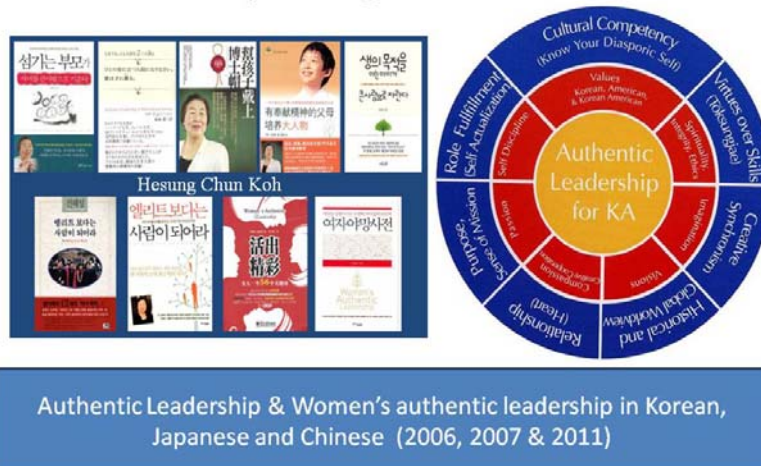


Korean Values and Authentic Leadership™ Model as Touchstones in the Time of COVID-19

By Terri Stangl, JD

ERI has been at the forefront of introducing educators and community leaders to the practical benefits of utilizing concepts embodied in Korean Cultural Values and the related cultural values emerged out of the Korean people's historical need to navigate between conflicts between powerful political, religious, and economic forces and belief systems. Dr. Hesung Chun Koh experienced the benefit of applying these values in her own life as she herself entered into the challenges of being a Korean woman who grew up in Korea, who must make her way as a professional, a wife, and mother raising children in a new country and new culture at a time when it was rare to see either Asians or Women in professional or academic roles. Her Authentic Leadership™ tenets were inspired by her own mother's teachings and tested in practice when she became a parent herself.

Authentic Leadership™ and Books by Hesung Chun Koh



In general, leadership can be defined as “an ability to identify the **common needs** or a shared goal of a group and **to mobilize available resources** and energy **to achieve that shared goal**”. As local families, communities, and governments seek to find firm footing and a clear direction amid the Covid-19 pandemic, both for policies and practices, ERI's expertise on Korea's cultural wisdom, becomes all the more unique and helpful. Leaders are currently being called to reconcile many conflicting views and interests, reconsider the traditional western ideas of “individuality”, and to address political and economic issues with deep compassion.

On June 2nd, Dr. Hesung Koh facilitated a discussion with the Professional Women's Dinner Group in greater New Haven about the Authentic Leadership tenets and their potential relevance to the challenges of Covid-19 and its aftermath. This group consists of women who are leaders in their organization, profession, or wider community. It is hoped that the leaders in attendance will be inspired by the discussion to identify their own current values in

light of what they learn about Korean values, and to find new tools that they can use as they meet the current challenges in fulfilling their life purposes and roles. We hope this is the first of many such discussions.

The basic tenets of Authentic Leadership™ are:

1. **Know who you are**

A. **Clear Self Identity** (i.e. ethnicity, gender, your values)

B. Cultural Competency

2. Decide what you stand for (**Purpose and Passion in life - Discipline**)

3. **Role Fulfillment** as a means for Self Actualization. (e.g. mother, wife, public role as professional or community volunteer etc.)

4. **Compassion**, Heart, Human Feeling (*Injong* in Korean). Human bonding, Gratitude

5. **“Virtue over Skill,”** Never let your skill exceed your virtues

6. **Creative Syncretism and Vision (finding resolution and harmony within opposites)**

7. **Think globally and act locally** (Historical and global worldview)

These tenets, which are based on Korean Cultural Values, can be a lens to consider the following kinds of questions:

1. What are the values we see represented by different leaders in the world?
2. What are the values or tenets of leadership that I learned growing up?
3. What are the cultural values currently expressed in my own life and/or organization?
4. Would the adoption of these leadership tenets change your own approach to life and leadership in any way?
5. Why would it be important for leaders to know who they are, individually and culturally, their social role, and their life purpose?

The tenets and discussions can spark rich and generative conversations among leaders and organizations who are in the process of making adjustments and repositioning themselves during the pandemic and in preparation for life after lockdown.

ERI would welcome hearing from leaders and organizations who are undertaking such discussions or who would like materials that can be used to facilitate them.

References: Hesung Chun Koh, “Authentic Leadership and Gender Roles: Korean Women’s Leadership Heritage and Ideals for Inspired, Creative Change” from World Woman’s Forum (2007).