE SELF-CONCEPT

Over the years, there have been numerous debates on not only the differences across cultures, but also the various explanations for these cultural differences. This discussion of cultural differences have included understanding the difference between a culture's individualistic and collectivistic orientation (Hofstede 1991), as well as the level of the culture's tightness and looseness (Jung, T. et al. 2005). There continues to be an extensive debate over the difference between Western and Eastern cultures, religions, philosophy, and psychology (Kim, U. and Park, Y. 2001, 2005; Kim, U. 2003).

Cultural differences are also important in understanding the conception of the self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) found that while Westerners tended to orient themselves toward a self that distinguished them from others (i.e., independent self-construal), Asians adopted a perception of the self that was influenced by their relationship with others (i.e., interdependent self-construal). It can be said that Asians self-concepts are more fluid than Westerners in being influenced by the relationship and social context.

Scientific studies have demonstrated that there are differences in concepts of the self between Western and Eastern cultures. According to a study that looked at the differences between American and Indian undergraduates' self-concepts, American students made more self-appraising statements about themselves and appraised events as more discrepant from what they wanted than did Indian students (Dhawan et al. 1995).

In Korea, Suh, E. (2002) has found that when Korean students were ask to evaluate themselves when they were alone versus interacting with others, their self-perceptions were more likely to change according to their social context than those of American students. Kashima et al. (2004) found that individuals become more sensitive depending on the context and this is found across cultures, and the degree of change and reason for change are particular to each culture. When undergraduates from the West (i.e., Australia, Germany, and England) and the East (i.e., Japan and South Korea) were compared, students from the East were more likely to change themselves according to their situation.

Cho, G. and Myung, J. (2001) compared the internalized culture of high

school and university students and found that identity formation depended on their cultural disposition. Those students who were individualistic emphasized their personal sense of identity, while those who were collectivistic emphasized a relative, public sense of identity. Individualistic people who were strong in personal sense of identity exaggerated their uniqueness, loss of individuality, and reduced self-efficacy often led to depression. On the other hand, collectivistic individuals with a public sense of identity exaggerated resembling the people around them, and loss of interdependence led to depression. These differences are explained by the idea that individualists emphasize their inner qualities, while collectivists focus on others and ingroup members.

Review of the literature indicates that concepts of the self are influenced by cultural differences. The following section reviews cultural differences and its influence on concept of the self in Korea.

III. RESEARCH ON KOREANS' SELF-CONCEPT: THE SELF THAT IS DISCOVERED WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS

Alongside the development of indigenous psychology (Kim, U. and Park, Y. 2004a), there have been numerous attempts to systematically understand Korean people and culture. There have been various studies that investigated the indigenous psychology of Koreans' self-concepts (Park, Y. and Kim, U. 2004). Choi, S. (1992) analyzed the self from a cultural psychology perspective and found that the Korean and Western selves were different in various respects. Choi, S. and Kim, K. (1999) found that Koreans' notion of the self was qualitatively different from Westerners' notion of the self, and analyzed the reasons behind the Western entity self and Korean relational self. They concluded that the Korean self is relational and founded on cultural values, and that Koreans placed far more importance on the question of "what should I do?" than "who am I?"

Understanding the question "what kind of concept do Korean people have of themselves" is significant because it influences the direction, strength, and persistence of individuals' behaviors. Park, A. (2002) has found that an individual who feels indebted to their parents for their sacrifice and

internalizes his or her high expectations do not easily give up when they encounter adversity. Even when they may entertain suicidal ideation in the face of extreme hardship, the reason why they do not give up and commit suicide is the strong and affectionate ties that they have with their parents. When Korean youth understand their parents' expectations, they also see that they do not have the right to give up. Parents and children lie at the center of Koreans' relational self and it constitutes the basis of Koreans' self-concepts.

Kim, U. (2002) expanded the development of the idea of the objective self and the observing self, and sought to explain Koreans' self-concept within the relational context (Park, Y. and Kim, U. 2004). For Koreans, it is not that the self and others are linked together to form relationships, but individuals discover relationships within themselves, and that they discover themselves within those relationships. These relationships make everyday use of the notion of Korean word *woori* ("we") more dynamic. Cha, J. and Park, J. (1991) have found such psychological meaning of the expression of *woori* in the collectivistic context.

Kim, J. and Kim, M. (2003) explored the meaning of the Korean relational self and the different factors that constructed it. They found that the reason behind the strong, collectivistic culture of Koreans was the importance both men and women placed on their relationships with others in defining themselves.

Indigenous psychological research has focused on Koreans' self-concept in the context of the parent-children relationship (Park, Y. and Kim, U. 2004). Based on previous research (Yang, K. and Kim, U. 2001; Hamm, B. and Park, Y. 2001; Hamm, B. et al. 2004), the following are the summary of the results of Koreans' self-concepts when they are with their parents. First, Koreans show different sides of themselves when they are with their fathers. They felt uncomfortable and avoided their fathers, but also felt they that should behave like a child when they are with them. Second, the most representative quality of the self was feeling indebted when they were with their fathers. Third, security and comfort was the most representative self-concept that Koreans had when they were with their mothers. Fourth, there were age differences in self-concept when they were with their parents. Students behaved like children when with their parents, while adults felt indebted to their fathers and felt like they should be good and take care of their mothers. Fifth, there

were emotional, behavioral, and gender-based differences in self-concept in relation to their parents. Sons were more likely to feel indebted towards their fathers, while daughters were more likely to converse with their mothers.

Korean parents' self-concepts when they were with their children can be summarized by following three main findings. First, parents had a strong sense of responsibility and understanding towards their children. Second, their sense of pride came from their children. Third, fathers' felt a strong sense of responsibility towards the children and the mothers felt tremendous pride from their children.

Based on previous studies (Hamm, B. et al. 2001, 2002, 2004a, 2004b), Park, Y. and Kim, U. (2004) analyzed "Koreans' search for the self through ancestral ceremony" and "Korean's notion of the self within the relational context." The results indicate that rather than perceiving themselves as independent individuals, Koreans find themselves in meaningful relationships with others and within the context of their relational roles. Koreans internalize their self-concept within the relational role, as a parent or a child within the context of the parent-child relationship. The parent-child relationship is expanded and serves as a basis to form other relationships, such as student-teacher relationships. The family based parent-child and elder-brother/sister relationship are expanded and extended to the workplace to their superiors and co-workers. Rather than confirming a self-concept that is based on discrete individuality or uniqueness, Koreans hold a flexible sense of self that is based on the relational context and their diverse set of roles.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Research on one's sense of self is significant not only for its scientific merit, but also because of its implications for mental health. Previous literature points toward the association between self-concept and mental health issues such as depression. Choi, J. and Lee, Y. (1998) found that those who were depressed were experiencing more discord in their self-concept than those who were not. Although there was no difference between the two groups with regard to idealistic selves, depressed individuals had lower sense of actual self-concept. According to research that investigated the relationship between

the variables of self-concept and mental health (Chun, H. and No, M. 1991), feeling unable to fulfill family expectations was related to depression, while feeling unable to maintain a satisfying family life was related to guilt. It was also discovered that self-concept was directly related to anxiety (Cho, S. et al. 2005; Cho, S. et al. 2005).

Cho, H.'s (1998) research on self-concept when respondents were with parents research has found, with the exception of a minority of students who experienced negative self-concepts due to pressure from their parents, most students perceived a positive self-concept when with their parents. They felt that their parents provided them with encouragement and growth.

Based on previous research on Koreans' self-concept (Park, Y. and Kim, U. 2004; Hamm, B. et al. 2004a; Kim, U. 2004, 2005), this research takes a more comprehensive and systematic approach to better understand Koreans' sense of self. The main purpose of this research is to investigate Koreans' sense of self through an indigenous psychological perspective.

This study looks at four particular aspects of the self: self as an entity (me in general, me that's unique, or me when alone), self when with family (me when with father, mother, children, spouse), self when with close and working relationship (me when with a close friend, teacher, superior at work, or subordinate at work), and self when with others (me when with a stranger or foreigner). This research takes a comprehensive approach to analyzing the personal and relational aspects of self-concept and seeks to understand Korean's sense of self through an indigenous psychological perspective. This study analyzes the generational differences and similarities between students and adults.

V. METHODOLOGY

1. Sample

This study sampled a total of 1,465 participants, with 623 students and 842 adults. (See Table 1). The males and females among the students and adults were evenly distributed, except for university students. The student sample included Grade 6 students in elementary school, Grade 9

Table 1. Sample

Sex	Number	Students					Adults
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Total	
Male	646	73	65	62	46	246	400
Female	819	75	64	82	156	377	422
Total	1,465	148	129	144	202	623	842

students in middle school, Grade 12 students in high school, and university students. Approximately 13.2% of students were high-achieving, 39.2% were moderately high-achieving, 30.2% were moderately achieving, 10.4% were moderately low-achieving, and 7.1% were low-achieving.

In the adult sample, the average age of fathers was 39.8 years old and for mothers was 38.1 years old. As for education of fathers 4.5% graduated elementary school, 6.7% graduated middle school, 44.4% graduated high school, 36.8% graduated university, and 7.6% graduated graduate school. For mothers 4.3% graduated elementary school, 11.4% graduated middle school, 67.7% graduated high school, 16.2% graduated university, and 0.5% graduated graduate school. A total of 75.5% of mothers were housewives, while only 24.5% had a job outside of the home. Families' standard of living was normally distributed (3.8% high, 13.8% middle-high, 60.3% middle, 14.5% middle-low, and 7.6% low)

2. Instrument

The instrument used for this study was developed by the researchers. Students and adults had different questionnaires that they could answer in an open-ended format. While the themes for each of the survey questions were identical, participants were asked to freely record the ideas that came into their mind when reading each question. There were four broad categories of survey questions: 1) self as an entity (me in general, me that's unique, or me when alone), 2) self when with family (me when with father, mother, children, spouse), 3) self when in a close and working relationship (me when with a close friend, teacher, superior at work, or subordinate at work), and 4) self when with others (me when with a stranger or foreigner). The following

is an example of a question: “When I am with my father, I am_____.” The student and adult questionnaires differed in the target persons (e.g., the target person “father” for the student version of the questionnaire vs. the target person “child” for the adult version of the questionnaire). In the demographic section, students listed their answers for school, academic scores, and family’s standard of living and adults listed their age, educational background, job status and type, and the family’s standard of living.

Responses for each question were categorized into similar themes. Next, similar themes were organized and labeled as a category and a coding scheme was developed. Similar categories were placed under the broader category, and each category and broader category was labeled. Through independent categorization and then consensus among the three coders, the final coding scheme was established. Using this coding scheme, researchers coded a number for a specific response and conducted a frequency analysis. Research then conducted frequency analysis on the final categories. Based on the frequency analysis, researchers finalized the frequency counts of each category and organized them from highest frequency to lowest frequency. Additional cross-tabulation analyses were conducted based on students’ grade level (elementary, middle, high, university) and sex (male, female), as well as adults’ age group (39 or below, below 40) and sex.

3. Procedure

Student surveys were distributed and collected within elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities with the help of homeroom teachers and professors. Students took approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Adult surveys were distributed and collected by having students take the surveys home and have their parents complete them. Results from parents make up the adult sample of the study. Researchers communicated the importance of completing the surveys to the students, and informed them of the confidentiality, and their compensation for their and their parents’ participation.

VI. RESULTS

1. Concept of Self as an Entity

Three separate analyses were conducted in order to investigate Koreans' concept of themselves as entities: Analyses for the self in general, the self as a unique entity and the self when alone. The results are presented in Tables 2-7.

As shown in Table 2, more than 30% of students responded with the highest frequency for the category "active" for the self in general, followed by nearly 20% responding with "introverted," "ordinary," and "diligent," and by more than 5% responding with "fulfill my role." Regardless of school level or sex, the response "active" was the most frequent response.

For adults, the response "active" was also the most frequent response. The percentage of adults' response with "fulfill my role" closely followed "active," followed by "ordinary," "diligent," and "introverted." There were different response patterns for adults by age group and gender, with those in their 30's mostly responding with "active," and those starting in their 40's with "fulfill my role" or "ordinary." "Ordinary" was the most common response among males, while "active" was most common amongst females.

In sum, Koreans' self-concept in general can be outlined by three characteristics. First, Koreans tended to have a positive concept of the self. The findings show that both students and adults most frequently described themselves as active and happy. More specifically, three students out of the 10 and two adults out of the 10 described themselves as active and happy. These positive self-concepts were associated with participants' feeling that they were living their lives diligently.

Second, many participants reported that they were fulfilling their roles. Results demonstrate that participants' sensitivity to fulfilling their roles in a given situation increased as they became older. For example, this response was the fifth most frequent among students, with 5.9% choosing "fulfill my role," while it was the second most popular among adults, with 19.5% choosing the response. Those participants above the age of 40 indicated that fulfilling their roles was most representative of their self-concept.

Adolescents felt that being active best described their self-concept, and

Table 2. Concept of Self in General: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade Level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Active	185 (31.2)	64 (43.8)	37 (31.8)	34 (24.7)	50 (26.2)	57 (24.9)	128 (35.2)
① Active	80 (13.5)	21 (14.3)	14 (12.1)	15 (11.0)	30 (15.8)	18 (7.9)	62 (17.0)
② Happy	41 (6.9)	8 (5.5)	13 (11.2)	5 (3.6)	15 (7.9)	14 (6.1)	27 (7.4)
③ Humorous	28 (4.7)	16 (11.0)	4 (3.4)	6 (4.3)	2 (1.0)	6 (2.6)	22 (6.1)
④ Talkative	20 (3.4)	8 (5.5)	4 (3.4)	6 (4.3)	2 (1.0)	6 (2.6)	14 (3.9)
⑤ Engaged in hobbies	16 (2.7)	11 (7.5)	2 (1.7)	2 (1.5)	1 (0.5)	13 (5.7)	3 (0.8)
2. Introverted	104 (17.7)	26 (17.8)	10 (8.6)	22 (15.9)	46 (24.0)	39 (17.2)	65 (17.9)
① Lack flexibility	37 (6.3)	6 (4.1)	2 (1.7)	12 (8.7)	17 (8.9)	18 (7.9)	19 (5.2)
② Introverted	35 (5.9)	9 (6.2)	8 (6.9)	5 (3.6)	13 (6.8)	8 (3.5)	27 (7.4)
③ Distractible	14 (2.4)	4 (2.7)	-	3 (2.2)	7 (3.6)	5 (2.2)	9 (2.5)
④ Dislikable	10 (1.7)	1 (0.7)	-	1 (0.7)	8 (4.2)	4 (1.8)	6 (1.7)
⑤ Irritable	8 (1.4)	6 (4.1)	-	1 (0.7)	1 (0.5)	4 (1.8)	4 (1.1)
3. Ordinary	96 (16.2)	15 (10.3)	29 (25.1)	19 (13.9)	33 (17.4)	37 (16.2)	59 (16.3)
① Ordinary	79 (13.3)	12 (8.2)	22 (19.1)	15 (11.0)	30 (15.8)	26 (11.4)	53 (14.6)
② Average	17 (2.9)	3 (2.1)	7 (6.0)	4 (2.9)	3 (1.6)	11 (4.8)	6 (1.7)
4. Diligent	68 (11.6)	16 (11.0)	15 (13.0)	12 (8.6)	25 (13.0)	33 (14.5)	35 (9.7)
① Hard-working	48 (8.1)	15 (10.3)	10 (8.6)	9 (6.4)	14 (7.3)	23 (10.1)	25 (6.9)
② Responsible	8 (1.4)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.9)	-	6 (3.1)	3 (1.3)	5 (1.4)
③ Steady	8 (1.4)	-	3 (2.6)	-	5 (2.6)	4 (1.8)	4 (1.1)
④ Sincere	4 (0.7)	-	1 (0.9)	3 (2.2)	-	3 (1.3)	1 (0.3)
5. Fulfill my role	35 (5.9)	7 (4.8)	6 (5.1)	12 (8.6)	10 (5.3)	19 (8.3)	16 (4.4)
① Kind	19 (3.2)	6 (4.1)	4 (3.4)	6 (4.3)	3 (1.6)	12 (5.3)	7 (1.9)
② Fulfill my role	9 (1.5)	1 (0.7)	-	5 (3.6)	3 (1.6)	3 (1.3)	6 (1.7)
③ Friendly	6 (1.0)	-	2 (1.7)	1 (0.7)	3 (1.6)	3 (1.3)	3 (0.8)
④ Family-oriented	1 (0.2)	-	-	-	1 (0.5)	1 (0.4)	-
6. Other	103 (17.4)	18 (12.3)	19 (16.4)	39 (28.3)	27 (14.1)	43 (18.9)	60 (16.5)
① Sleep	26 (4.4)	3 (2.1)	3 (2.6)	3 (2.2)	17 (8.9)	11 (4.8)	15 (4.1)
② Just myself	26 (4.4)	5 (3.4)	8 (6.9)	11 (8.0)	2 (1.0)	12 (5.3)	14 (3.9)
③ Others	51 (8.6)	10 (6.8)	8 (6.9)	25 (18.1)	8 (4.2)	20 (8.8)	31 (8.5)
Total	591 (100.0)	146 (100.0)	116 (100.0)	138 (100.0)	191 (100.0)	228 (100.0)	363 (100.0)

while adults also had a positive view of themselves, these tendencies slowly decreased over time and they tended to emphasize fulfilling their roles as age

Table 3. Concept of Self in General: Adult Sample

Category \ Adult	Total (%)	Age Group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Active	156 (21.7)	98 (24.3)	58 (18.3)	53 (15.3)	103 (27.8)
① Feel pleasure	54 (7.5)	29 (7.2)	25 (7.9)	20 (5.8)	34 (9.2)
② Active	52 (7.2)	35 (8.7)	17 (5.4)	9 (2.6)	43 (11.6)
③ Engaged in hobbies	38 (5.3)	23 (5.7)	15 (4.7)	17 (4.9)	21 (5.7)
④ Humorous	9 (1.3)	8 (2.0)	1 (0.3)	6 (1.7)	3 (0.8)
⑤ Talkative	3 (0.4)	3 (0.7)	-	1 (0.3)	2 (0.5)
2. Fulfill my role	139 (19.5)	80 (19.9)	59 (18.7)	51 (14.6)	88 (23.8)
① Fulfill my role	56 (8.0)	37 (9.2)	19 (6.0)	15 (4.3)	41 (11.1)
② Friendly	42 (5.8)	26 (6.5)	16 (5.1)	15 (4.3)	27 (7.3)
③ Family-oriented	30 (4.2)	13 (3.2)	17 (5.4)	16 (4.6)	14 (3.8)
④ Kind	11 (1.5)	4 (1.0)	7 (2.2)	5 (1.4)	6 (1.6)
3. Ordinary	119 (16.6)	60 (15.0)	59 (18.7)	64 (18.6)	55 (14.7)
① Ordinary	112 (15.6)	56 (14.0)	56 (17.8)	59 (17.2)	53 (14.2)
② Average	7 (1.0)	4 (1.0)	3 (0.9)	5 (1.4)	2 (0.5)
4. Diligent	104 (14.4)	54 (13.4)	50 (15.8)	63 (18.1)	41 (11.1)
① Hard-working	46 (6.4)	27 (6.7)	19 (6.0)	30 (8.6)	16 (4.3)
② Sincere	26 (3.6)	13 (3.2)	13 (4.1)	12 (3.5)	14 (3.8)
③ Responsible	21 (2.9)	8 (2.0)	13 (4.1)	13 (3.7)	8 (2.2)
④ Steady	11 (1.5)	6 (1.5)	5 (1.6)	8 (2.3)	3 (0.8)
5. Introverted	101 (14.1)	59 (14.7)	42 (13.3)	51 (14.7)	50 (13.4)
① Introverted	37 (5.2)	18 (4.5)	19 (6.0)	22 (6.3)	15 (4.0)
② Lack flexibility	33 (4.6)	23 (5.7)	10 (3.2)	18 (5.2)	15 (4.0)
③ Dislikable	26 (3.6)	16 (4.0)	10 (3.2)	10 (2.9)	16 (4.3)
④ Irritable	5 (0.7)	2 (0.5)	3 (0.9)	1 (0.3)	4 (1.1)
6. Other	99 (13.7)	51 (12.7)	48 (15.2)	65 (18.7)	34 (9.2)
① Sleep	36 (5.0)	19 (4.7)	17 (5.4)	24 (6.9)	12 (3.2)
② Just myself	16 (2.2)	8 (2.0)	8 (2.5)	5 (1.4)	11 (3.0)
③ Other	47 (6.5)	24 (6.0)	23 (7.3)	36 (10.4)	11 (3.0)
Total	718 (100.0)	402 (100.0)	316 (100.0)	347 (100.0)	371 (100.0)

progressed. This is particularly true of the participants over the age of 40.

Third, there was a tendency towards describing one's self-concept as "ordinary." This category was the third highest response among students and adults. Nearly a fifth of participants described themselves as "ordinary."

Table 4. Concept of Self as a Unique Entity: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade Level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Individuality	175 (33.0)	48 (36.9)	33 (34.0)	44 (35.6)	50 (28.1)	69 (33.5)	106 (33.0)
① Individuality	139 (26.2)	34 (26.1)	23 (23.7)	38 (30.8)	44 (24.7)	52 (25.3)	87 (27.1)
② Hobbies	26 (4.9)	11 (8.5)	6 (6.2)	4 (3.2)	5 (2.8)	12 (5.8)	14 (4.3)
③ Distinct looks	10 (1.9)	3 (2.3)	4 (4.1)	2 (1.6)	1 (0.6)	5 (2.4)	5 (1.6)
2. Confidence	121 (22.8)	23 (17.7)	19 (19.6)	30 (24.2)	49 (27.6)	45 (21.7)	76 (23.6)
① Confident	78 (14.7)	14 (10.8)	14 (14.4)	22 (17.7)	28 (15.7)	30 (14.5)	48 (14.9)
② Proud	21 (4.0)	7 (5.4)	3 (3.1)	5 (4.0)	6 (3.4)	11 (5.3)	10 (3.1)
③ Hard-working	15 (2.8)	2 (1.5)	2 (2.1)	2 (1.6)	9 (5.1)	4 (1.9)	11 (3.4)
④ Good	7 (1.3)	-	-	1 (0.9)	6 (3.4)	-	7 (2.2)
3. Thoughtful	89 (16.8)	26 (20.0)	16 (16.5)	18 (14.4)	29 (16.2)	39 (18.7)	50 (15.5)
① Fun	30 (5.7)	14 (10.8)	8 (8.2)	3 (2.4)	5 (2.8)	17 (8.2)	13 (4.0)
② Quiet	23 (4.3)	8 (6.2)	2 (2.1)	3 (2.4)	10 (5.6)	9 (4.3)	14 (4.3)
③ Thoughtful	16 (3.0)	2 (1.5)	3 (3.1)	6 (4.8)	5 (2.8)	5 (2.4)	11 (3.4)
④ Develop self	10 (1.9)	-	1 (1.0)	4 (3.2)	5 (2.8)	4 (1.9)	6 (1.9)
⑤ Kind	10 (1.9)	2 (1.5)	2 (2.1)	2 (1.6)	4 (2.2)	4 (1.9)	6 (1.9)
4. Discontent	80 (15.2)	7 (5.4)	17 (17.5)	21 (17.0)	35 (19.7)	23 (11.1)	57 (17.6)
① Discontent	39 (7.4)	4 (3.1)	9 (9.3)	11 (8.9)	15 (8.4)	13 (6.3)	26 (8.1)
② Lack individuality	19 (3.6)	1 (0.8)	4 (4.1)	5 (4.0)	9 (5.1)	7 (3.4)	12 (3.7)
③ Talkative	15 (2.8)	2 (1.5)	4 (4.1)	4 (3.2)	5 (2.8)	3 (1.4)	12 (3.7)
④ Self-centered	4 (0.8)	-	-	1 (0.9)	3 (1.7)	-	4 (1.2)
⑤ Lack patience	3 (0.6)	-	-	-	3 (1.7)	-	3 (0.9)
5. Average	43 (8.2)	20 (15.4)	7 (7.2)	7 (5.6)	9 (5.0)	22 (10.7)	21 (6.6)
① Average	30 (5.7)	13 (10.0)	7 (7.2)	3 (2.4)	7 (3.9)	14 (6.8)	16 (5.0)
② Laid back	13 (2.5)	7 (5.4)	-	4 (3.2)	2 (1.1)	8 (3.9)	5 (1.6)
6. Other	21 (4.0)	6 (4.6)	5 (5.2)	4 (3.2)	6 (3.4)	9 (4.3)	12 (3.7)
Total	529 (100.0)	130 (100.0)	97 (100.0)	124 (100.0)	178 (100.0)	207 (100.0)	322 (100.0)

This was a common response among adult men in particular, with 18.6% describing themselves in this way.

Table 4 presents students' self-concepts as it relates to the self as a unique entity. "Individuality" had the highest response rate among students with

Table 5. Concept of Self as a Unique Entity: Adult Sample

Category \ Adult	Total (%)	Age Group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Confidence	142 (23.7)	70 (21.2)	72 (26.7)	78 (26.7)	64 (21.3)
① Confident	97 (16.2)	43 (13.0)	54 (20.0)	56 (19.3)	41 (14.0)
② Hard-working	39 (6.5)	24 (7.3)	15 (5.6)	18 (6.1)	21 (6.8)
③ Good	5 (0.8)	3 (0.9)	2 (0.7)	3 (1.0)	2 (0.5)
④ Proud	1 (0.2)	-	1 (0.4)	1 (0.3)	-
2. Discontent	129 (21.5)	74 (22.3)	55 (20.3)	61 (20.8)	68 (22.4)
① Discontent	72 (12.0)	42 (12.7)	30 (11.1)	32 (10.9)	40 (13.6)
② Lack individuality	22 (3.7)	10 (3.0)	12 (4.4)	12 (4.1)	10 (3.2)
③ Self-centered	18 (3.0)	8 (2.4)	10 (3.7)	8 (2.7)	10 (3.2)
④ Lack patience	15 (2.5)	12 (3.6)	3 (1.1)	9 (3.1)	6 (1.9)
⑤ Talkative	2 (0.3)	2 (0.6)	-	-	2 (0.5)
3. Individuality	116 (19.3)	60 (18.3)	56 (20.7)	59 (20.1)	57 (17.9)
① Individuality	97 (16.2)	53 (16.2)	44 (16.3)	51 (17.4)	46 (14.5)
② Hobbies	17 (2.8)	7 (2.1)	10 (3.7)	8 (2.7)	9 (2.9)
③ Distinct looks	2 (0.3)	-	2 (0.7)	-	2 (0.5)
4. Thoughtful	105 (17.4)	64 (19.2)	41 (15.2)	39 (13.3)	66 (21.3)
① Thoughtful	33 (5.5)	22 (6.6)	11 (4.1)	11 (3.8)	22 (7.1)
② Develop self	27 (4.5)	16 (4.8)	11 (4.1)	12 (4.1)	15 (4.9)
③ Kind	20 (3.3)	14 (4.2)	6 (2.2)	6 (2.0)	14 (4.5)
④ Quiet	17 (2.8)	8 (2.4)	9 (3.3)	8 (2.7)	9 (2.9)
⑤ Fun	8 (1.3)	4 (1.2)	4 (1.5)	2 (0.7)	6 (1.9)
5. Average	67 (11.1)	42 (12.7)	25 (9.3)	35 (11.9)	32 (10.3)
① Average	44 (7.3)	26 (7.9)	18 (6.7)	22 (7.5)	22 (7.1)
② Laid back	23 (3.8)	16 (4.8)	7 (2.6)	13 (4.4)	10 (3.2)
6. Other	42 (7.0)	21 (6.3)	21 (7.8)	21 (7.2)	21 (6.8)
Total	601 (100.0)	331 (100.0)	270 (100.0)	293 (100.0)	308 (100.0)

more than 30%, followed by “confidence” with 20%, and then “thoughtful,” “discontent,” and “average.” “Individuality” had the highest rating among subgroups when analyzed by grade level and sex. Elementary school students rated “discontent” lowest, and this tendency increased among middle and high school students, with university students having the highest rating.

Results for adults are presented in Table 5. Adults rated “confident” highest, with a percentage of more than 20%, and a similar percentage

of adults who listed “discontent.” In addition, more than 10% of adult participants listed “individuality,” “thoughtful,” and “average.” Separated by age, those who were in their 30’s rated “discontent” and “confident” each at a little above 20%, while 40 year olds and above rated “confident,” “individuality,” and “discontent” at a little above 20%. Although the differences by gender are not significant, men reported “confidence” and women reported “discontent” as their highest rating.

Overall, there are three main qualities that characterize one’s concept of the self as a unique individual. First, Koreans generally have a positive self-concept with regard to themselves as unique individuals. These positive self-concepts can come in the form of qualities like “individuality,” “confidence,” or “thoughtfulness.” Positive self-perceptions for individuality and confidence were apparent in both the student and adult groups.

Second, although participants generally have a positive self-view as unique individuals, they are discontented with themselves in some respects. Discontent was more common among adult participants than student participants: “discontent” was the fourth most common quality for students, while it was the second most common quality for adults.

Third, one intriguing result is that 10% of both students and adults listed that they were “average.” Even though participants were specifically asked to record their descriptions of themselves as unique individuals, they still gave a qualitatively different answer to the question by describing themselves as “average.” This demonstrates that these participants see themselves as ordinary people. The previous Table 2 and 3 illustrates that when they were describing their everyday selves, more than 16% of students and adults listed they were ordinary.

Table 6 provides the results for the concept of the self when alone. Up to 40% of student participants reported “lonely,” more than 20% reported doing various “leisure activities,” followed by more than 10% reporting “think,” with “comfortable,” and “sleep” with similar response percentages. By grade level, more than 50% of elementary school students listed “lonely,” demonstrating that half of elementary school students felt lonely when they were alone. However, a little more than 30% of middle and high school students listed “lonely”; still this response was rated most highly among these two grade level groups. More middle school through university students indicated “think”

Table 6. Concept of Self When Alone: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade Level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Lonely	217 (36.1)	73 (50.3)	41 (33.8)	44 (32.1)	59 (30.3)	96 (41.6)	121 (32.9)
① Lonely	167 (27.8)	57 (39.2)	32 (26.3)	31 (22.7)	47 (24.1)	72 (31.2)	95 (25.9)
② Dislikeable	32 (5.3)	13 (9.0)	6 (5.0)	6 (4.3)	7 (3.6)	15 (6.5)	17 (4.6)
③ Solitude	16 (2.7)	1 (0.7)	3 (2.5)	7 (5.1)	5 (2.6)	7 (3.0)	9 (2.4)
④ Think about others	2 (0.3)	2 (1.4)	-	-	-	2 (0.9)	-
2. Leisure activities	129 (21.5)	37 (25.6)	33 (27.3)	40 (28.8)	19 (9.7)	53 (22.9)	76 (20.7)
① Listen to music	30 (5.0)	3 (2.1)	6 (5.0)	13 (9.4)	8 (4.1)	10 (4.3)	20 (5.4)
② View TV	27 (4.5)	13 (9.0)	10 (8.3)	1 (0.7)	3 (1.5)	8 (3.5)	19 (5.2)
③ Read books	26 (4.3)	10 (6.9)	4 (3.3)	9 (6.5)	3 (1.5)	18 (7.8)	8 (2.2)
④ Travel	18 (3.0)	-	1 (0.8)	13 (9.4)	4 (2.1)	3 (1.3)	15 (4.1)
⑤ Play games	16 (2.7)	7 (4.8)	7 (5.8)	2 (1.4)	-	7 (3.0)	9 (2.4)
⑥ Use computer	12 (2.0)	4 (2.8)	5 (4.1)	2 (1.4)	1 (0.5)	7 (3.0)	5 (1.4)
3. Think	84 (14.1)	6 (4.1)	12 (9.9)	28 (20.4)	38 (19.5)	20 (8.6)	64 (17.4)
① Think	83 (13.9)	5 (3.4)	12 (9.9)	28 (20.4)	38 (19.5)	19 (8.2)	64 (17.4)
② Worry	1 (0.2)	1 (0.7)	-	-	-	1 (0.4)	-
4. Comfortable	58 (9.7)	7 (4.8)	12 (9.9)	11 (7.9)	28 (14.3)	18 (7.8)	40 (10.8)
① Comfortable	41 (6.9)	6 (4.1)	9 (7.4)	9 (6.5)	17 (8.7)	17 (7.4)	24 (6.5)
② Likeable	8 (1.3)	-	2 (1.7)	1 (0.7)	5 (2.6)	1 (0.4)	7 (1.9)
③ Enjoyment	4 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.8)	-	2 (1.0)	-	4 (1.1)
④ Relaxed	3 (0.5)	-	-	-	3 (1.5)	-	3 (0.8)
⑤ Happy	2 (0.3)	-	-	1 (0.7)	1 (0.5)	-	2 (0.5)
5. Sleep	36 (6.0)	8 (5.5)	6 (5.0)	9 (6.5)	13 (6.7)	15 (6.5)	21 (5.7)
6. Others	75 (12.6)	14 (9.7)	17 (14.1)	6 (4.3)	38 (19.5)	29 (12.6)	46 (12.5)
① Play	31 (5.2)	8 (5.5)	15 (12.4)	4 (2.9)	4 (2.1)	17 (7.4)	14 (3.8)
② Work/study	13 (2.2)	2 (1.4)	2 (1.7)	2 (1.4)	7 (3.6)	1 (0.4)	12 (3.3)
③ Other	31 (5.2)	4 (2.8)	-	-	27 (13.8)	11 (4.8)	20 (5.4)
Total	599 (100.0)	145 (100.0)	121 (100.0)	138 (100.0)	195 (100.0)	231 (100.0)	368 (100.0)

and “comfortable” than elementary school students when they were alone. By gender, “lonely” was the most popular choice among men and women when they were alone and there were no significant differences between the two groups in general pattern. Still, male students listed more “lonely” than

Table 7. Concept of Self When Alone: Adult Sample

Category	Adult Total (%)	Age Group (%)		Sex (%)	
		30 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Lonely	212 (27.4)	120 (27.4)	92 (27.1)	109 (29.2)	103 (25.7)
① Lonely	134 (17.3)	75 (17.2)	59 (17.3)	71 (19.0)	63 (15.8)
② Solitude	38 (4.9)	18 (4.1)	20 (5.9)	25 (6.7)	13 (3.2)
③ Dislikeable	21 (2.7)	15 (3.4)	6 (1.8)	6 (1.6)	15 (3.7)
④ Think about others	19 (2.5)	12 (2.7)	7 (2.1)	7 (1.9)	12 (3.0)
2. Think	188 (24.1)	110 (25.2)	78 (23.1)	98 (26.3)	90 (22.4)
① Think	173 (22.2)	101 (23.1)	72 (21.3)	95 (25.5)	78 (19.4)
② Worry	15 (1.9)	9 (2.1)	6 (1.8)	3 (0.8)	12 (3.0)
3. Leisure activities	166 (21.5)	99 (22.7)	67 (19.9)	78 (20.9)	88 (21.9)
① Read books	58 (7.5)	36 (8.2)	22 (6.5)	31 (8.3)	27 (6.7)
② Listen to music	44 (5.7)	25 (5.7)	19 (5.6)	8 (2.1)	10 (2.5)
③ Travel	27 (3.5)	16 (3.7)	11 (3.3)	17 (4.6)	36 (9.0)
④ View TV	19 (2.5)	10 (2.3)	9 (2.7)	11 (2.9)	8 (2.0)
⑤ Use computer	10 (1.3)	7 (1.6)	3 (0.9)	4 (1.1)	6 (1.5)
⑥ Play games	5 (0.6)	3 (0.7)	2 (0.6)	4 (1.1)	1 (0.2)
⑦ Exercise	3 (0.4)	2 (0.5)	1 (0.3)	3 (0.8)	-
4. Comfortable	71 (9.2)	40 (9.1)	31 (9.2)	25 (6.8)	46 (11.4)
① Comfortable	47 (6.1)	27 (6.2)	20 (5.9)	19 (5.1)	28 (7.0)
② Likeable	10 (1.3)	5 (1.1)	5 (1.5)	1 (0.3)	9 (2.2)
③ Enjoyment	10 (1.3)	8 (1.8)	2 (0.6)	3 (0.8)	7 (1.7)
④ Happy	3 (0.4)	-	3 (0.9)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.5)
⑤ Relaxed	1 (0.1)	-	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	-
5. Sleep	51 (6.6)	28 (6.4)	23 (6.8)	24 (6.4)	27 (6.7)
6. Others	87 (11.2)	40 (9.2)	47 (13.9)	39 (10.4)	48 (11.9)
① Work/study	29 (3.7)	13 (3.0)	16 (4.7)	8 (2.1)	21 (5.2)
② Play	11 (1.4)	3 (0.7)	8 (2.4)	6 (1.6)	5 (1.2)
③ Other	47 (6.1)	24 (5.5)	23 (6.8)	25 (6.7)	22 (5.5)
Total	775 (100.0)	437 (100.0)	338 (100.0)	373 (100.0)	402 (100.0)

female students, who more frequently listed “think.”

Results for adults are presented in Table 7. Similar to the students, adults also had the highest responses for “lonely,” and showed a response rate of over 20%, followed by “think” and “leisure activity.” Although “comfortable” and “sleep” had percentages below 10%, they appeared to be significant categories.

There were no age or gender differences in participants' most common choice of "lonely."

Overall, there are two distinct qualities that we found. First, regardless of age or gender, Koreans feel lonely when they are alone. Although middle school through university students and adults did not have as high of a response as elementary school students, most participants felt lonely when alone. Specifically, approximately half of elementary school students and third of adults felt lonely when they were alone. Only 10% of students and adults feel comfortable being alone. Second, while Koreans feel lonely when they are alone, this tendency was more common among students and relatively less common among adults. More adults think when they are alone (24.1%) than students (14.1%).

2. Concept of Self in the Context of Family

As the family is especially important among all others, we investigated self-perceptions when participants were with their family members. We focused on analyzing self-concepts when with the father, mother, children, and spouse. Students and adults were surveyed about their self-concept when their fathers and mothers, and adults were the only ones asked about children and spouse. These analyses results are shown in Tables 8-13.

Table 8 provides the findings for how students see themselves when they were with their fathers. In general, more than 30% of students listed "avoid," followed by "behave like a child" as their most common response, then by "comfortable" and "indebted," "converse" and "apathy." We find different patterns when we look at the results by grade level. More than 30% of elementary school students listed "comfortable" and "behave like a child" as their most common answer, more than 30% of middle school students listed "behave like a child," followed by more than 20% for "avoid" and "comfortable."

More than 35% high school through university students listed that "avoid" best described their self-concepts when they were with their fathers. While elementary school students listed comfortable or behaved like children when with their fathers, middle school students had increased cases of avoidance and decreased comfort, in the midst of still behaving like children. High school and university students listed uncomfortable when with their fathers

Table 8. Concept of Self When with Father: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Avoid	191 (31.8)	35 (24.1)	33 (26.3)	51 (36.4)	72 (37.9)	79 (33.0)	112 (31.1)
① Quiet	58 (9.7)	8 (5.5)	12 (9.5)	18 (12.9)	20 (10.5)	22 (9.2)	36 (9.9)
② Avoid	55 (9.2)	13 (9.0)	11 (8.7)	15 (10.7)	16 (8.4)	23 (9.6)	32 (8.9)
③ Tense	29 (4.8)	5 (3.4)	2 (1.6)	5 (3.6)	17 (8.9)	11 (4.6)	18 (5.0)
④ Difficult	21 (3.5)	4 (2.8)	7 (5.6)	5 (3.6)	5 (2.6)	11 (4.6)	10 (2.8)
⑤ Constrained	14 (2.3)	5 (3.4)	1 (0.9)	5 (3.6)	3 (1.6)	8 (3.3)	6 (1.7)
⑥ Uncomfortable	14 (2.3)	-	-	3 (2.1)	11 (5.8)	4 (1.7)	10 (2.8)
2. Behave like a child	189 (31.4)	47 (32.4)	41 (32.5)	42 (29.9)	59 (31.1)	74 (31.0)	115 (31.7)
① Behave like a child	88 (14.6)	16 (11.0)	13 (10.3)	27 (19.2)	32 (16.8)	18 (7.5)	70 (19.3)
② Recognized	59 (9.8)	21 (14.5)	19 (15.1)	9 (6.4)	10 (5.3)	35 (14.7)	24 (6.6)
③ Depending	42 (7.0)	10 (6.9)	9 (7.1)	6 (4.3)	17 (8.9)	21 (8.8)	21 (5.8)
3. Comfortable	103 (17.0)	49 (33.8)	30 (23.8)	11 (7.9)	13 (6.8)	42 (17.6)	61 (16.8)
① Comfortable	63 (10.4)	33 (22.8)	16 (12.7)	7 (5.0)	7 (3.7)	21 (8.8)	42 (11.6)
② Good	40 (6.7)	16 (11.0)	14 (11.1)	4 (2.9)	6 (3.2)	21 (8.8)	19 (5.2)
4. Indebted	74 (12.5)	6 (4.2)	11 (8.7)	25 (17.9)	32 (16.8)	26 (10.9)	48 (13.3)
① Indebted	57 (9.5)	2 (1.4)	11 (8.7)	21 (15.0)	23 (12.1)	22 (9.2)	35 (9.7)
② Filial	13 (2.2)	4 (2.8)	-	3 (2.1)	6 (3.2)	4 (1.7)	9 (2.5)
③ Feel sorry for father	3 (0.5)	-	-	1 (0.7)	2 (1.1)	-	3 (0.8)
④ Worry about father	1 (0.2)	-	-	-	1 (0.5)	-	1 (0.3)
5. Converse	20 (3.3)	4 (2.8)	6 (4.8)	5 (3.6)	5 (2.6)	8 (3.3)	12 (3.3)
6. Apathy	16 (2.7)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.6)	5 (3.6)	8 (4.2)	5 (2.1)	11 (3.0)
7. Other	8 (1.3)	3 (2.1)	3 (2.3)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.5)	5 (2.1)	3 (0.8)
Total	601 (100.0)	145 (100.0)	126 (100.0)	140 (100.0)	190 (100.0)	239 (100.0)	362 (100.0)

and experienced a marked increase in avoidance. Similarly by gender, more than 30% of both male and female students avoided and behaved like children when they were with their fathers.

Results for the adult sample are presented in Table 9. In general, adults' response rate was highest for "avoid" and "behave like a child," with over 20%, followed by "indebted" and "comfortable" at a similar percentage. They also reported "apathy" and "converse." By age group, those in their 30s and below most frequently listed "avoid," while those 40 years old and above listed

Table 9. Concept of Self When with Father: Adult Sample

Category	Adult Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Avoid	132 (21.6)	80 (23.1)	52 (19.5)	60 (20.1)	72 (22.9)
① Avoid	32 (5.2)	20 (5.8)	12 (4.5)	17 (5.7)	15 (4.8)
② Quiet	26 (4.2)	16 (4.6)	10 (3.8)	11 (3.7)	15 (4.8)
③ Difficult	24 (3.9)	16 (4.6)	8 (3.0)	10 (3.4)	14 (4.5)
④ Constrained	21 (3.4)	12 (3.5)	9 (3.4)	10 (3.4)	11 (3.5)
⑤ Tense	15 (2.5)	8 (2.3)	7 (2.5)	6 (2.0)	9 (2.9)
⑥ Uncomfortable	14 (2.3)	8 (2.3)	6 (2.3)	6 (2.0)	8 (2.5)
2. Behave like a child	126 (20.6)	70 (20.2)	56 (21.1)	63 (21.1)	63 (20.1)
① Behave like a child	53 (8.7)	35 (10.1)	18 (6.8)	19 (6.4)	34 (10.8)
② Recognized	45 (7.4)	16 (4.6)	29 (10.9)	28 (9.4)	17 (5.4)
③ Depending	28 (4.6)	19 (5.5)	9 (3.4)	16 (5.4)	12 (3.8)
3. Indebted	111 (18.1)	59 (17.1)	52 (19.5)	56 (18.8)	55 (17.5)
① Indebted	53 (8.7)	31 (9.0)	22 (8.3)	32 (10.7)	21 (6.7)
② Filial	24 (3.9)	11 (3.2)	13 (4.9)	7 (2.3)	17 (5.4)
③ Worry about father	18 (2.9)	11 (3.2)	7 (2.5)	11 (3.7)	7 (2.2)
④ Feel sorry for father	16 (2.6)	6 (1.7)	10 (3.8)	6 (2.0)	10 (3.2)
4. Comfortable	98 (16.0)	58 (16.8)	40 (15.1)	41 (13.8)	57 (18.2)
① Comfortable	69 (11.3)	38 (11.0)	31 (11.7)	31 (10.4)	38 (12.1)
② Good	29 (4.7)	20 (5.8)	9 (3.4)	10 (3.4)	19 (6.1)
5. Apathy	33 (5.4)	16 (4.6)	17 (6.4)	17 (5.7)	16 (5.1)
6. Converse	32 (5.2)	18 (5.2)	14 (5.3)	32 (10.7)	-
7. Others	80 (13.1)	45 (13.0)	35 (13.1)	29 (9.7)	51 (16.2)
Total	612 (100.0)	346 (100.0)	266 (100.0)	298 (100.0)	314 (100.0)

“behave like a child.” Men tended to choose “avoid” and women “behave like a child” when the data was analyzed by gender. Still, there were no significant differences between frequency (20%) of the answers “avoid” and “behave like a child.”

Overall, there are a number of intriguing results. First, it is clear that Koreans show a very different side of themselves when they are with their fathers. Feeling uncomfortable and avoiding their fathers is representative of Koreans, while simultaneously feeling that they have to behave like a child and acknowledge and depend on their father. Over 30% of students avoid and

behave like a child, while over 20% of adults feel they exhibit such behaviors.

Second, there are clear developmental differences in concepts of the self in adolescence. Children feel most comfortable with their fathers during their elementary school years. While they do depend on and behave like a child with their fathers and this continues into their middle school years. Their discomfort and avoidance begins to increase in middle school and there is a marked decrease in levels of comfort. In high school, students experience even more changes in self-concepts when they are with their fathers; they feel increased levels of discomfort and avoidance and their comfort when they are with their fathers decline. Despite these changes, students' dependence on and childlike behaviors remain constant. Similarly, university students experience similar increases in discomfort and avoidance and decreases in comfort when they are with their fathers.

Third, indebtedness was found to be very important in describing Koreans' self-concept when they were with their fathers. Participants listed indebted to their fathers, wanted to care for them, felt pity for them, and worried about them. Feelings of indebtedness was reported as the fourth most common response among students and the third among adults, demonstrating that adults held more feelings of indebtedness in their self-concepts than students when they were with their fathers.

Table 10 presents the results for concept of the self when with their mothers. Among students, the highest response percentage was for "comfort" with more than 35%, followed by "behave like a child" with over 25%, as well as "filial," "bored," and "converse" with 10%. When we examined the data by grade level, we found that elementary school, middle school, and university students all listed "comfort" as their most common response, but high school students most commonly listed "behave like a child," followed by "comfort." But unlike participants from other grade levels, middle school participants had low ratings for "filial," and instead, more than 20% listed bored when with their mothers. Male and female students displayed similar responses, with over 30% listing "comfort," followed by "behave like a child."

Results for the adult sample are presented in Table 11. Among adults, almost 40% listed "comfort," more than 20% "filial," and more than 10% "behave like a child" and "bored." These results were consistent across ranking, age group, and gender. That is, participants indicated a self that was

Table 10. Concept of Self When with Mother: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade Level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Comfortable	215 (35.1)	59 (40.4)	47 (37.9)	37 (26.0)	72 (36.2)	93 (38.9)	122 (32.8)
① Comfortable	124 (20.2)	32 (21.9)	28 (22.6)	23 (16.2)	41 (20.6)	57 (23.8)	67 (18.0)
② Like friends	51 (8.3)	19 (13.0)	11 (8.9)	8 (5.6)	13 (6.5)	27 (11.3)	24 (6.5)
③ Warm	29 (4.7)	7 (4.8)	4 (3.2)	6 (4.2)	12 (6.0)	8 (3.3)	21 (5.6)
④ Cute	11 (1.8)	1 (0.7)	4 (3.2)	-	6 (3.0)	1 (0.5)	10 (2.7)
2. Behave like a child	167 (27.3)	29 (19.9)	30 (24.2)	48 (33.8)	60 (30.2)	57 (23.8)	110 (29.6)
① Behave like a child	112 (18.3)	21 (14.4)	15 (12.1)	36 (25.4)	40 (20.1)	40 (16.7)	72 (19.4)
② Do as I please	39 (6.4)	4 (2.7)	12 (9.7)	8 (5.6)	15 (7.5)	11 (4.6)	28 (7.5)
③ Make her worry	16 (2.6)	4 (2.7)	3 (2.4)	4 (2.8)	5 (2.5)	6 (2.5)	10 (2.7)
3. Filial	87 (14.4)	23 (15.8)	12 (9.7)	20 (14.1)	32 (16.0)	31 (13.0)	56 (15.1)
① Filial	69 (11.4)	21 (14.4)	10 (8.1)	16 (11.3)	22 (11.0)	26 (10.9)	43 (11.6)
② Worry about her	7 (1.1)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.4)	3 (1.5)	1 (0.5)	6 (1.6)
③ Indebted	5 (0.8)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.8)	-	3 (1.5)	2 (0.8)	3 (0.8)
④ Try to be dependable	3 (0.5)	-	-	1 (0.7)	2 (1.0)	-	3 (0.8)
⑤ Precious	3 (0.5)	-	-	1 (0.7)	2 (1.0)	2 (0.8)	1 (0.3)
4. Bored	84 (13.7)	24 (16.4)	28 (22.6)	21 (14.8)	11 (5.5)	45 (18.9)	39 (10.4)
① Bored	57 (9.3)	18 (12.3)	19 (15.3)	13 (9.2)	7 (3.5)	35 (14.6)	22 (5.9)
② Irritating	18 (2.9)	4 (2.7)	5 (4.0)	7 (4.9)	2 (1.0)	6 (2.5)	12 (3.2)
③ Conflicts	9 (1.5)	2 (1.4)	4 (3.2)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.0)	4 (1.8)	5 (1.3)
5. Converse	58 (9.5)	11 (7.5)	7 (5.6)	16 (11.3)	24 (12.1)	13 (5.4)	45 (12.1)
Total	611 (100.0)	146 (100.0)	124 (100.0)	142 (100.0)	199 (100.0)	239 (100.0)	372 (100.0)

comfortable and filial with they were with their mothers, regardless of age and gender.

There are three primary findings that we can draw from these results on Koreans' Concept of Self when with their mothers. First, students and adults alike felt warm and comfortable with their mothers. In particular, "comfort" was the most frequent response among students and adults with 35%, demonstrating that three quarters of Korean people saw themselves as being comfortable when with their mothers.

Second, while students described themselves as feeling comfortable around their mothers, following by behaving like children, more than 20%

Table 11. Concept of Self When with Mother: Adult Sample

Category \ Adult	Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Comfortable	292 (37.7)	167 (38.6)	125 (36.7)	151 (39.4)	141 (36.1)
① Comfortable	166 (21.4)	100 (23.1)	66 (19.3)	79 (20.7)	87 (22.3)
② Like friends	92 (11.9)	52 (12.0)	40 (11.8)	58 (15.1)	34 (8.7)
③ Cute	24 (3.1)	10 (2.3)	14 (4.1)	10 (2.6)	14 (3.6)
④ Warm	10 (1.3)	5 (1.2)	5 (1.5)	4 (1.0)	6 (1.5)
2. Filial	176 (22.7)	104 (23.9)	72 (21.2)	74 (19.1)	102 (26.2)
① Filial	102 (13.2)	54 (12.4)	48 (14.1)	42 (10.9)	60 (15.4)
② Indebted	27 (3.5)	21 (4.8)	6 (1.8)	9 (2.3)	18 (4.6)
③ Dependable	22 (2.8)	12 (2.8)	10 (2.9)	14 (3.6)	8 (2.1)
④ Precious	15 (1.9)	9 (2.1)	6 (1.8)	5 (1.3)	10 (2.6)
⑤ Worry about parents	10 (1.3)	8 (1.8)	2 (0.6)	4 (1.0)	6 (1.5)
3. Behave like a child	131 (17.0)	68 (15.7)	63 (18.5)	67 (17.4)	64 (16.4)
① Behave like a child	104 (13.5)	55 (12.7)	49 (14.4)	52 (13.5)	52 (13.3)
② Do as I please	15 (1.9)	6 (1.4)	9 (2.6)	8 (2.1)	7 (1.8)
③ Make her worry	12 (1.6)	7 (1.6)	5 (1.5)	7 (1.8)	5 (1.3)
4. Bored	116 (15.0)	61 (14.0)	55 (16.2)	68 (17.8)	48 (12.3)
① Bored	67 (8.7)	34 (7.8)	33 (9.7)	39 (10.2)	28 (7.2)
② Irritating	30 (3.9)	13 (3.0)	17 (5.0)	16 (4.2)	14 (3.6)
③ Conflicts	19 (2.5)	14 (3.2)	5 (1.5)	13 (3.4)	6 (1.5)
5. Converse	48 (6.2)	27 (6.2)	21 (6.2)	18 (4.7)	30 (7.7)
6. Other	11 (1.4)	7 (1.6)	4 (1.2)	6 (1.6)	5 (1.3)
Total	774(100.0)	434 (100.0)	340 (100.0)	384 (100.0)	390 (100.0)

of adults listed “filial” as their second most common response. Students felt comfortable and behaved like children around their mothers, while adults felt comfortable, and felt indebted to them, and wanted to be filial and care for their mothers.

Third, findings show that children not only experience positive feelings best described as comfortable and filial toward their mothers, but also feel negative feelings like boredom. More than 10% of students and adults felt bored when they are with their mothers. Feelings of boredom and irritation increased especially during middle school.

Table 12 provides results for adults’ concept of themselves when they are

Table 12. Concept of Self When with Children: Adult Sample

Category	Adult Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Feel pleasure	232 (28.6)	131 (28.9)	101 (28.2)	106 (26.1)	126 (31.0)
① Feel pleasure	105 (13.0)	59 (13.0)	46 (12.9)	53 (13.1)	52 (12.8)
② Content	60 (7.4)	32 (7.1)	28 (7.8)	29 (7.1)	31 (7.6)
③ Comfortable	48 (5.9)	31 (6.8)	17 (4.7)	16 (3.9)	32 (7.9)
④ Hope	19 (2.3)	9 (2.0)	10 (2.8)	8 (2.0)	11 (2.7)
2. Responsible	207 (25.4)	112 (24.7)	95 (26.4)	111 (27.3)	96 (23.5)
① Responsible	87 (10.7)	51 (11.3)	36 (9.9)	54 (13.3)	33 (8.1)
② Education	76 (9.3)	36 (7.9)	40 (11.2)	34 (8.4)	42 (10.3)
③ Feel sorry	34 (4.2)	20 (4.4)	14 (3.9)	16 (3.9)	18 (4.4)
④ Worry about health	10 (1.2)	5 (1.1)	5 (1.4)	7 (1.7)	3 (0.7)
3. Caring	192 (23.6)	110 (24.3)	82 (22.8)	96 (23.7)	96 (23.7)
① Caring	75 (9.2)	38 (8.4)	37 (10.3)	45 (11.1)	30 (7.4)
② Converse	71 (8.7)	38 (8.4)	33 (9.2)	28 (6.9)	43 (10.6)
③ Like friends	46 (5.7)	34 (7.5)	12 (3.3)	23 (5.7)	23 (5.7)
4. Strict	79 (9.7)	43 (9.5)	36 (9.9)	48 (11.8)	31 (7.6)
① Strict	35 (4.3)	18 (4.0)	17 (4.7)	22 (5.4)	13 (3.2)
② Fearful	22 (2.7)	10 (2.2)	12 (3.3)	14 (3.4)	8 (2.0)
③ Dislikeable	22 (2.7)	15 (3.3)	7 (1.9)	12 (3.0)	10 (2.4)
5. Loveable	64 (7.9)	38 (8.4)	26 (7.2)	26 (6.4)	38 (9.3)
6. Other	39 (4.8)	19 (4.2)	20 (5.5)	19 (4.7)	20 (4.9)
① Prepare food	12 (1.5)	9 (2.0)	3 (0.8)	4 (1.0)	8 (2.0)
② Other	27 (3.3)	10 (2.2)	17 (4.7)	15 (3.7)	12 (2.9)
Total	813 (100.0)	453 (100.0)	360 (100.0)	406 (100.0)	407 (100.0)

with their children. “Feel pleasure” was the most frequent response among adults, followed by over 20% listing “responsible” and “caring.” Regardless of age group, most adult participants listed “feel pleasure,” followed by “responsible,” and “caring.” By gender, men most commonly listed “responsible,” while women listed “feel pleasure” when they were with their children; the responses “feel pleasure,” “responsible,” and “caring” each saw a response rate of over 20%.

Overall, Korean parents experience “feel pleasure” when they are with

Table 13. Concept of Self When with Spouse: Adult Sample

Adult Category	Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	>40	Male	Female
1. Comfortable	298 (37.7)	174 (40.3)	124 (34.4)	143 (35.9)	155 (39.2)
① Comfortable	230 (29.1)	135 (31.2)	95 (26.4)	105 (26.3)	125 (31.6)
② Like friends	48 (6.1)	27 (6.3)	21 (5.8)	23 (5.8)	25 (6.3)
③ Warm	20 (2.5)	12 (2.8)	8 (2.2)	15 (3.8)	5 (1.3)
2. Love	133 (16.8)	69 (15.9)	64 (17.8)	66 (16.6)	67 (17.0)
① Feel love	104 (13.1)	55 (12.7)	49 (13.6)	52 (13.1)	52 (13.2)
② Feel good	29 (3.7)	14 (3.2)	15 (4.2)	14 (3.5)	15 (3.8)
3. Family-oriented	101 (12.8)	55 (12.7)	46 (12.8)	57 (14.4)	44 (11.2)
① Work for family	45 (5.7)	24 (5.6)	21 (5.8)	35 (8.8)	10 (2.5)
② Open	42 (5.3)	23 (5.3)	19 (5.3)	16 (4.0)	26 (6.6)
③ Finance	6 (0.8)	4 (0.9)	2 (0.6)	4 (1.0)	2 (0.5)
④ Future	4 (0.5)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.8)	1 (0.3)	3 (0.8)
⑤ Children's education	4 (0.5)	3 (0.7)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	3 (0.8)
4. Distance	99 (12.4)	52 (12.1)	47 (13.1)	42 (10.6)	57 (14.4)
① Distance	36 (4.5)	25 (5.8)	11 (3.1)	16 (4.0)	20 (5.1)
② Conflict	31 (3.9)	16 (3.7)	15 (4.2)	12 (3.0)	19 (4.8)
③ Spouse	19 (2.4)	6 (1.4)	13 (3.6)	9 (2.3)	10 (2.5)
④ Dislikeable	13 (1.6)	5 (1.2)	8 (2.2)	5 (1.3)	8 (2.0)
5. Trust	93 (11.7)	46 (10.6)	47 (13.0)	59 (14.9)	34 (8.6)
① Trust	38 (4.8)	20 (4.6)	18 (5.0)	17 (4.3)	21 (5.3)
② Responsibility	23 (2.9)	11 (2.5)	12 (3.3)	19 (4.8)	4 (1.0)
③ Sincerity	20 (2.5)	8 (1.9)	12 (3.3)	14 (3.5)	6 (1.5)
④ Feel sorry	12 (1.5)	7 (1.6)	5 (1.4)	9 (2.3)	3 (0.8)
6. Other	68 (8.6)	36 (8.4)	32 (8.9)	30 (7.6)	38 (9.6)
① Time together	27 (3.4)	15 (3.5)	12 (3.3)	13 (3.3)	14 (3.5)
② Other	41 (5.2)	21 (4.9)	20 (5.6)	17 (4.3)	24 (6.1)
Total	792 (100.0)	432 (100.0)	360 (100.0)	397 (100.0)	395 (100.0)

their children, regardless of age group or gender. In particular, this happiness can be seen as related to the satisfaction and comfort they feel from their children, as well as the expectations they have for them. The next common feeling that parents have when they are with their children is responsibility. Parents often feel responsible for their children's education, feel sorry when

they are unable to care for them as they feel they should, and worry about their health. In addition, parents frequently converse with their child and caring for them. Other qualities like being strict and loving were also listed, but with relatively low frequency.

The results for adults' self-concepts when they are with their spouse are shown in Table 13. As much as 40% of adults reportedly felt comfortable around their spouse. This high percentage was followed by "feel love," "family-oriented," and "distance," each in between 10-20% percent. "Comfort" was the most common response among adults, regardless of age or gender group.

Overall, Koreans perceive themselves as comfortable when they are with their spouses. Approximately 4 out of 10 people show this finding. In general, they had positive concepts of the self when with spouses, including feeling love, being family-oriented, and trusting one another. About 12% felt distance within their relationships, and more than one person out of 10 experienced these negative self-concepts of distance due to conflicts or dislike.

3. Concept of Self within the Context of Close and Working Relationships

The analyses results for the self within the context of close and working relationships are presented in Tables 14 through 20. These results include people who are close to the participants. In particular, we analyzed students' self-concept when with close friends and teachers and adults' self-concept when with close friends, work superiors, and work subordinates.

Table 14 provides the results of participants' self-concepts when with close friends. The general findings for the student group is that more than 40% listed "comfortable," followed by "converse" at more than 20%, and "drink" and "thankful" each around 10%. By grade level, only high school students were at 30% for both "converse" and "comfortable," while elementary school, middle school, and university students listed "comfortable," followed by "converse." In addition, there is a marked increase in "drink" starting from high school. Both male and female students saw high percentages for "comfortable" at over 40%, followed by "converse," and "drink."

The results for adults' self-concepts when they are with their friends are provided in Table 15. Paralleling the results for students, the findings for adults show that in general participants had a high response rate of over 30%

Table 14. Concept of Self When with Close Friends: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Comfortable	263 (43.1)	78 (52.6)	55 (45.1)	42 (29.6)	88 (44.2)	103 (43.7)	160 (42.7)
① Comfortable	233 (38.2)	57 (38.4)	53 (43.5)	39 (27.5)	84 (42.2)	88 (37.3)	145 (38.7)
② Feel good	30 (4.9)	21 (14.2)	2 (1.6)	3 (2.1)	4 (2.0)	15 (6.4)	15 (4.0)
2. Converse	141 (23.1)	41 (27.7)	25 (20.5)	43 (30.3)	32 (16.1)	50 (21.2)	91 (24.3)
① Converse	94 (15.4)	20 (13.5)	15 (12.3)	31 (21.8)	28 (14.1)	30 (12.7)	64 (17.1)
② Play	47 (7.7)	21 (14.2)	10 (8.2)	12 (8.5)	4 (2.0)	20 (8.5)	27 (7.2)
3. Drink	88 (14.4)	2 (1.4)	15 (12.3)	33 (23.3)	38 (19.1)	27 (11.4)	61 (16.2)
① Alcohol	85 (13.9)	2 (1.4)	14 (11.5)	32 (22.5)	37 (18.6)	26 (11.0)	59 (15.7)
② Money	3 (0.5)	-	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.5)
4. Thankful	62 (10.1)	11 (7.4)	19 (15.6)	9 (6.3)	23 (11.6)	34 (14.4)	28 (7.5)
5. Worry	20 (3.3)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.6)	5 (3.5)	12 (6.0)	3 (1.3)	17 (4.5)
6. Trust	18 (2.9)	2 (1.4)	1 (0.8)	10 (7.0)	5 (2.5)	5 (2.1)	13 (3.5)
7. Competitive	18 (2.9)	12 (8.1)	5 (4.1)	-	1 (0.5)	13 (5.5)	5 (1.3)
① Distance	11 (1.8)	9 (6.1)	1 (0.8)	-	1 (0.5)	8 (3.4)	3 (0.8)
② Competition	7 (1.1)	3 (2.0)	4 (3.3)	-	-	5 (2.1)	2 (0.5)
8. Other	1 (0.2)	1 (0.7)	-	-	-	1 (0.4)	-
Total	611 (100.0)	148 (100.0)	122 (100.0)	142 (100.0)	199 (100.0)	236 (100.0)	375 (100.0)

for “comfortable,” followed by “converse,” and “drink” at 20%. Although each of these three qualities was most prominent among both the student and adult sample, students had relatively higher ratings for “comfortable” and adults for “drink.”

Overall, Koreans feel comfortable when they are with close friends, and these results were true for both students and adults. The next most common self-concept was conversing with close friends, followed by having a drink with them. It was found that many become close friends by drinking together, and that participants also perceived themselves as experiencing thankfulness, worry, and trust for their close friends.

Table 16 provides the results for how students perceive themselves when they are with teachers. Students most often indicated that they felt “tense”

Table 15. Concept of Self When with Close Friends: Adult Sample

Category \ Adult	Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Comfortable	259 (33.6)	148 (34.3)	111 (32.7)	123 (32.1)	136 (34.8)
① Comfortable	236 (30.6)	136 (31.5)	100 (29.5)	104 (27.1)	132 (33.8)
② Good	23 (3.0)	12 (2.8)	11 (3.2)	19 (5.0)	4 (1.0)
2. Converse	189 (24.5)	111 (25.7)	78 (22.9)	75 (19.7)	114 (29.2)
① Converse	163 (21.1)	95 (22.0)	68 (20.0)	58 (15.2)	105 (26.9)
② Play	26 (3.4)	16 (3.7)	10 (2.9)	17 (4.5)	9 (2.3)
3. Drink	149 (19.3)	85 (19.7)	64 (18.8)	58 (15.2)	91 (23.4)
① Alcohol	143 (18.5)	80 (18.5)	63 (18.5)	55 (14.4)	88 (22.6)
② Money	6 (0.8)	5 (1.2)	1 (0.3)	3 (0.8)	3 (0.8)
4. Thankful	66 (8.5)	31 (7.2)	35 (10.3)	47 (12.3)	19 (4.9)
5. Worry	30 (3.9)	14 (3.2)	16 (4.7)	15 (3.9)	15 (3.7)
6. Trust	30 (3.9)	17 (3.9)	13 (3.8)	22 (5.8)	8 (2.1)
7. Competitive	7 (0.9)	4 (0.9)	3 (0.9)	3 (0.8)	4 (1.1)
① Distance	5 (0.6)	3 (0.7)	2 (0.6)	2 (0.5)	3 (0.8)
② Competition	2 (0.3)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)
8. Other	42 (5.4)	22 (5.1)	20 (5.9)	39 (10.2)	3 (0.8)
Total	772(100.0)	432 (100.0)	340 (100.0)	382(100.0)	390 (100.0)

with a percentage of 30%, as well as “apathy,” “achievement,” “observe manners,” and “fun.” When compared by grade level, elementary school, middle school, high school, and university students all most often felt “tense” when they were around their teachers. Similar results were also found by gender for both male and female students. But male students listed “apathy,” “achievement,” and “observe manners” in the respective order, while females listed “observe manners,” “achievement,” “fun,” and “apathy,” respectively.

Overall, Korean students felt uncomfortable, distant, fear, or tense when they were with their teachers. These results were found across grade level and gender. But male students felt more apathetic than female students when they were with their teachers, and female students more often saw themselves as observing their manners, worrying about their achievement, behaving well, and becoming achievement-oriented.

Table 16. Concept of Self When with Teachers: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade Level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Tense	157 (26.8)	35 (24.9)	35 (29.6)	42 (30.3)	45 (23.5)	63 (28.2)	94 (25.8)
① Tense	53 (9.1)	6 (4.3)	14 (11.9)	17 (12.3)	16 (8.3)	25 (11.2)	28 (7.7)
② Discomfort	53 (9.1)	13 (9.2)	13 (11.0)	13 (9.4)	14 (7.3)	21 (9.4)	32 (8.8)
③ Distance	23 (3.9)	3 (2.1)	-	8 (5.8)	12 (6.3)	7 (3.1)	16 (4.4)
④ Problematic	15 (2.5)	7 (5.0)	3 (2.5)	2 (1.4)	3 (1.6)	4 (1.8)	11 (3.0)
⑤ Fearful	13 (2.2)	6 (4.3)	5 (4.2)	2 (1.4)	-	6 (2.7)	7 (1.9)
2. Apathy	112 (18.9)	31 (21.9)	28 (23.9)	26 (18.8)	27 (14.1)	56 (25.0)	56 (15.3)
① Average student	85 (14.3)	26 (18.4)	26 (22.1)	16 (11.6)	17 (8.9)	43 (19.2)	42 (11.5)
② Apathy	27 (4.6)	5 (3.5)	2 (1.7)	10 (7.2)	10 (5.2)	13 (5.8)	14 (3.8)
3. Achievement	106 (18.0)	27 (19.2)	21 (17.8)	18 (13.2)	40 (20.8)	42 (18.8)	64 (17.5)
① Worry about grade	62 (10.5)	20 (14.2)	15 (12.7)	13 (9.4)	14 (7.3)	27 (12.1)	35 (9.6)
② Model student	44 (7.5)	7 (5.0)	6 (5.1)	5 (3.8)	26 (13.5)	15 (6.7)	29 (7.9)
4. Observe manners	102 (17.3)	16 (11.3)	17 (14.4)	30 (21.7)	39 (20.3)	35 (15.5)	67 (18.4)
5. Fun	79 (13.4)	31 (22.0)	15 (12.6)	9 (6.6)	24 (12.4)	20 (8.9)	59 (16.2)
① Fun	25 (4.2)	19 (13.5)	5 (4.2)	-	1 (0.5)	9 (4.0)	16 (4.4)
② Likeable	24 (4.1)	9 (6.4)	5 (4.2)	3 (2.2)	7 (3.6)	8 (3.6)	16 (4.4)
③ Converse	17 (2.9)	1 (0.7)	4 (3.4)	3 (2.2)	9 (4.7)	1 (0.4)	16 (4.4)
④ Laugh	13 (2.2)	2 (1.4)	1 (0.8)	3 (2.2)	7 (3.6)	2 (0.9)	11 (3.0)
6. Other	33 (5.6)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.7)	13 (9.4)	17 (8.9)	8 (3.6)	25 (6.8)
Total	589 (100.0)	141 (100.0)	118 (100.0)	138 (100.0)	192 (100.0)	224 (100.0)	365 (100.0)

Table 17 provides the results for adults' self-concepts when with their work superiors. "Uncomfortable" had the highest response rate at 30%, followed by "ability," "sincere," and "converse." Other self-concepts included "comfortable," "apathy," and "feel pity." "Uncomfortable" had the highest response rate among participants across gender.

Overall, Korean adults felt uncomfortable when they were with work superiors, which related to disliking the superior, stress from the superior, or complaint against the superior. Around a third of the participants shared these experiences, and the finding was consistent across age and gender. Participants also had positive attitudes, including showing their abilities, sincerity, and sharing conversations with them.

Table 17. Concept of Self When with Work Superior: Adult Sample

Adult Category	Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Uncomfortable	107 (30.7)	57 (32.1)	50 (29.3)	67 (27.8)	40 (37.5)
① Uncomfortable	61 (17.5)	33 (18.6)	28 (16.4)	36 (14.9)	25 (23.4)
② Dislike	30 (8.6)	17 (9.6)	13 (7.6)	19 (7.9)	11 (10.3)
③ Drink/stress	9 (2.6)	2 (1.1)	7 (4.1)	7 (2.9)	2 (1.9)
④ Discontent	7 (2.0)	5 (2.8)	2 (1.2)	5 (2.1)	2 (1.9)
2. Has ability	62 (17.8)	29 (16.4)	33 (19.3)	43 (17.8)	19 (17.7)
① Has ability	47 (13.5)	21 (11.9)	26 (15.2)	34 (14.1)	13 (12.1)
② Strong	15 (4.3)	8 (4.5)	7 (4.1)	9 (3.7)	6 (5.6)
3. Sincere	49 (14.1)	24 (13.6)	25 (14.6)	33 (13.7)	16 (14.9)
① Conscientious	25 (7.2)	15 (8.5)	10 (5.8)	15 (6.2)	10 (9.3)
② Sincere	24 (6.9)	9 (5.1)	15 (8.8)	18 (7.5)	6 (5.6)
4. Converse	46 (13.2)	26 (14.7)	20 (11.7)	32 (13.3)	14 (13.1)
5. Comfortable	31 (8.9)	14 (7.9)	17 (9.9)	22 (9.1)	9 (8.4)
① Likeable	15 (4.3)	8 (4.5)	7 (4.1)	12 (5.0)	3 (2.8)
② Comfortable	10 (2.9)	4 (2.3)	6 (3.5)	7 (2.9)	3 (2.8)
③ Broad-minded	6 (1.7)	2 (1.1)	4 (2.3)	3 (1.2)	3 (2.8)
6. Apathy	15 (4.3)	7 (4.0)	8 (4.7)	11 (4.6)	4 (3.7)
7. Feel pity	11 (3.2)	5 (2.8)	6 (3.5)	9 (3.7)	2 (1.9)
8. Other	27 (7.8)	15 (8.5)	12 (7.0)	24 (10.0)	3 (2.8)
Total	348 (100.0)	177 (100.0)	171 (100.0)	241 (100.0)	107 (100.0)

Table 18 provides the results of self-concepts when with work subordinates. Korean adults listed “comfortable” when they were around their subordinates. Over 20% listed “thoughtful,” and “comfortable,” and more than 10% listed “uncomfortable,” “authoritarian,” and “sincere” to describe their self-concepts when with their subordinates. By age group, 30-year olds most often listed comfortable, followed by “thoughtful,” while those in their 40s and above listed “thoughtful,” closely followed by “comfortable.” There were significantly higher percentages of “authoritarian” for those participants in their 40s and above. By gender, male students most frequently listed “thoughtful,” while females listed “comfortable.”

These results demonstrate that while most Koreans felt uncomfortable

Table 18. Concept of Self When with Work Superior: Adult Sample

Category \ Adult	Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Comfortable	82 (24.9)	44 (27.4)	38 (22.3)	58 (23.0)	24 (30.3)
2. Thoughtful	78 (23.7)	39 (24.4)	39 (23.0)	62 (24.7)	16 (20.3)
① Thoughtful	50 (15.2)	23 (14.4)	27 (15.9)	39 (15.5)	11 (13.9)
② Warm	28 (8.5)	16 (10.0)	12 (7.1)	23 (9.2)	5 (6.3)
3. Uncomfortable	41 (12.4)	21 (13.1)	20 (11.7)	32 (12.7)	9 (11.4)
4. Authoritarian	40 (12.1)	10 (6.3)	30 (17.6)	31 (12.4)	9 (11.4)
① Strict	19 (5.8)	7 (4.4)	12 (7.1)	14 (5.6)	5 (6.3)
② Authoritarian	11 (3.3)	2 (1.3)	9 (5.3)	10 (4.0)	1 (1.3)
③ Fearful	10 (3.0)	1 (0.6)	9 (5.3)	7 (2.8)	3 (3.8)
5. Sincere	39 (11.8)	22 (13.7)	17 (10.1)	31 (12.4)	8 (10.1)
① Sincere	21 (6.4)	9 (5.6)	12 (7.1)	17 (6.8)	4 (5.1)
② Intelligent	12 (3.6)	9 (5.6)	3 (1.8)	10 (4.0)	2 (2.5)
③ Active	6 (1.8)	4 (2.5)	2 (1.2)	4 (1.6)	2 (2.5)
6. Converse	25 (7.6)	14 (8.8)	11 (6.5)	18 (7.2)	7 (8.9)
7. Apathy	12 (3.6)	3 (1.9)	9 (5.3)	10 (4.0)	2 (2.5)
8. Other	13 (3.9)	7 (4.4)	6 (3.5)	9 (3.6)	4 (5.1)
Total	330 (100.0)	160 (100.0)	170 (100.0)	251 (100.0)	79 (100.0)

when they were with their work superiors, but felt comfortable and thoughtful towards their work subordinates. These positive attitudes were often accompanied by more negative ones like feeling uncomfortable and authoritarian.

4. Concept of Self in the Context of the Larger Society

In addition to how Koreans perceive themselves when they are with family and close others, Koreans also have different self-concepts in the context of the larger society, as presented in Tables 19 and 22. Table 19 presents the analyses for when Koreans are with strangers. The results indicate that most students listed “apathy,” with a response rate of over 40%. Next, was a 20% response rate for “uncomfortable” and “distance,” followed by “thoughtful”

Table 19. Concept of Self When with Strangers: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade Level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Apathy	243 (44.7)	54 (40.1)	38 (37.4)	57 (47.1)	94 (50.4)	85 (42.8)	158 (46.0)
① Apathy	209 (38.4)	37 (27.5)	34 (33.4)	49 (40.5)	89 (47.7)	69 (34.8)	140 (40.8)
② Avoid	34 (6.3)	17 (12.6)	4 (4.0)	8 (6.6)	5 (2.7)	16 (8.0)	18 (5.2)
2. Uncomfortable	108 (19.9)	47 (34.9)	22 (21.8)	16 (13.2)	23 (12.5)	44 (22.1)	64 (18.5)
① Fear	51 (9.4)	31 (23.0)	8 (7.9)	5 (4.1)	7 (3.8)	24 (12.1)	27 (7.8)
② Uncomfortable	42 (7.7)	12 (8.9)	14 (13.9)	4 (3.3)	12 (6.5)	15 (7.5)	27 (7.8)
③ Cold	15 (2.8)	4 (3.0)	-	7 (5.8)	4 (2.2)	5 (2.5)	10 (2.9)
3. Distance	102 (18.8)	17 (12.5)	28 (27.8)	22 (18.2)	35 (18.8)	32 (16.1)	70 (20.4)
① Distance	56 (10.3)	11 (8.1)	15 (14.9)	10 (8.3)	20 (10.8)	22 (11.1)	34 (9.9)
② Defensive	45 (8.3)	6 (4.4)	13 (12.9)	12 (9.9)	14 (7.5)	10 (5.0)	35 (10.2)
③ Relative	1 (0.2)	-	-	-	1 (0.5)	-	1 (0.3)
4. Considerate	44 (8.1)	5 (3.7)	7 (7.0)	12 (9.9)	20 (10.8)	15 (7.5)	29 (8.4)
① Friendly	25 (4.6)	3 (2.2)	2 (2.0)	8 (6.6)	12 (6.5)	8 (4.0)	17 (4.9)
② Considerate	11 (2.0)	-	2 (2.0)	4 (3.3)	5 (2.7)	3 (1.5)	8 (2.3)
③ Behave properly	8 (1.5)	2 (1.5)	3 (3.0)	-	3 (1.6)	4 (2.0)	4 (1.2)
5. Converse	31 (5.7)	6 (4.4)	1 (1.0)	11 (9.1)	13 (7.0)	13 (6.5)	18 (5.2)
① Converse	18 (3.3)	3 (2.2)	1 (1.0)	6 (5.0)	8 (4.3)	6 (3.0)	12 (3.5)
② Show interest	13 (2.4)	3 (2.2)	-	5 (4.1)	5 (2.7)	7 (3.5)	6 (1.7)
6. Other	15 (2.8)	6 (4.4)	5 (5.0)	3 (2.5)	1 (0.5)	10 (5.0)	5 (1.5)
Total	543 (100.0)	135 (100.0)	101 (100.0)	121 (100.0)	186 (100.0)	199 (100.0)	344 (100.0)

and “converse.” “Apathy” was the most frequent response across grade level and gender.

Among the adult participants, approximately 40% listed “apathy,” followed by “distance,” “uncomfortable,” and “thoughtful,” respectively. Again, “apathy” was the most common choice across age and gender.

Thus, nearly half of students and adults perceived themselves as neutral or apathetic when they were with strangers. They experienced negative attitudes such as feeling uncomfortable or distant. Still, some students and adults listed positive attitudes towards strangers, including observing manners, being friendly and thoughtful. Only 1 in 10 people was considerate towards strangers, and the rest felt negative attitudes that included feeling apathetic,

Table 20. Concept of Self When with Strangers: Adult Sample

Category \ Adult	Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Apathy	215 (37.6)	125 (39.1)	90 (35.7)	104 (39.8)	111 (35.5)
① Apathy	191 (33.4)	111 (34.8)	80 (31.7)	99 (37.9)	92 (29.4)
② Avoid	24(4.2)	14 (4.3)	10 (4.0)	5 (1.9)	19 (6.1)
2. Distance	155 (27.0)	89 (27.6)	66 (26.3)	65 (25.1)	90 (28.7)
① Distance	82 (14.3)	47 (14.6)	35 (13.9)	27 (10.4)	55 (17.5)
② Defensive	69 (12.0)	40 (12.4)	29 (11.6)	35 (13.5)	34 (10.9)
③ Relative	4 (0.7)	2 (0.6)	2 (0.8)	3 (1.2)	1 (0.3)
3. Uncomfortable	88 (15.4)	48 (14.9)	40 (16.0)	27 (10.4)	61 (19.4)
① Uncomfortable	50 (8.7)	29 (9.0)	21 (8.4)	19 (7.3)	31 (9.9)
② Fearful	29 (5.1)	12 (3.7)	17 (6.8)	6 (2.3)	23 (7.3)
③ Cold	9 (1.6)	7 (2.2)	2 (0.8)	2 (0.8)	7 (2.2)
4. Thoughtful	59 (10.3)	22 (6.7)	37 (14.8)	33 (12.7)	26 (8.3)
① Friendly	29 (5.1)	12 (3.7)	17 (6.8)	19 (7.3)	10 (3.2)
② Behave properly	15 (2.6)	4 (1.2)	11 (4.4)	6 (2.3)	9 (2.9)
③ Thoughtful	13 (2.3)	4 (1.2)	9 (3.6)	8 (3.1)	5 (1.6)
④ Respect	2 (0.3)	2 (0.6)	-	-	2 (0.6)
5. Converse	50 (8.7)	34 (10.5)	16 (6.4)	28 (10.8)	22 (7.1)
① Converse	28 (4.9)	20 (6.2)	8 (3.2)	15 (5.8)	13 (4.2)
② Show interest	22 (3.8)	14 (4.3)	8 (3.2)	13 (5.0)	9 (2.9)
6. Other	6 (1.0)	4 (1.2)	2 (0.8)	3 (1.2)	3 (1.0)
Total	573 (100.0)	322 (100.0)	251 (100.0)	260 (100.0)	313 (100.0)

discomfort, or distance. These results were also consistent across gender.

Table 21 provides the results for students' self-concepts when with foreigners. The most frequent response among students was "uncomfortable" at about 30%, followed by "curious" at 25%. In addition, "friendly," "avoid," "introduce Korean culture," and "apathy" were each at about 10%. The most common response among students was "curious," followed by "uncomfortable." But elementary school, middle school, and university students are most likely to list "uncomfortable." In looking at gender differences, we found that male students most often listed "curious," while female students listed "uncomfortable."

More than 20% of adults saw themselves as "uncomfortable," "curious,"

Table 21. Concept of Self When with Foreigners: Student Sample

Student Category	Total (%)	Grade level (%)				Sex (%)	
		Elementary	Middle	High	University	Male	Female
1. Discomfort	158 (29.5)	38 (27.3)	34 (32.4)	32 (27.6)	54 (30.9)	37 (18.7)	121 (35.8)
① Discomfort	85 (15.9)	19 (13.6)	16 (15.2)	19 (16.4)	31 (17.7)	18 (9.1)	67 (19.8)
② Difficult	51 (9.5)	13 (9.4)	11 (10.5)	12 (10.3)	15 (8.6)	15 (7.6)	36 (10.7)
③ Quiet	22 (4.1)	6 (4.3)	7 (6.7)	1 (0.9)	8 (4.6)	4 (2.0)	18 (5.3)
2. Curious	131 (24.5)	31 (22.3)	22 (21.0)	33 (28.4)	45 (25.7)	54 (27.3)	77 (22.8)
① Curious	82 (15.3)	16 (11.5)	15 (14.3)	23 (19.8)	28 (16.0)	30 (15.2)	52 (15.4)
② Converse	49 (9.2)	15 (10.8)	7 (6.7)	10 (8.6)	17 (9.7)	24 (12.1)	25 (7.4)
3. Friendly	56 (10.6)	12 (8.6)	11 (10.5)	12 (10.4)	21 (12.0)	20 (10.1)	36 (10.8)
① Good	34 (6.4)	6 (4.3)	5 (4.8)	7 (6.0)	16 (9.1)	12 (6.1)	22 (6.5)
② Friendly	20 (3.8)	5 (3.6)	6 (5.7)	4 (3.5)	5 (2.9)	7 (3.5)	13 (3.9)
③ Active	2 (0.4)	1 (0.7)	-	1 (0.9)	-	1 (0.5)	1 (0.3)
4. Avoid	52 (9.7)	15 (10.8)	10 (9.6)	15 (12.9)	12 (6.8)	21 (10.6)	31 (9.2)
① Avoid	37 (6.9)	11 (7.9)	5 (4.8)	12 (10.3)	9 (5.1)	16 (8.1)	21 (6.2)
② Uncomfortable	15 (2.8)	4 (2.9)	5 (4.8)	3 (2.6)	3 (1.7)	5 (2.5)	10 (3.0)
5. Introduce Korean culture	52 (9.7)	11 (7.9)	11 (10.5)	15 (12.9)	15 (8.6)	29 (14.6)	23 (6.8)
6. Apathy	49 (9.1)	15 (10.8)	10 (9.5)	7 (6.0)	17 (9.7)	21 (10.6)	28 (8.3)
7. Foreign language	22 (4.1)	13 (9.4)	5 (4.8)	1 (0.9)	3 (1.7)	10 (5.1)	12 (3.6)
8. Other	15 (2.8)	4 (2.9)	2 (1.7)	1 (0.9)	8 (4.6)	6 (3.0)	9 (2.7)
Total	535 (100.0)	139 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	116 (100.0)	175 (100.0)	198 (100.0)	337 (100.0)

and “friendly,” respectively, when with foreigners (See Table 22). By age group, those in their 30s had highest rating for “uncomfortable,” while those in their 40s for “curious.” Males most often listed “curious,” while females listed “uncomfortable.” These differences were not significant.

In sum, Korean people, whether they are students or adults, perceived themselves as feeling uncomfortable when they were with foreigners. They not only experience these negative attitudes, but also rated curiosity as their next popular self-concept, followed by being friendly, avoiding them altogether, or feeling apathetic.

Table 22. Concept of Self When with Foreigners: Adult Sample

Category \ Adult	Total (%)	Age group (%)		Sex (%)	
		39 or below	Age >40	Male	Female
1. Uncomfortable	141 (25.3)	91 (28.0)	50 (21.5)	46 (18.2)	95 (31.1)
① Discomfort	66 (11.8)	45 (13.8)	21 (9.0)	22 (8.7)	44 (14.4)
② Difficult	65 (11.7)	39 (12.0)	26 (11.2)	21 (8.3)	44 (14.4)
③ Quiet	10 (1.8)	7 (2.2)	3 (1.3)	3 (1.2)	7 (2.3)
2. Curious	131 (23.5)	76 (23.5)	55 (23.6)	52 (20.6)	79 (26.0)
① Curious	91 (16.3)	55 (17.0)	36 (15.4)	29 (11.5)	62 (20.4)
② Converse	40 (7.2)	21 (6.5)	19 (8.2)	23 (9.1)	17 (5.6)
3. Friendly	122 (21.9)	68 (21.0)	54 (23.1)	44 (17.5)	78 (25.6)
① Friendly	61 (11.0)	32 (9.9)	29 (12.4)	27 (10.7)	34 (11.1)
② Likeable	35 (6.3)	19 (5.9)	16 (6.9)	13 (5.2)	22 (7.2)
③ Active	22 (3.9)	14 (4.3)	8 (3.4)	4 (1.6)	18 (6.0)
④ Glad	4 (0.7)	3 (0.9)	1 (0.4)	-	4 (1.3)
4. Apathy	60 (10.8)	33 (10.2)	27 (11.6)	44 (17.5)	16 (5.2)
5. Avoid	44 (7.9)	28 (8.6)	16 (6.9)	26 (10.4)	18 (6.0)
① Uncomfortable	23 (4.1)	14 (4.3)	9 (3.9)	14 (5.6)	9 (3.0)
② Avoid	21 (3.8)	14 (4.3)	7 (3.0)	12 (4.8)	9 (3.0)
6. Foreign language	22 (3.9)	10 (3.1)	12 (5.1)	17 (6.7)	5 (1.6)
7. Introduce Korean culture	16 (2.9)	6 (1.9)	10 (4.3)	16 (6.3)	-
8. Other	21 (3.8)	12 (3.7)	9 (3.9)	7 (2.8)	14 (4.5)
Total	557 (100.0)	324 (100.0)	233 (100.0)	252 (100.0)	305 (100.0)

VII. DISCUSSION

This study examined the Korean concept of the self from an indigenous psychology perspective. We looked at four main aspects of the self: concept of the self as an entity, concept of the self in the context of family, the self within the context of close and working relationships, and the self in the context of the larger society. There were a number of interesting findings from this analysis. Instead of discussing these diverse findings here, we focus on the most important aspects of Koreans' concepts of the self from an indigenous

psychological perspective. We can draw two main themes from our findings. First, we will discuss the importance of one's self-concept of his or her role in relation to others as we consider the "individual self" and the "relational self." Second, we hope to explain the fluidity of the self in the social context by looking at the consistency and flexibility of the self.

1. Concept of Self in Relation to Others: The Individual Self and Relational Self

When the Korean concept of the self is analyzed, we can find that they not only perceive an individual self, but also perceive a relational self. We can confirm this by focusing on people's perceptions of their roles within their relationships. For instance, fulfilling one's roles was the second most common response among adults and the fifth most common response among students.

Adults who work find that they have very different self-concepts depending on their various roles at their workplace. We find that they feel uncomfortable and capable when they are with their work superiors, but that they feel comfortable and considerate when they are with their work subordinates, all the while behaving in an authoritarian manner around them. We can clearly see that Koreans' sense of their roles within their relationships, be it with their work superiors or subordinates, have a significant influence on their self-concepts.

The results demonstrate that Koreans' perceptions of their roles as students shape their self-concepts, causing them to worry about their achievement, behave like a good student, or become achievement-oriented, when they are with their teachers. In addition, parents perceive themselves as having a self-concept of being responsible when they are with their children, while children feel that they exhibit child-like behaviors and feel comfortable from a sense of dependence on their parents, while also experiencing a sense of indebtedness and filial piety.

These findings show that Koreans not only see themselves as individual selves, but also see themselves in relation to others, as well as their respective roles within these relationships. The notion that one's role is significant in determining how one understands himself/herself has been influenced by Confucian tradition. In Confucianism, keeping the Five Cardinal

Relationship was critical in maintaining social harmony. The five qualities within the five cardinal relationships can be explained by the emphasis of the Middle Path and they are regulated by the emphasis on harmonious human relations.

Although formal aspects of Confucian doctrines are disappearing from modern Korean society, the importance that has been placed on the roles within human relationships still persists. We find the roots of Korean people's tendency towards treating others with the respect and emphasis on status and role are the core values of Confucianism. The results from a study (Park, Y. and Kim, U. 2004) that looked at trust among Koreans demonstrate that relationships are important in developing trust and that trust is deeply embedded in the culture of relatedness.

Previous studies show that mental health is not only determined by the individual, but is closely related to his or her relationships. Koreans experience a high degree of stress related to their social relationships (Park, Y. et al. 2002), and given that their roles within these relationships are important, it is no wonder that they influence their stress experience. It is thus more productive to view Koreans as role-focused and relational (Chang, S. 2005) than being individualistic.

Korean culture is relational, and the self must be understood in relation to others. By investigating Korean people's concept of the self, family, achievement, stress, and security through an indigenous psychology perspective, Park, Y. (2001) found that there were limitations in understanding the Korean psychology from the Western perspective, and proposed the need for understanding Koreans' relational culture. Just as we are able to observe in the paternalism of business organizations, we can understand relations within Korean society as a larger version of the relations within the family (Kim, U. and Choi, S. 1994). Additionally, each individual's role is very important within these relations.

2. The Changing Self in the Social Context: Consistency of the Self and Flexibility of the Self

The results of this study confirm that Koreans' concept of the self can change within the social context depending on the type of relationship that they have

with others. They change with time and environment rather than emphasizing maintaining an internal, consistent self across contexts.

Being “active” was the most common response for students or adults, and both groups perceived themselves as lonely when they were alone. We see that Koreans have differing self-concepts in general and when they are alone. Koreans’ Concept of Self when with a specific other person change depending on the specific person with whom they are interacting. The most representative responses among adults and students when they were with their fathers were feeling uncomfortable and avoidance, but when they were with their mothers, most participants indicated feeling comfortable. Most students and adults felt comfortable when they were with their friends, but students felt tense when they were with their teachers, while adults felt uncomfortable when they were with their work superiors. Participants perceived themselves as apathetic when they were with strangers, and as uncomfortable when they were with foreigners. When these results are seen as a whole, Koreans’ concept of the self is dependent on whether they are alone or with other people, and whom in particular they are with.

These findings demonstrate that rather than being consistent, Koreans’ Concept of Self change in different contexts and relationships. The reason behind the flexibility of Koreans’ self-concept is that the Korean culture is not founded upon the individual; rather, relationships are far more significant (Kim, U. 1994, 2004). Additionally, there are large differences in the roles expected within each relationship (Kim, U. 1996, 1997; Kim, U. and Park, Y. 2004a, 2006). These marked differences in the concept of self depend on the distance, strength, quality, and appearance of each relationship.

From an indigenous psychological perspective, Korean concept of self changes based on the relationship and context. The Korean self differs from the Western concept of self that emphasize consistency, which centers on the individual. Rather than being a consistent entity, Koreans’ Concept of Self is fluid, based on relational contexts and it is shaped by Buddhism as well as Confucianism. Hināyana Buddhism upholds the three core values of the insight into impermanence, impurity, and non-self. Among these, insight into impermanence seems to correspond closely with Koreans’ flexible self-concepts. According to the core value of impermanence, there is nothing in our lives that is eternal, and the fact that everything changes is a fundamental

characteristic of life. Life is characterized by the Eight Sufferings, and even with these sufferings, human experiences are not eternal. Similarly, the notion that we are constantly changing (the insight of impermanence) is related to the idea that the self does not exist (the insight of non-self).

According to the insight into non-self, all phenomena appear, stay, change, and disappear and the mind follows these rules by appearing, staying, changing, and disappearing. Initially there were no names for “self,” or the “mind,” hence the five temporary, material energies of particularity, feeling, cognition, will, and consciousness were aggregated together. When these five qualities lose their equilibrium, individuals experience suffering and confusion, but suffering ceases through re-established balance via diligent self-cultivation.

The Buddhist belief that everything changes (the insight of impermanence) and that the self does not exist (the insight of non-self) explains the roots of flexibility Koreans display in a relational context. This is one of many other explanations, and because there are various others, there is a need for continuous, in-depth study of Koreans’ concept of the self.

3. Staying Open to Finding the Self

Humaneness is overcoming selfishness and keeping to propriety.

- Confucius -

When we think about what it is to become a learned person by overcoming our selfishness in order to maintain social order and harmony, we say that we have understood the Confucian idea of the healthy human being in relationship with others (Kim, Y. 2005). In Korean society, individuals are able to build an ideal self when they are able to maintain harmony in all areas of life and to live in healthy way. These ideas are very different than the Western ideas of what helps individuals function well in life.

As we recognize the socio-cultural differences between the East and the West, this study examines the concept of the self from an indigenous psychology perspective. By weaving together the latitudes and longitudes of time and space, we were able to step at least a little bit closer to understanding the essence of one’s self-concept by providing theoretical, conceptual and

empirical analyses. The core idea that was uncovered within a spatial framework was the concept of the self in relation to others. The idea embedded within a temporal framework was the second topic of discussion, which was the flexibility of the self within a relational context.

The tendency to not limit oneself to individual attributes, but to define oneself within relationships and their roles in those relationships, and ultimately to contribute to social harmony and order, is founded on Confucian ideals. We see that the self is not fixed, but is constantly changing as it continuously strives towards an ideal society, as reflected in the Buddhist idea of an impermanent self. In order to fully understand the Korean indigenous view of self-concept, it is necessary to analyze the foundational philosophical and religious thoughts of the East.

Descartes once stated, "I think, therefore, I am." The Western mind has been founded on rationalist philosophy and explains its current individualism. Rather than forming a unique, secure sense of self, the Korean sense of self continues to change depending on relationships and circumstances, as well as their roles in those contexts. In light of Descartes' Western reasoning, the Korean sense of self can seem peculiar. In fact, if we were to examine Koreans' self from a Western perspective, the Korean mind can appear to be immature and similar to a person with multiple personalities. However, it is not that the self lacks consistency and maturity, but that the self is fluid within the context of relationships and develops into a different kind of maturity as it becomes more considerate of others. We can see that qualitatively different interpretations and assessments are necessary, depending on whether we are considering the Western standard and way of living or the Eastern standard and way of living.

Seung (1997) once questioned Descartes, "Where would I be if I completely stopped all thinking?" Years before, when Socrates was said to have stated, *know thyself*, a great number of philosophers began to become intrigued by the study of the self. Even within the field of psychology, William James examined the difference between the "objective self" and the "subjective self." Numerous psychologists have continued to investigate the composition, function, and meaning of the self, in addition to the Buddhist perspective that the self does not exist. To the questions of the essence of self, Confucius would have emphasized, "I feel, therefore, I am," emphasizing relatedness and

emotions that bind people and communities together.

The Western foundation of an individualistic self that is rooted in a Judeo-Christian worldview and the Eastern founding of a collectivistic self that is rooted in Confucianism and Buddhism are qualitatively different. These selves differ in that the former is internally consistent, while the latter changes based on relationships. This combination results not only from the interchange between one individual and another in the social context, but also from the interaction between nature and the individual. We can understand the human being by seeing that the providence of the earth where one lives and changes within individuals over time.

While it is true that the bases of Eastern and Western thought are very different, it is not always true that all countries within the East share these commonalities. For instance, Choi (1993) found that the Korean understanding of *woori* (“we”) is founded on the family and human relationships, and includes horizontal relationships. But the Japanese word “we” or *ware ware* is not founded on the family, but is understood from a collectivistic sense of group purpose and activity, and adheres to keeping the order in hierarchical relationships. Koreans’ notion of *chong* (“affection”) is activated in the context of relationships, while the Japanese idea of *ninjo* explains that relationships form through group activities that provide fulfillment and that they are activated through the activities that are based on the group norms. The results of numerous studies that look at differences among East Asian countries demonstrate the need to look at Koreans’ indigenous psychology.

As we continue to examine the large accumulation of philosophical, religious and empirical research results of “finding the self” in the world’s history, or when we recognize the work of researchers who have been driven by the study of “erasing the self,” we find the importance of asking the question “why do we always have to remain open to others?” At the same time, this study’s indigenous psychological approach to understand the Korean sense of self confirms what the West perceives as the illogical is sensible and reasonable from a Korean perspective. We believe that the findings of this study are only one small step towards understanding the Korean mind.

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