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## **The 4-C Framework for Mindfulness and Empathy Development**

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### **1. Introduction**

Suffering and strife are endemic to the human condition.<sup>3</sup> The impetus that motivates us to behave in ways that beget suffering for ourselves and for others, and to commit strife in order to achieve personal satisfaction, may never be known. But there is compelling reason to believe that, if anything, the impetus might just be our own personal desires to fulfill some sense of "self." Far too often it seems that people claim to know who they are, invariably rooted in an attribute or perceived social role.<sup>4</sup> As true as this may be, we need to look beyond the surface of our ecology and deeper into the socio-cognitive factors that motivate behavior deleterious to empathy development. In other words, we need to understand how and why we construe a stimulus and its provocation of a behavioral response. The combined response of meditation/ mindfulness practice,<sup>5</sup> self-reflection,<sup>6</sup> and ecological systems<sup>7</sup> suggests a way for us to not only develop but also embody empathy. Through this approach, we might arrive at a truer understanding of "self,"<sup>8</sup> which might just put an end to the suffering and strife.

### **2. The Project**

#### **2.1. Review of Literature**

The issues of emotional memory, emotional hindrance, socio-cognitive factor, ecology, and self-construal are all central to my investigation of empathy as found in Korean Seon Buddhist monastic education. While a number of definitions have been suggested, it is appropriate to consider that there is little agreement for an operable definition of empathy found in the literature.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Empathy Literature*

Granted, a dictionary definition of empathy is straightforward: the objective emotional awareness of another's experience; but this is not useful to understanding the purpose of the practices under study. For instance, Jegerski and Upshaw,<sup>10</sup> as well as Cliffordson,<sup>11</sup> demonstrate that empathy development is a universal human trait albeit expressed differently because of socio-cultural behaviors. Johnson, Cheek, & Smither<sup>12</sup> and Deonna<sup>13</sup> provide a satisfactory explanation of empathy, but not so much for its applicability in the meditation/ mindfulness field. Research conducted by Håkansson<sup>14</sup> provides a strong argument by identifying four themes that appear repeatedly in the empathy literature: (1) understanding, (2) emotion, (3) perceived similarity, and (4) concern.

Another way of looking at the concept of empathy is through a comparison with sympathy. Wispe<sup>15</sup> remarked that there is a clear distinction between empathy and sympathy. Sympathy, on the one hand, could mean "relating to," "I am," or "moved by." This suggests that the sympathizer can be

caught by the emotional agenda of the other and thus become entangled by it. On the other hand, empathy could mean “knowing,” “as if,” or “reaches out.” This suggests that the empathizer is aware of possible entanglements caused by the other’s emotional agenda. Additional support is found in the work by Decety and Jackson:

Empathy accounts for the naturally occurring subjective experience of similarity between the feelings expressed by the self and the other without losing sight of whose feelings belong to whom.<sup>16</sup>

It suggests that a person should not get caught by the emotional agenda of others, but should remain emotionally non-attached.

Many researchers in the meditation/ mindfulness field have stressed the importance of compassion as the force underpinning the practices.<sup>17</sup> Compassion, the subjective emotional need to help another, means “to suffer with,” and runs contrary to the Buddhist concept of *karuṇā* which generally means “to pity.” Even the influential Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh<sup>18</sup> claims that the term compassion is misused, while Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche<sup>19</sup> claims it to be a skill which brings about spiritual awakening. Compassion as a popular Western concept could enable habits or lead to self-deception.<sup>20</sup> Critics, like myself, would argue that empathy could become convoluted with compassion, and pose a challenge to educators who are trying to make sense of the practices.

In response to the matter, I propose a new definition, not focused on the structure of empathy but rather on empathy itself, albeit Buddhist inspired: *Empathy is mindful awareness of how socio-cognitive stimuli affect a behavioral response rooted in the construal of self.* This definition suggests an examined life in which a person as an actor in their own self-construal learns how to govern their behaviors while attempting to suspend judgment of an experience (*epoché*) in order to become liberated from their emotional hindrances.

### *Construal of “Self” Literature*

Socio-cognitive activity found in one’s environment shapes the concept of the self. Such a notion underlies the fundamental difference between East Asian and Western ways of thinking and doing. Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan<sup>21</sup> examine a wealth of literature to determine the extent to which ancient Chinese and Greek social systems might have nurtured cognition and subsequent behavior apparent in contemporary East Asian and Western societies. Their study suggests that today’s cognitive processes persist because of several socio-cognitive spheres of activity. Rice farming in China needed a cooperative effort by the entire village, whereas fishing and herding in Greece rested generally on individual effort. For this reason, East Asian and Western cognitive modes, respectively holistic and analytic, are believed to be a result of attention and control of an object or event and its correlates in an environment. Given these modes, activity would influence a cultural perception of causality. East Asians tend to the context’s relations, while Westerners tend to the object. Causal tendency evinces culture in how a person explains an event or predicts an outcome. Moreover, because East Asian objective perceptions about relationships and similarities differ from Western objective perceptions, people tend to categorize and group objects based on cultural norms. Furthermore, cultural norms for compromise and argument are clearly rooted in historic socio-cognitive stimuli. One area in which East Asians and Westerners find

accord is through logic and experience.<sup>22</sup> It appears that self and culture might be one and the same, and that a person would act on beliefs fundamental to a particular culture.

People express much of themselves in the socio-cognitive activities in which they engage. In some cases, the activity is already present in the culture; and in other cases, the activity is introduced to the culture. In other words, human adaptation and cultural diffusion make it increasingly difficult to ignore the possibility that culture, like people, evolves.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps an historical vignette might illuminate cultural evolution and what Triandis<sup>24</sup> meant about the shifting concept of self and behavior as being dependent on identity-dimensions and cultural complexity. Korean culture, for instance, is historically collective with rural village tradition governing group norms. In the past 40 years, striking changes have taken place because of rapid industrialization, economic growth, and alliances with other countries. As Korean culture became more complex given its economic changes, it also became more diverse and tolerant.<sup>25</sup> The idea of a Korean cultural evolution finds support with Hamamura<sup>26</sup> who contends that the Japanese people, although respectful of cultural traditions, have become more individualistic. Additional literature suggests that self-construal assumes more individualistic values as a result of a country's economic growth.<sup>27</sup> A country's prosperity might possibly contribute to the individuation of self and culture.<sup>28</sup>

Another way of looking at the issue of individuation as a developmental process may be through concepts of identity and personality. Previous studies have posited a variety of definitions for them, suggesting they are aspects of the self: configurations of expression, emotion, motivation, habitual tendencies, and relationships.<sup>29</sup> The "self" is "situation-consistent traits."<sup>30</sup> Self is "ideology cognized through the individual engagement with discourse . . . and through social interaction and social practice."<sup>31</sup> "Self" is a narrative identity that makes meaning out of life.<sup>32</sup> McCrae and Costa<sup>33</sup> suggest that identity formation is a result of how a person attempts to meet their unique needs. Regardless of definition and its usage, identity and personality construe a self (person) who is rooted in a cultural matrix.

### *"Self" Reflection Literature*

Bohman dialogue urges people to explore their deeply held emotional hindrances (pride, aggression, greed, lust, bias, and addiction/ habit to name a few) about themselves not only as individual but also as a member of a society or culture.<sup>34</sup> Bohm uses a river as metaphor of humanity's polluted mind. The source of pollution is not the river itself but factors upstream. These factors are emotional hindrances poured into the river by past experiences with family, friends, and society-at-large.<sup>35</sup> Each factor then coalesces to form a person's self-identity, and this in turn wields a powerful negative influence on our belief of "self."<sup>36</sup> In essence, a person is conditioned to behave a certain way.

Meditation/ mindfulness helps transform false notions of "self" and develop positive character traits in which one reconditions his or her "self."<sup>37</sup> To engage in open and honest dialogue based on Bohman principles a person must challenge themselves by questioning the very essence of each factor: (1) that reality is not as real as we believe it to be; (2) that a problem-solution examined from a singular perspective only fuels the problem; (3) that the rational self needs to observe the emotional self and constrain it; and (4) that thoughts will run their course as a thought as long as the one does not allow a negative thought to manifest as negative action.<sup>38</sup> To do this means to

reevaluate who we are as both individuals and group members, and in doing so, recondition our lived experiences with “self” and others.<sup>39</sup>

Reconditioning oneself is not an easy task. It takes discipline and willpower to release emotional hindrances of body, speech, and mind.<sup>40</sup> What makes this task challenging is a mountain of life experiences conditioned by family, friends, school, work, and social factors.<sup>41</sup> To undo these factors, we may use Bohm’s strategy that helps us question the factors that pollute our mind.<sup>42</sup> During the process we may uncover uncomfortable truths about family and friends,<sup>43</sup> truths that may shed light on a darker side of our personality and that may arrest further inquiring into the “self.” Nonetheless, Bohm and Nichol<sup>44</sup> seem to stop at the point in which two or more people can have a genuine dialogue, a point where each person has a chance to speak and be heard. Bohm and Nichol<sup>45</sup> move dialogue into a deeper, spiritually significant realm where we must unlearn habits and biases. Here we find congruence with the Buddhist doctrinal tradition, which holds that positive character trait formation derives from affective and moral self-awareness, while negative character trait formation derives from its lack.<sup>46</sup>

Consistent spiritual practice<sup>47</sup> can positively affect student performance in school.<sup>48</sup> Several case studies which assessed student motivation are discussed in the article by Duerr, Zajonc, and Dana.<sup>49</sup> Lesson disengagement and student demotivation, the most obvious and frequent issues experienced by teachers, is often the result of an assignment’s irrelevance to real life issues which lack intelligibility to a student’s personal experiences.<sup>50</sup> Schools, however, that implement meditation/ mindfulness education practices as part of the curriculum<sup>51</sup> find that student engagement and motivation improve and that the student is emotionally and socially healthier.<sup>52</sup> For example, in his course at University of Arkansas, Daniel Holland<sup>53</sup> assigns three learning activities – meditation, discussion, and journal writing – in order to foster mindfulness.

## **2.2. Methodology**

*“How does my own experience of this culture connect with and offer insights about this culture, situation, event, and/ or way of life?”<sup>54</sup>*

Auto-ethnography involves the connection between self and context,<sup>55</sup> and as such serves as an ideal approach to understanding the empathetic teaching practices found in Korean Seon Buddhist monastic education. Moreover, it is an ideal method in order to provide first-person experiential advice<sup>56</sup> to educators in both the private and public sectors who seek to develop themselves and their programs along empathetic lines.

### *Research Setting*

My approach to data collection was an immersion in the Korean Seon Buddhist monastic education tradition, by which I entered into a retreat in the winter of 2015-2016 over a 46-day period at two different temples, one rural and one urban. The first retreat took place at “Eagle’s Nest,” an important meditation center because of the meditation master and its secluded rural location. The second retreat took place at “Stubborn Tiger,” a small urban temple in Busan, South Korea, a metropolis with a population of over six million.

### *Data Collection*

Using the five-step video analysis model developed by Fitzgerald, Hackling, and Dawson,<sup>57</sup> I observed three videos<sup>58</sup> of Korean Buddhist master Hwansan Sunim who taught school-aged children and their parents about the benefits of Hwa-du meditation, a practice found in the Seon/Zen Buddhist tradition which is an open-ended question meant to dissolve or burn useless or unwanted thoughts and conceptual bias. Each video showed how the master demonstrated empathy throughout his lessons, which support the practical application of Hwa-du meditation/ mindfulness within modern education. Hwa-du means “point before thought.” The titles of the three videos were: *The Role of Meditation and Modern Education*; *Handling Adolescent Emotions*; and *Sitting Meditation with Korean American Students*. The Fitzgerald, Hackling, and Dawson model<sup>59</sup> was selected since it is one used by classroom teachers and school administrators to improve classroom practices and professional growth.

Data was documented in a self-reflective journal as suggested by Hart,<sup>60</sup> who uses the same method in his college course on mindfulness. The choice of using a self-reflective journal is corroborated by the model proposed by Duncan.<sup>61</sup> This model helped mitigate reliability and validity concerns because of the robustness found in the self-reflective notebook.<sup>62</sup> It consisted of several elements which defined time and location boundaries, defined the instrument’s utility within the context, delineated the evidence chain, established applicability to a theoretical framework, and followed a general case study protocol.<sup>63</sup> In some ways, Duncan’s model echoes features of a Bohmian dialogue, making the research meaningful and personal for its intended audience.<sup>64</sup>

### *Data Analysis*

The video analysis technique developed by Fitzgerald, Hackling, and Dawson<sup>65</sup> helped to identify the high frequency terms used by Hwansan Sunim in his teaching method. Elements of Markus’s and Kitayama’s self-construal theory<sup>66</sup> were integrated into the findings to determine how a cultural dialectic might appear in the master’s methodology. The *in vivo* highlighting technique, reduced data in the self-reflective journal to open them to thematic identification.<sup>67</sup> Two broad themes were identified: (1) drama creator and (2) mission minded. Ten *in vivo* sub-themes were identified, five for each broad theme. Each *in vivo* sub-theme was interpreted as a case study vignette, and analyzed through heuristic and phenomenological lenses based on Håkansson’s structure of empathy,<sup>68</sup> and Markus’s and Kitayama’s self-construal theory.<sup>69</sup>

I integrated the videos’ high frequency terms, the self-reflective journal’s *in vivo* themes, Håkansson’s structure of empathy,<sup>70</sup> and Markus’s and Kitayama’s independent and interdependent self-construal theory<sup>71</sup> within Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory,<sup>72</sup> which framed the overall analysis.

## **3. Results of the Study**

Several conclusions can be drawn from the data gathered from the entries made in both the video observation journal and the self-reflective journal. These tools served as artifacts with which I interacted as both an observer and someone experiencing it. This approach enabled me to analyze

the teaching method of a Korean Buddhist master and determine that the “self” can be flexible regardless of culture, dependent more or less on situation and circumstance. Equally important, the approach generated a construct, which is necessary so that empathy can become an expression of lived experience.

### **3.1. Video Observations**

Hwansan Sunim’s empathy appears prominently in the Hwa-du meditation instructions when he uses the term “systemized response to stabilize emotions.” Throughout each video, he gives the audience a rationale for practice, notably during moments in school that are suffused with anxiety. He accentuates Hwa-du meditation and the four-stages of an emotional experience to provide a means for self-learning.

- The *four stages of emotional experience* are: (1) a situation due to an environmental factor; (2) attention drawn to factor stimuli; (3) factor stimuli evaluated for positive or negative attributes; and (4) a reaction based on positive and negative evaluations of the stimuli.
- *Three-step Hwa-du meditation* involves: (1) a practice of rationale and proper posture in which the emotion is calmed; (2) a breathing technique which is meant to create a space between the situation and emotion; and (3) the meditation practice itself using the “what is this?” technique by means of which the meditator questions a sense stimulus.
- The *high-frequency terms* identified in the video lessons are: emotional regulation, heart-ache, anxiety, reading emotions, self-reflection, difficult moments, opportunity to practice, and positive habits.

A closer look at the video lesson data further suggests the need for adolescents to cultivate self-awareness of their physical and emotional responses during an anxious moment. It is sufficient to argue that adolescents should learn how to engage in appropriate actions – namely self-restraint and self-definition – within a social context in order to maintain harmony. Hwansan Sunim demonstrated how meditation/ mindfulness is a path of self-learning inclusive to all people, and that through individual effort and self-reflection a meaningful life can be lived. This is achieved by applying self-reflection to identify anxiety during difficult moments; and in this way, emotional regulation can become a positive habit. The video lessons suggest that a meditation/ mindfulness teacher should be flexible in respect to individual circumstances and how socio-cognitive stimuli might influence a construal of self.

### **3.2. Self-Reflective Journal**

Each vignette demonstrated how socio-cognitive stimuli can incite emotional memory, allowing for a better identification of the self-construal and concurrent behavior. Håkansson’s structure of empathy also fits with the vignettes because it serves as a tool to better understand how emotional memory and socio-cognitive stimuli might cooperate to arrest empathy development, while establishing a base in order to develop empathy. Often the vignettes suggested a dialectic between

an independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal. A closer look at the data suggests there might not be such an apparent difference in self-construal as previously reported. It appeared in my data that although a person might have an independent sense of self, they seemed to have wanted to behave interdependently. A converse logic about a sense of an interdependent self also appears in the data, in that the person demonstrates a dependent construal of self. Admittedly, my interpretation of the vignettes quite possibly has bias; but the data suggests that the sense of self is both independent and interdependent regardless of culture.

The *in vivo* themes identified an emotional tension that I carry with me to all my relationships, and thus colors my response or reaction to socio-cognitive stimuli. A student should be guided carefully through a self-reflective process in which an *in vivo* journal is kept, and by which they gradually develop a more mature understanding of their emotional experience. This approach helps to show how Korean Seon Buddhist monastic education's empathetic practices might be applied to a person's daily life experiences.

### ***3.3. Generating an Empathy Construct***

An empathy construct is needed because it helps a person learn to recognize how an ecology system incites emotional memory which drives behavior. The construct – generated from data identified in both journals, suggests that (a) Hwansan Sunim's Hwa-du meditation and four stages of emotional experience, (b) Hakansson's empathy structure, (c) Markus and Kitayama self-construal theory, and (d) Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model provide us with such a tool. On a personal level, the construct revealed the following insights about empathy development:

- It helped gain insight into my emotionally conditioned personality, and allowed me to better observe how distractions could move me out of the present moment.
- It cultivated critical self-reflection, insight into socio-cognitive factors that influence behavior and if learned properly, can equip a person with a skill-set to suspend judgment while navigating life's vagaries.
- Emotional hindrances are an important aspect to develop empathy because without a foil, empathy would never mature. Hindrances are a constituent of the structure of empathy because they help a person navigate through challenges and difficulties.
- Any person can practice meditation/ mindfulness, but to know the self is to be self-reflective and also reflective of others, which should result in a more empathetic life.
- Students and teachers unfamiliar with meditation/ mindfulness practice, and who may not necessarily be self-reflective, need a framework.
- A person who has a better understanding of their behavior in social contexts should be better able to regulate their emotions at the time.

Meditation/ mindfulness practice provides a person with a skill-set to stop an emotional cycle, whether it is malignant or benign. Nevertheless, any practice does not stand alone, but requires additional support that is clear and usable, especially for adolescents.

#### 4. Discussion of Results

My research is not only consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework,<sup>73</sup> but augments it as a reliable model for self-examination of the socio-cognitive factors that shape "self." The framework enables an objective examination of oneself *in vivo* to understand how socio-cognitive factors might influence the construal of a situation and its relational dynamic. As a lens, it helps to contextualize an emotional memory, providing for a more complete self-awareness about emotional conditioning and hindrances as expressed in body, speech, and mind. This makes it easier to see another's emotional "self" and the factors that feed a personality. It is meditation/ mindfulness, however, that enables this to happen; therefore, it is important to have a robust daily practice to help stabilize and deepen this realization so it becomes a natural extension of one's "self."

Bronfenbrenner's framework certainly finds wide application in contexts other than a Buddhist temple. I feel, however, it needed augmentation useable for both meditation/ mindfulness practitioners and non-practitioners. A quick sweep of three studies lends support to my research. Cala and Soriano<sup>74</sup> identified how complex interactions and lifestyle choices within and across the ecological levels condition adolescent self-identification and values. In a study on counselor training programs, Lau and Ng<sup>75</sup> suggest using a framework as a self-reflective tool to help gauge development and progression. And in an older but still relevant study, Swick and Williams<sup>76</sup> suggest that professional counselors should have a stout understanding of the ecological factors that cause stress. This research adds to the pool of teaching methodologies for use in meditation / mindfulness learning environments.

Based on this research, I find that a meditation/ mindfulness teacher should be trained in both self-reflection and meditation practice. If a teacher does not have the right tools, they can neither help themselves nor their students to develop empathy. As such, I developed the *4-C Framework for Mindfulness and Empathy Development* with my secondary research question in mind: *To what end can I use the data collected here for a broader purpose?* A fundamental contribution of this model will be to inform educators of the importance of proper preparation that includes instruction on how to identify and release emotional hindrances.

The augmented *Self-Reflective Journal Template* (cf. *Appendix One*) works in conjunction with the *4-C Framework for Mindfulness and Empathy Development*, which is discussed later. The journal template consists of three stages to help a person critically assess and modify their behavior. It follows the process by which I reflected on the *in vivo* themes in research collection point five and the project analysis. Stage one is the situational context/ environment in which an event occurred, as well as the journal entry itself and the identifiable socio-cognitive factors and *in vivo* theme. Stage two consists of the ideas and assumptions couched within the frameworks of Hwansan Sunim and Håkansson. Lastly, stage three examines the resolutions and turning points through the Bronfenbrenner framework, leading to behavior modification.

The *4-C Framework of Mindfulness* (cf. *Appendix Two*) consists of three parts. The first part is a segmented cycle that highlights the four stages of an emotional experience. The second part identifies possible socio-cognitive trigger points that incite an emotional memory. And the third part has self-reflective questions which prompt mindfulness.



The cycle, as represented in the diagram found in *Appendix Two*, is composed of four elements: (1) contentment, (2) contention, (3) conflict, and (4) conciliation. These elements are defined in the following way:

- *Contentment* is defined as an emotional state of happiness, satisfaction, or being carefree.
- *Contention* is defined as an emotional state in which personal opinion becomes argumentative.
- *Conflict* is defined as an emotional state in which strong disagreement and fiery emotions create a crack or break in a relationship.
- *Conciliation* is defined as an emotional state in which fiery emotions are lessened and the situation resolved.

In *Appendix Two* will be found a segmented cycle diagram showing how the framework operates. To be sure, a socio-cognitive trigger point of an emotional experience is a disruption expressed specifically within a stage, and thus spurs movement into the next stage. Each stage in the diagram has a text-box with prompts inspired by Hwansan Sunim<sup>77</sup> and Vimalaramsi.<sup>78</sup> The question prompts are not specific to a single individual but could be adapted to a number of situations and ecologies. Håkansson's four-part structure of empathy<sup>79</sup> is also evident within the framework. For instance, applying the first stage's question prompts to a situation would help to understand and quell the arising emotions that lead to contention. Stages are color-coded in *Appendix Two* to indicate emotional intensity.

The aim of this approach is to allow a person to take an objective view, namely to remain impartial throughout a situation. Moreover, it requires an introspective association of personal experiences with the experiences of others and how he or she may feel at the time. Having arrived at this level of an objective viewpoint, it now may be possible to keep from moving into the next stage. The key is to find a path to conciliation and remain in contentment, without ever moving into the next stages of contention and conflict. For this reason, the *4-C Framework* must work jointly with the self-reflective journal identified in *Appendix One*. In addition, it must be done with a rigorous meditation / mindfulness practice which helps identify one's *in vivo* themes in order to objectify the four stages, suspend judgment, and abide in the situation. It may find application in a variety of environments such as school, home life, and other social occasions.

#### **4.1. Cultural Implications Affecting Empathy**

In considering the implications of the augmented self-reflective journal template and the *4-C Framework*, a further discussion on cultural implications, especially those that might appear in schools is merited. Many schools today are represented by culturally diverse populations that are largely grounded in ethnic and gender issues. For instance, an ethnic issue may be that a student population is Hispanic or Latino/a. However, these terms are far-reaching and may even exclude country of origin, language diversity, and social interactions. Culture is communicated at multiple levels, both directly and indirectly, ranging from gestures, intonations and pauses, styles, proximity, colloquial expressions, and mannerisms to name a few. These elements create a complex milieu for any educator who needs to be aware of their own assumptions about culture. In effect, an educator needs to suspend judgment when dealing with a diverse student population

because their assumptions may not apply to a particular student or group. Below are several areas (posed as questions) that address a multi-cultural environment and empathy development:

- a. what is the role of intentionality in the framework?
- b. does a religious ethical system play a role in the framework?
- c. how does it apply to someone who is unwilling to engage in the process itself?
- d. how does it apply when multiple parties are involved with differing expectations?
- e. how do differing values challenge resolution?
- f. what might happen if there is a cross-cultural conflict?
- g. how might a self-construal influence the self-reflective process?

In the first question (a), intentionality is the responsibility of both parties in order to resolve the situation; but someone needs to make the first move. A teacher or counselor needs to be the agent in this regard, keeping in mind cultural issues, age level, and socio-economic status, and so forth.

In answering the second question (b), it is not necessary that a specific religious perspective or philosophy find expression within the framework because empathy is a universal human value. Nevertheless, religion may be the matrix from which some people behave.

In answering the third question (c), it may be extremely difficult to remain in stage one or two especially if the other person is consumed with fiery emotions. The ultimate result may be to let the other vent their emotions over a period of time, and then identify the right opportunity for conciliation.

The fourth question (d) is difficult to answer if a situation is escalating. In a school, an educator needs to examine the various cultural and emotional perspectives by separating the students and walking them through each stage. In a home environment, the same process is applied if there is a conflict between siblings. In both instances, compromise is needed. The goal is to move to conciliation.

The fifth question (e) is knowing when not to impose your own values onto another, and leave the other person alone.

In answering the sixth question (f), one needs to be aware of multiple cultural dynamics. Cross-cultural education should be a part of any program or curriculum in order to understand how socio-cognitive stimuli found in an ecology system feeds bias and stereotyping. It becomes more difficult when the parties come from diverse cultures with their own cultural expectations. This can be further complicated when the teacher is not part of any these cultures.

In answering question seven (g), one should be cautious when guiding a student through a self-reflective process because they might experience a cultural dialectic in which their construal of self, whether independent or interdependent, is challenged and they resist any new notions of changing their self-construal. A second reason for caution is that meditation / mindfulness could nurture a deep sense of contentment because it can block an examination of emotional hindrances. Emotional hindrances are an important aspect to empathy development, and thus they figure into the construct because a hindrance helps a person navigate through challenges and difficulties.

The *4-C Framework* needs further development to determine its applicability in schools and other environments. I recommend additional research to examine various scenarios in which conflict arises, an elaboration on the trigger points, the adaptability of the question prompts at different grade levels, and cultural perspectives.

## **5. Concluding Thoughts**

Knowing the “self” is the outcome of an intense self-reflective process by which the empathy construct investigates how socio-cognitive factors found in each ecological sub-system construes a sense of “self.” This construction allows a person to see more clearly how stimulus, memory, and choice figure into their construal of self, and the situational trigger of an emotional hindrance. The empathy construct offers a framework that can help a person balance choices in order to regulate their emotions, nurture positive habits, and release the emotional hindrance. Self-awareness is not only practicing meditation / mindfulness, it is also understanding how an environment shapes us and the choices it presents. In sum, it is a quest of *epoché* in which intellectual and emotional honesty is valued.

APPENDIX ONE: *Self-Reflective Journal Template*

Stage 1: Situational Context / Environment	
Single Journal Entry	
<i>In Vivo</i> Theme	Socio-Cognitive Factor(s)
Stage 2: Ideas and Assumptions	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hwansan Sunim’s Four Stages of Emotional Experience</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A situation due to an environmental factor</li> <li>2. Attention drawn to factor stimuli</li> <li>3. Factor stimuli evaluated for positive or negative attributes</li> <li>4. A reaction based on positive and negative evaluations of the stimuli</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Håkansson’s Structure of Empathy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotion</li> <li>2. Understanding</li> <li>3. Perceived Similarity</li> <li>4. Concern</li> </ol>
Stage 3: Resolutions and Turning Points	
<p><b>Level 2 Micro-system:</b> consists of subjective socio-cognitive factors such as family, school, religion, friends, and neighborhood</p>	
<p><b>Level 3 Meso-system:</b> consists of socio-cognitive factors which pressure a person, more or less, to make an objective choice such as eating a meal at home or in a restaurant, playing in the backyard, going to a gym, joining the armed forces, getting a job, driving to the next town to see a concert</p>	
<p><b>Level 4 Exo-system:</b> consists of socio-cognitive factors which exert far-reaching cultural pressures such as media, sports teams, health care, commercial enterprises, and local government services</p>	
<p><b>Level 5 Macro-system:</b> consists of prominent cultural values and assumptions evident in state and national government policies, laws, as well as economic and social issues</p>	

**APPENDIX TWO: 4-C Framework**

**Self-Reflective Question Prompts**

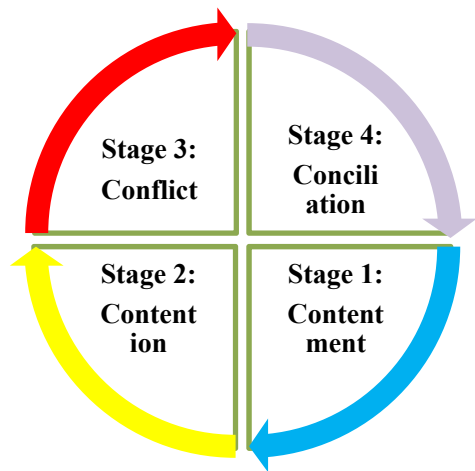
- What stage 3 behaviors do I need to be mindful of?
- What behaviors could lessen intensity and move to stage 4 or back to stage 1?

**Possible Socio-Cognitive Trigger Points**  
 Responding Physically or Verbally, Storming Out, Blocking Listening, Cutting Off the Conversation

**Self-Reflective Question Prompts**

- What behaviors would allow me to achieve conciliation?

**Possible Socio-Cognitive Trigger Points**  
 Respecting Point-of-View, Calming Down, Agreeing to Disagree, Explaining Rationale, Setting Aside Own Convictions, Listening without Speaking, Apologizing, Shaking Hands, Stepping Back



**Self-Reflective Question Prompts**

- What stage 2 behaviors do I need to be mindful of?
- What behaviors could move me back to stage 1 or into stage 3?

**Possible Socio-Cognitive Trigger Points**  
 Raising Voice Tone, Being Unapologetic, Projecting Blame, Silent Treatment, Ignoring, Being Obstinate, Smirking

**Self-Reflective Question Prompts**

- What behaviors do I need to be mindful of to stay in stage 1?
- What behaviors could move me into stage 2?

**Possible Socio-Cognitive Trigger Points**  
 Unresponsiveness, Tardiness, Vacillation, Forgetfulness, Unemotionality, Selfishness, Unpreparedness, Repetitiveness

**Endnotes**

1. Given the *diverse contexts of Lasallian higher education* today and the increasingly pluri-religious populations served, this paper on meditation/ mindfulness practice and empathy in the Korean Seon Buddhist educational tradition seems a worthy and congruent compliment to an evolving understanding to core principles of Lasallian education. In the *Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission*, we find written: “Being Lasallian is, above all, a way of living, of being the bearer of one’s religion, which are enriched when they are shared. Therefore, being

Lasallian does not depend on belonging to a particular culture or a religious creed. This conviction has made possible the existence and relevance of Lasallians who profess religions other than Catholicism or even those partners who do not subscribe to any religious faith or define themselves as indifferent.” In *Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission: Challenges, Convictions, and Hopes* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020), page 52.

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