

**SHIMCHEONG PSYCHOLOGY:  
A CASE OF AN EMOTIONAL STATE FOR CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Sang-Chin Choi  
Chung-An University, Korea

Gyuseog Han  
Chonnam National University, Korea

**ABSTRACT.** *Shimcheong* is a Korean vernacular representing an aroused mind state precipitated by a relational event in we-ness relationship. *Shimcheong* is a complex cultural emotion for Koreans which plays vital roles in interpersonal relationships in everyday lives. Koreans react very sensitively to other's *shimcheong* as well as to their own, and consider those contents of *shimcheong* very important in maintaining the relationships. One of the major functions of maintaining relationships for Koreans is to develop and reinforce we-ness. This function is achieved through *shimcheong* mode of communications. When *shimcheong* communication runs smooth, the parties feel their minds are tuned to each other. This tuning confirms positively their existing we-ness and leads the relationship into deeper level. When it fails, conflict evolves which may cause break-up of the relationship. The characteristics of *shimcheong* and its mode of communication can be explicated as a typical phenomenon of dialogical nature. *Shimcheong* involves self-reflective thinking (internal dialogue among I-positions) and social validation (external dialogue with others). Although *shimcheong* is unique phenomenon operating in Korean society, dialogical analysis suggests it sheds light into working mind of individuality in a collective culture. A suggestion was made to expand the area of research for the theory of dialogical science.

Keywords: Korean emotion concepts, *Shimcheong*, *cheong*, *maum* (mind)

Korean people are enigmatic. They show a strong sense of collectivism—yet individuality is well and alive. The mass wearing the Red-devil shirts in support of the Korean soccer team during the 2002 World Cup Game stunned the world audience. People in a group consider hierarchy and harmony very important. Yet, currently one out of three newly wed couples files for divorce. Sojourners find Korean people easy to approach, candid, humane—but get puzzled also by their volatile characters, assertiveness, and spontaneous behaviors.

The present paper presents a key Korean concept—*shimcheong*—and its working dynamic which serves to understand the enigmatic characters of Korean people. We

**AUTHORS' NOTE.** Sang-Chin Choi received his Ph.D in University of Hawaii in 1975. His research interest has been socio-cultural psychology of Korean people. He is credited for the psychological conceptualization of many indigenous phenomena in Korea. He is the first recipient of the Academic Award by the Koran Psychological Association. His publication includes *Psychology of Korean People* (2000) and numerous others. He is now Emeritus Professor of *Chung-Ang University* in Seoul. Email: [choi@cau.ac.kr](mailto:choi@cau.ac.kr) (Note continued on next page)

present *shimcheong* as an indigenous cultural emotional state, which plays critical roles in interpersonal relationship making in Korea. In carrying out this analysis, we applied a newly developing epistemology of dialogical self theory (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, 2001, 2002; Marková, 2003) to highlight the working processes of *shimcheong*. Dialogical self theory proposes that the self be viewed “as a dynamic multiplicity of I-positions in the landscape of the mind, intertwined as this mind is with the minds of other people” (Hermans, 2002, p. 147). The I-positions are any number of different positions that a single person can take on within the mind: social roles (i.e., father, teacher, Koreans, etc.), close others (i.e., my friend, my mother, etc.), and internal characteristics (i.e., fun-lover, an ambitious worker, etc.). *Shimcheong* psychology is presented as a representative phenomenology approachable from this epistemology. This analysis also points a direction to which cultural psychological research needs to head.

### **General Understanding of Interpersonal Psychology of Koreans**

Korean culture is generally regarded as strong in collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). Despite such strong collectivism on the surface, it is not well understood how the collectivism operates in daily life. In order to understand the cultural psychology of Korean collectivism, three concepts are helpful.

***We-ness:*** *We-ness* is a mentality that transcends an aggregate of individuals. For Koreans, forming close relationships with others has special meanings to their self—the me-self is extended to become we-self. For example, the quality of relationships between family members, close friends or colleagues is quite different from that of relationship between acquaintances or strangers (Cha, 1994; Choi, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000; Choi & Choi, 1994; Choi & Kim, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Choi, Kim, & Choi, 1993; Park, 1979; see also Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999). The mentality operating in a close relationship is *we-ness*. This mentality is characterized by a strong sense of bonding, unconditional friendship, mutual altruism, and exclusive favoritism (Choi, 1998; Choi & Kim, 1999a). Relationships with others not in the *we-ness* category, however, are characterized by reason-based rationality, objective social norms, individual interests, social justice and equity, or often by neglect. Like this, Koreans have different types of interactions with others depending on whether they are members of the *We-ness* category or not.

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Gyuseog Han received his Ph.D at Ohio University (USA) in 1986. His research interest has been socio-cultural psychology of Korean people. He is currently interested in the social psychology of hierarchy, cultural process of psychological phenomena. He published *Understanding of Social Psychology* (1995, 2002) and others. He is a professor in the department of psychology of *Chonnam National University* in Gwangju, South Korea. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Prof. Gyuseog Han (Dept. of Psychology, Chonnam National University, Gwangju, S. Korea 500-757. Email: ghan@jnu.ac.kr).

Choi and Choi (1994) compared the social representation of we-ness between Koreans and Canadians; the researchers report that “the majority of the Korean participants feel that their we-membership definitely, or to some extent, restricts their psychological and social operations” (p. 72). While the typical representation of we-ness is communality in the West, it is one-ness or whole-ness among Koreans. A conspicuous operation of individuality is a hindering factor to the proposition of we-ness. Therefore, in we-ness relationships synthetic we-marker of the parties, which should be distinguished from the amalgamation of the members, takes place as the third marker over I-markers and other-markers (Zabinski & Valsiner, 2004). The interpersonal psychology operating between members of the *we-ness* category is called *cheong*. *Cheong* is an affectional feeling tone which describes the relational tie and bonding.

***Cheong.*** *Cheong* is a central concept in describing the quality of relationship in any dyad. The basic feature of *cheong* is caring mind for others, as do siblings, which consists of attentive, empathetic, helpful, and supportive behaviors. The prototype of *cheong*-based relationships can be found in the interactions among family members (Choi, 2000; Choi & Choi, 2001; Choi & Kim, 1999a; Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2000). The Korean family, historically and culturally bound together by common fate, emphasizes oneness, sameness, member’s-sacrifice, mutual assistance, and *cheong*. Korean relationships with non-family members in the category of *we-ness* are just an extension of psychology of within-family relationships to general social settings. A collective without *cheong* is a mere amalgamation of individuals. In Korean society, the distinction of ingroup/outgroup is not made on the members of the group itself, but inside the self. Once the other is regarded as an ingroup, a psychology of *we-ness* or *cheong* relationship operates (Han & Choe, 1994). Therefore, Korean *we-ness* cannot be understood as collective entity but must be understood as of relational phenomenon (Choi, 1997; Han, 2002; see, too, Ho, 1993).

***Maum.*** Mind is usually translated into *maum* in Korean. An immense amount of vocabulary in Korean dictionary contains a syllable denoting mind (Kim & Hong, 1974). This indicates that mind is a very important concept and so the schema of mind is highly developed. However, the scope of usage of mind is much narrower for Koreans than for Western people. The English word “mind” carries with it both cognitive and emotional aspects of human activities (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). The Korean word *maum* has strong connotation of affective emotion rather than of cognition. When used in interpersonal context, *maum* refers strongly to an actor’s agentivity and intentionality connoting volition, interest, motivation, emotion, intention, determination and mood, as in “a hurt mind,” “a mind in pain,” “a mind not in good mood,” “a motivated mind,” “a lenient mind,” “to have no mind to do,” “a determined mind,” and so on (Choi & Kim, 1999a; see also Lillard, 1998). As such the most frequent use of *maum* occurs in the context of close interpersonal relations. Parties in

*cheong* relationship often exchange social behaviors (gift, dining, visit, call, etc.). All these behaviors are taken to indicate their *maum*, the level of caring.

Another aspect of *maum* is its authenticity untainted by conscious control or cognitive manipulation. Because of its authenticity and volitional nature, *maum* is to be shown and to be understood between parties in *cheong* relationship. Close friends are frequently rephrased as friends to share and understand their *maums*, or friends tied by their minds. This emphasis on *maums* in close relationships leads Koreans to be prone to evaluate behavior of their friends not by the behavior per se, but by the quality and magnitude of mind which the behavior conveys. Likewise, everyday discourses and narrations produced in the relational contexts rely heavily on references to their mind (see Harre & Gillett, 1994). For instance, the following expressions are quite common in everyday life: "Do not say anything that does not come from mind," "Do not hurt my mind," "I don't know how to show you my mind," "One must have a good mind," and so on.

Choi and Kim (1999a) take *maum* as the central concept to differentiate the Korean self from the Western self. Because of people's tendency to infer consistently the *maum*, the currency in social exchange is *maum*, not the behavior per se in Korea. Although the currency is *maum*, the invisible mind should be inferred from manifest behavior. This fact helps Koreans develop schemas concerning the inferences of others' mind as well as one's own. However, those schemas may not be always infallible, so that sometimes behavior can be interpreted in the wrong way. The possibility of misreading others' mind is especially high when there is a paucity of behavioral cues on their inner mind or in ambiguous situations. This sort of situations likely engenders misunderstandings or even conflicts between those involved in the relationships. Under these circumstances, the *shimcheong* gets activated, which helps to re-evaluate their relationship (Choi & Kim, 1999a). *Shimcheong* takes a paramount importance among Koreans because of this mind reading practice in daily interactions.

### **Characteristics and Working Processes of *Shimcheong***

*At the '88 Seoul Olympics, a Korean athlete would not come down the ring as a reaction against the unfair judgment when his loss was announced. This happening ended up with delayed processes for the remaining agenda of the day. Most of Western media criticized his behavior as illegitimate. However, Korean people expressed sympathies with the boxer. Headings of Korean newspapers read like this: "Unfair judgment Kept a Korean Boxer Seated on the Canvass," or "The Boxer's shimcheong Shared by Koreans", etc.*

In this case, spectators usually focus on the violation of social rules in evaluating the athlete's behavior, judge the behavior as rule-breaking, and condemn the athlete. Koreans, however, are likely to take the boxer's personal feeling into account instead of relying exclusively on the inappropriate behavior violating the rule. Korean people

frequently use such phrases as "treated unfairly," "too apathetic," "too inconsiderate," and "to hurt my mind" in everyday discourses (Choi, 1997; Choi & Kim, 1998; Choi & Kim, 1999a; Shon & Choi, 1999). Those expressions represent phenomena occurring inside the mind of persons involved in the close relationships. Koreans are put easily into an empathic mode with what others experience in inner mind and likely to adjust their behavior by taking other's mind into account. People are sensitive to inner experiences of others involved in close relationships upon proper cues. In this sense, Koreans like to share their inner experiences with each other as if they take the perspective of persons involved, not as a third person uninvolved (Choi, 1998). This sensitivity to an other's inner mind accounts for why Koreans are more vulnerable to hindsight bias (Choi & Nisbett, 2000) and less vulnerable to fundamental attribution errors (Choi & Nisbett, 1998). Perhaps, a famous *Whang-Hee* parable would illustrate this case:

The honorable *Whang Hee* (1363-1452) was highly respected person who served 18 years as the prime minister of the last dynasty. One day in his residence, he was asked to settle a quarrel between two servants. Listening to first servant's story, *Whang Hee* agreed with the servant's argument. And he gave agreement to the second servant's argument, too. Upon seeing this, his wife scolded him for being dubious. *Whang Hee* also nodded to his wife's view.

To those observers taking a third-person objective standpoint, *Whan Hee*'s behavior is dubious. But those taking a *shimcheong* perspective may understand his behavior. In fact, the rule of golden mean (中庸) may not be appreciated properly without the understanding of this parable (see Peng & Nisbett, 1999 for a related demonstration of resolving contradictions).

**Characteristics of *Shimcheong*.** *Shimcheong* is a Korean word denoting an emotional state felt in mind. The term is composed of two parts: *Shim* (心) means mind and *Cheong* (情) means affection (Kim & Hong, 1974). It refers to a state of aroused emotion concerning a particular event occurring in a relationship (Choi & Kim, 1999a, 1999b). This term is so commonly used as to appear frequently in newspapers and serial TV dramas. For instance, when a man of power is publicly disempowered, reporters in news media give titles such as "President Kim's *shimcheong*", "President Noh's *shimcheong*" or even "*shimcheong* of President Kim's wife." Expressions and discourses of *shimcheong* are not that appropriate in formal interactions in which rational thinking and critical discourse prevail. However, they underlie as normative frame of personal interactions in *we-ness relationship*.

*Shimcheong* is activated when a specific behavior or event provokes a violation of expectations concerning the self in the *we-ness* category. The most frequently used expressions are "disappointed *shimcheong*," "rejected *shimcheong*," "sad *shimcheong*," "unfairly treated *shimcheong*," "depressed *shimcheong*," "despaired *shimcheong*," etc.

(Choi, 1997; Choi & Kim, 1999a) These expressions show that the valence of *shimcheong* is generally negative. Although it can be positive when desires or motivations are fulfilled in the relationships, *shimcheong* takes a prominent function in negative contexts.

In daily usage, the word *shimcheong* has two meanings. The general meaning refers to the aroused feeling state at an intra-psychic level. This feeling state may arise in response to diverse situations such as seeing a sad scene on the street. Often, many intra-psychic emotional states are expressed in *shimcheong*. Culturally more significant meaning refers to the state of feeling into other at the inter-psychic level. It is this feeling state that exerts a dynamic influence on the relationship.

Four elements of *shimcheong* can be described. First, *shimcheong* presupposes the existence of self-consciousness, which makes the person concerned aware of the arousal of emotion or mind. That is, both mind in action and conscious reading of that mind are all involved in the process of *shimcheong* arousal (Choi & Kim, 1999b; see also Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998). Secondly, on the side of the person concerned, *shimcheong* is provoked by evaluative judgment of the caring mind (*maum*) of the partner in interaction. Here, it is a conceived mind state of the other within one's self: thus, the Other-within-the-self may not be the actual Other (Zabinski & Valsiner, 2004). Other's *maum* is read through the behaviors or activities upon the self exercised by the other. Third, *shimcheong* contains narratives constructed within the self through the reflective thinking of past interactions. The evaluative judgment is the result of this narrative or story-telling. This takes a form of introspective narration of what went on in between the two parties in the past. Here, different I-positions are in a dialogue (Hermans, 2002, 2001) which may sooth the arousal of *shimcheong* or aggravate it. Fourth, *shimcheong* involves external justification through conversation with the other or with a third person who would be readily in an empathic mood state with the person (Choi, Han, & Kim, 2007). Like most internal psychology, the subjective feeling state of *shimcheong* becomes a social reality through this external dialogue in society.

**Working Processes of *Shimcheong*.** The four elements of *shimcheong* combine together in a full-blown *shimcheong* episode. A *shimcheong* episode can be analyzed into two parts: at the intra-psychic level and inter-psychic level. At the intra-individual level, *shimcheong* is an intra-psychic feeling state which is evoked when the extent of considerate mind referred from the partner's behavior or activity falls short of or exceeds the expectation held by that person (Choi & Kim, 1999, 1999b). That is, *shimcheong* is not aroused in the relationship of casualty or formality for expectation of personalized treatment is untenable in such relationships. Expectation of certain level of considerate mind from the partner is formed between the parties in a dyad through history of their interactions. The history of relationships between persons involved in *shimcheong* episodes plays important role in interpretation and evaluation of behavior of their partner (Choi & Kim, 1999). For instance, when an old chum in a we-ness

relationship refuses to offer a favor or rejects a personal request, Koreans express dissatisfaction with his or her relentless mind in the pour-out of *shimcheong* such as "How could you refuse my asking if our friendship of long standing is not fake?" Like this, expressions of *shimcheong* take a form of story-telling with reference to historical background of their relationships (Figure 1).

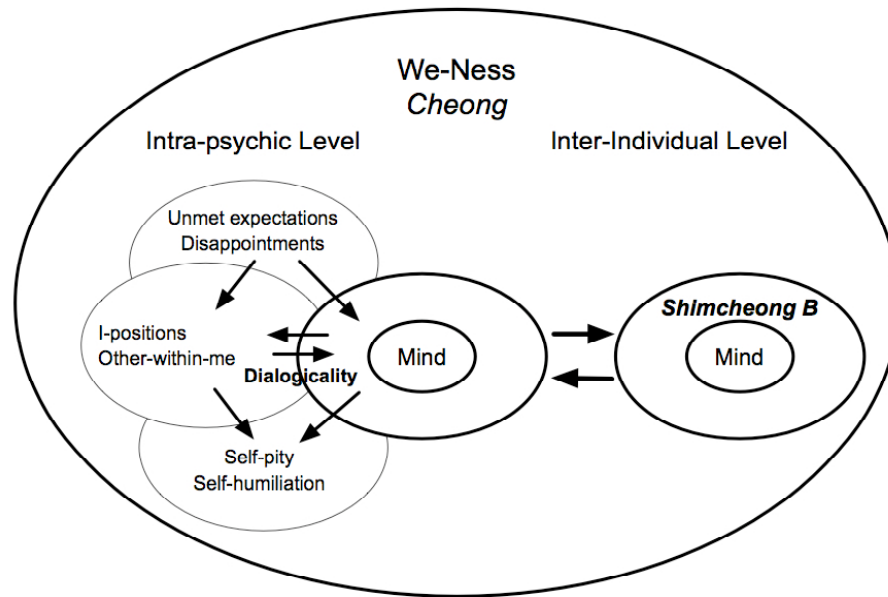


Fig. 1 Processes of the dialogical self within the *shimcheong*.

The most important properties which differentiate *shimcheong* from other emotions is the reflective thinking on one's own circumstances involved in the arousal of *shimcheong* (Choi & Kim, 1999b). Generally, emotions such as hatred, love and jealousy are oriented toward external objects. Likewise, at the initial stage, *shimcheong* (usually negative) is provoked against the partner. Here, *shimcheong* is an aroused mind-feeling state unelaborated. This initial feeling state of mind develops into another stage to become a full *shimcheong* state of emotion. The actor goes through to understand why such feeling-state occurs. He or she reviews the past exchange with the partner. This reflective thinking may dissolve the feeling-state, resulting no change in their relationship. On the other hand, this reflective thinking may justify the feeling state which in consequence shakes the whole relationship. From the perspective of dialogical self theory, when initial state of *shimcheong* is aroused, a number of voices or I-positions are brought in to engage in dialogue; other-within-the-self, me-within-the-other, me-within-we, past I-experience, and etc. The mind becomes the field of activity "where internal and external positions meet in processes of negotiation, cooperation, opposition, conflict, agreement and disagreement." (Hermans, 2001, p. 253)

Conflict, negotiation, and moderation take place in this internal dialogue. When this dialogue leads no justifiable understanding of the partner's act, the person feels own *shimcheong* hurt, or damaged. At this stage, *shimcheong* leads the beholder to turn his or her attention to the self and then to evaluate negatively his or her own ability, characteristics and resources in relation to his or her circumstances. Negative self-evaluation driven by *shimcheong* usually results in a self-pity and a self-handicapped feeling of humiliation, as expressed in the phrases of "my unfortunate lot," "my pitiful lot," and "my lot unappreciated by others" (Choi & Kim, 1999; Shon & Choi, 1999; see Figure 1). So, the mode of pouring out *shimcheong* is very similar to that of complaining about misfortunate circumstances. Because of the authenticity of *shimcheong*, people attend to mind and *shimcheong*. If the aroused mind or *shimcheong* is not attended by the holder, he or she feels alienated from the self. If the partner is conceived to be responsible for the inconsiderate treatment, he or she feels deserted or no value to the partner. The self-esteem is demolished by the person in the relationship; outburst of emotion may surface.

An empirical study by Shon and Choi (1999) buttresses the idea that *shimcheong* is a combination of initial emotion induced by the behavior of the partner and secondary emotion induced by negative evaluation of the self. They asked a group of Korean undergraduates to list occasions when they felt hurt sc. The following cases were high ranked in the rank order of frequencies: (1) When a truthful friend betrays me; (2) When my mind is misunderstood; (3) When others are not considerate and kind to me; (4) When I am not considered important; (5) when I feel myself terrible; (6) when I am treated unfairly. The first three responses concern experiences caused by one's own expectations unfulfilled by behavior of others, whereas the remaining three responses relate to the feelings of self-pity and self-humiliation derived from self-consciousness of not being cared about by others.

At this level of intra-individual, a good metaphor to describe *shimcheong* is a wave in a pond. If a wave in a pond is tiny due to a pebble throwing, it may not be even noticed but the person with aroused *shimcheong* feels something uncomfortable. When the wave gets big, it blocks the movement of the boat (the relationship).

*Shimcheong* does not remain as an internal dialogue. The internal state of *shimcheong* becomes inter-individual state of feeling-into- the-other by engaging in a dialogue with other people. Thus, the initially unelaborated feeling state goes through internal dialogue and then external dialogue to be shaped as a psycho-social reality. This will be elaborated more in the next part. If *shimcheong* is not attended by the partner in interaction, he or she feels unvalued or betrayed. This feeling will lead to resentment or retreat from the relationship.



**Functions of *Shimcheong*:** *Shimcheong* plays a vital role in interpersonal relationship among *we-ness* relationship. Several functions can be pointed out. First, *shimcheong* serves important cultural function of serving individuality in the collective society (Choi, Han, & Kim 2007). The Korean society does not appear to allow much room for individuality. Individuals are always in the context of social roles, duties, and a hierarchy. No society small or large remains, however, sustainable and healthy if it operates entirely on collectivism or on individualism. Being attentive to *shimcheong* of the partners, the parties get concerned with the other's mind state (e.g., interests, motivation, personality, etc.). Because *shimcheong* conveys authentic state of mind, parties involved are likely to engage in dialogue. In this dialogue, the parties come to understand the predicament, the uneasy feeling, misunderstanding, as well as egocentricity. Mutual understanding achieved through this dialogue harvests the feeling of oneness and *we-ness*. Therefore, *shimcheong* works both for the dyad and the members somewhat paradoxically.

Second, *shimcheong* serves communicative function in *we-ness* relationship. Hall's (1976) classification of high-context culture may not be appreciated properly if the mechanism of high-context communication is not known. *Shimcheong* is one such mechanism which asks the parties to engage in different mode of communication. In this mode of communication, parties leave the position of individual -I and takes the position of *we*. The psychological basis of *we-ness*, *cheong*, takes a personage tying the two parties (Zabinski & Valsiner, 2004). Both get into dialogue with a motivation to understand the other. Therefore, empathic attitude prevails. In the ambience of empathic concern, the understanding of the other comes not from the third person perspective (objective) but from the first person perspective (subjective=> intersubjective). It is more like Rogerian psychotherapy in session. In sum, the explanatory mode of *shimcheong* has a sharp contrast to the reason-based explanatory mode of facts. Several differences between these two modes are presented in Table 1 (Choi, 1997, 1998). Korean students are shown to be quite able to differentiate the two modes in judging diverse communication scripts taken from TV soap operas (Kim & Han, 2000).

When a person is placed in *shimcheong* mode, the self consciously shifts its I-position to the position of what is perceived to be the empathized other. The other-within-the-self is compared to the actual other. This comparison is to reach a state of co-experiencing the other's feeling. Hermans (2001) describes using a diagram the dynamic nature of dialogicality in a dyadic interaction. When two partners communicate, they do so on the basis of mutual understanding. Since intersubjectivity is ongoing and always in the process of negotiating individuality, subjectivity is the area of mutual sharing (understanding) and non-sharing areas fluctuate. An area metaphor is appropriate to describe *shimcheong* at this inter-individual level. Being placed in the mode of *shimcheong*, interactants try to enlarge the area of mutual understanding by taking empathy. If *shimcheong* dialogue fails to achieve mutual understanding, the

**Table 1. Two types of Dialogue: *Shimcheong* mode and Fact-mode**

The Logics of <i>Shimcheong</i> Mode	The Logics of Fact Mode
[I – You] within We-ness	Individual to individual
Context, relational,	Public, individual
Exchange of <i>maum</i>	Exchange of interests, opinion
Intersubjective	Objective
<b>Cheong</b>	Reason

relationship will falter. Through *shimcheong* mode of dialogue, parties clear up misunderstanding and maintain a healthy rewarding relationship.

***Cheong* and *Shimcheong*:** It may be helpful to clarify the two concepts. *Cheong* and *shimcheong* both refer to relational quality of we-ness relationship. *Cheong* is more of static psychological property of which function is to describe or define the relationship (Choi & Choi, 2001). It is an affectional state experientially felt post hoc through diverse interactions. *Cheong* gets deepened through *maum* (mind) experiences as the partners in relationship show discretionary mind of caring to each other. *Maum* experience is personal experience about the considerate mind coupled with narrative constructed through interactional exchange. *Cheong* narrative, depending upon its constructed nature, may function as psychological glue (or dissolvent) instilling togetherness (or separateness) feeling into the we-relationship; thereby further solidify (or dissolve) the relationship. Various quality of *cheong* exists. The quality of *cheong* (i.e., deep, shallow, etc.) in the relationship serves as a frame to interpret the behavior which may result in *shimcheong* operation. For example, a small gift on the occasion of birthday does not elicit *shimcheong* operation in moderate *cheong* relationship. But the same gift may work as a disappointment, eliciting a negative *shimcheong* operation, in a deep *cheong* relationship.

In contrast, *shimcheong* is a temporal quality aroused by specific interactional events. It is an emotional state of "here-and-now" characteristic of a mixture of emotion caused by behavior of the partner and emotion related to self-evaluation. In this respect, *shimcheong* is an immediate experience whereas the *we-ness* and *cheong*-based relationship is a mediated experience (Choi, Kim, & Kim, 1999, 2000).

Regardless of this difference, the relationship between these two experiences is like that of head and tail of a coin, so that they are intertwined with each other in a complementary way. That is, existence of one experience defines existence of the other. *Cheong* which cannot play any role in a *shimcheong* dialogue is not *cheong* any more and experience of *shimcheong* evidence existence of *cheong* in the relationships. So, *shimcheong* functions as a cue for identifying or confirming *we-ness* and *cheong*-relationships (Choi & Kim, 1999b).

### Phenomenological Cases of *Shimcheong* Dialogue in Korea

Interactants in we-ness relationship are constantly engaged in mind-reading activities each other from the manifest behaviors of the partner. People are keen to verbal and nonverbal cues that indicate an arousal of *shimcheong* in the partner's mind. Initiation of *shimcheong* dialogue is usually sparked up by sensing some discomfort or tension in the interaction with the other. The sensing of *shimcheong* relies frequently on non-verbal cues (Kim & Han, 2000). The reason is that people know verbal channel can be deceitful while the authenticity of *shimcheong* is self-revealing through nonverbal cues. Since social face and harmony maintenance are strong concern in Confucian culture, these concerns constrain the explicit communication. That is why people in Confucian culture, including Koreans, regard as most ideal the exchange of mind based on "from one mind to another" in the *cheong*-based relationships. One party in a dyad senses an arousal of *shimcheong* in the other as an empathetic reaction to the other and then the other is empathetic to one's *shimcheong* (Choi & Kim, 1999b).

Interactions based on "from one mind to another" occur most frequently between family members. Parents have developed the ability to read their children's mind and to act accordingly even when the children do not unfold explicitly their inner feeling. Children also behave in the considerate ways of their parents' wishes and desires although these are not explicitly stated. Ability to read each other's *shimcheong* unspoken outwardly and to react accordingly is well-developed in the parent-child relationships in Korea (Choi & Kim, 1999, 1999b). Let's take an example of *shimcheong* discourse between son and mother (Choi, Han, & Kim, 2007):

*On a rainy day, a mother was waiting for her son coming back from school with an umbrella for him at a bus stop. Finally, the bus arrived and the son got angry on seeing his mother; "You shouldn't have come out here with the umbrella for me." The mother replied, "My baby, sorry about that".*

Superficial contents of this discourse are constituted by a complaint made by the son about his mother and an apology made by his mother. However, this dialogue illustrates a typical case of *shimcheong* exchange. The son must be grateful for the considerate behavior of his mother. Nonetheless, the son hides his real *shimcheong* of gratitude by getting angry with his mother. The mother also conceals her true *shimcheong* of being disappointed at her son's blame just by apologizing to him. In this episode, both parties have exchanged the mind of caring implicitly. Often times, the strength of *shimcheong* in close relationships is reinforced by expressed emotions that are opposite to the real and inner emotions. The parent-child relationship is based on in-depth *shimcheong*. To build up interpersonal relationships on deep *shimcheong* means to become one in flesh and spirit. These relationships make one's *shimcheong* dependent on the other's and finally make both co-experience an identical *shimcheong*.

Another example of *shimcheong* discourses may be given. It has not been rare in Korea that a young disgruntled man takes hostages in public and thus creates a dramatic scene.. Whenever possible, the police brings his mother to the spot and ask her to persuade her son to surrender. In most cases, the mother solicits her son to consider, instead of giving persuasive message, her painful *shimcheong*. This request would work usually because of the invoked *shimcheong* in son's mind. The man is likely to co-experience painful *shimcheong* by his mother, feels sorry for his mother, and surrenders. This method of persuasion involves *shimcheong* transference.

*Shimcheong* exchange does not always occur in the form of "from one mind to another." A long history of relationships, like that of relationships between family members, facilitates people to read *shimcheong* of others, although cues for their *shimcheong* are not abundant and straightforward. However, some more specific behavior is required to exchange *shimcheong* between common colleagues or friends. Patting a child in the head, grasping firmly hands of a close friend, sighing together with a friend in trouble, and so forth are all acts to convey one's sharing of *shimcheong* to the other. Interpretations of those acts in terms of *shimcheong* are usually dependent on the situational contexts where they take place. Interpretative frames for *shimcheong*-related behavior are well elaborated in Korean societies although they are not formalized explicitly (Choi & Kim, 1999, 1999b). *Diary of Rural Life*, a serial Korean TV drama of most long lasting, depicts many conflict situations in *we-ness* relationship delicately and shows how Koreans exchange a variety of their subtle *shimcheong* with each other in diverse situations. Had not well-developed *shimcheong* schema, Koreans would not be attracted to that drama.

In the election culture of Korea, a sympathy vote is far from negligible. This sympathy vote indicates that voters cast their vote for a candidate when they are induced to feel *shimcheong* of the candidate. It is not rare at all in Korea that a candidate in prison wins the election. Being locked up in a prison for a charge that he is not responsible often stirs *shimcheong* of the public, which in turn stimulates them to vote for the candidate. Sometimes, people cast their vote to a candidate with history of several defeats in the past due to *shimcheong* ("how desperate this man is to win!") aroused. These anecdotal cases demonstrate that Koreans are very sensitive and sympathetic to *shimcheong* of others.

As another illustration of *shimcheong* discourse, a famous poem may be cited, written by the late Kim Sowol, one of the most cherished poet in Korea. The relic relies almost exclusively on paradoxical phrases to express one's own *shimcheong*. For instance, sad *shimcheong* caused by being deserted by the lover is expressed like this:

*"I will never shed a tear drop  
when your love dies away  
and so you leave me."*

Korean literature, Korean music, and Korean drama are all full of the *shimcheong* theme and their expressions to illustrate pains and agonies of life (Choi, 2000; Park, 1990).

The above illustrations may be sufficient to point out experience of *shimcheong* is vital indigenous phenomenon of Korean culture. That is, Koreans are exclusively sensitive to *shimcheong* phenomena and weigh them in their relationships. Second, Koreans define, understand and evaluate relationships in terms of *shimcheong*. Third, they have developed particular sets of communicative grammars and frameworks on the basis of *shimcheong*. The communicative modes of *shimcheong* such as discourses and pour-out of *shi*

### **Modes of *Shimcheong* Discourse in Korea**

The primary form of *shimcheong* exchange is non-verbal as noted earlier. In cases when verbal communication is used to deliver one's *shimcheong* to others, considering illocutionary functions of the words outspoken is more important than lexical meanings of the words per se (Choi & Kim, 1999, 1999b). For instance, Koreans often ask, "Have you had a meal?" when they come across with a friend. In this type of discourses, what they try to convey to the friend is their considerate mind (*maum*). The person says "yes" even though it is a lie. Even a lie may be well accepted if it reflects the considerate mind.

When *shimcheong* is delivered verbally, it often takes the form of narration and story-telling. Several modes are available; (1) a mode of discourse based on the logics of *shimcheong*, (2) a mode of story-telling of what is going on inside the mind, (3) a third person narrative mode of describing and interpreting what went on inside the mind (see Bruner, 1990, 1996; Crossley, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 1994), and (4) a mode of speaking out inner mind straightforward (Choi & Kim, 1999, 1999a). A study (Shon & Choi, 1999) obtained results similar to those three modes (2, 3, and 4). Korean college students watched one session of a Korean TV soup opera. Then the participants were asked to list *shimcheong*-related discourses or situations in the drama, along with reasons for such judgment. Top three reasons in the rank order are: (1) because the person concerned tells his or her inner mind; (2) because the person concerned describes sore spots or shameful points hard to expose, and (3) because the person concerned speaks out his or her mind frankly (see also, Kim & Han, 2000 for the similar results obtained from exposure to *shimcheong* scripts). When exposed to diverse modes of *shimcheong* discourse from partners, Koreans perceive their behavior as a delivery or a pour-out of *shimcheong* and also base their own behavior on the logics of *shimcheong* rather than those of fact (see Table 1).

**Folk Belief in Pure *Shimcheong* and Its Authenticity.** Koreans have folk belief that *shimcheong* and *maum* (mind) is pure in nature untainted by intention or personal control. Since they spring up spontaneously in inner mind even against one's

hope or will, people take it a norm not to charge the holder responsible for the aroused *shimcheong* even when the contents of *shimcheong* is unfavorable to the involved parties (Choi & Kim, 1999, 1999b; Choi, Kim & Kim, 1999, 2000). Instead of charging, the other party probes what caused such *shimcheong* and typically try to explain what his or her real intention was and how that might have been misunderstood by the *shimcheong* holder.

Thus when at odds with partners, Koreans tend to express their own feelings felt in inner mind to the partner through diverse modes of *shimcheong* discourse. During *shimcheong* dialogue, both parties take empathic perspective to understand the partner. Any misunderstanding or conflict due to such misunderstanding is cleared through the exchange. While *shimcheong* mode of exchange may not eliminate the conflict, it helps to make the conflict temporal or contextual not stemming from malicious intent or greed. Often, their relationships can get better through *shimcheong* dialogue. For instance, Koreans often invite the partners in conflict to a bar and then engage in *shimcheong* discourse over several glasses of alcoholic drink. Misunderstanding and hard feelings between them are quickly dissipated in the shower of *shimcheong* discourses. Of course, ahead *shimcheong* dialogue is behavior re-confirming their strong *we-ness* and deep *cheong* such as "We've been working together for the last 10 years!" (Choi, Kim & Kim, 1999). This helps the partners to get ready for *shimcheong* discourse with a hope to heal or to improve the relationship.

**Social Validation of *Shimcheong* Dialogue.** An important reason for the effectiveness of *shimcheong* discourses in improving *we-ness* relationships lies in the emphasis Koreans place on *cheong* in the relationships. As noted previously *cheong* is a raw material for build up of *we-ness* based relationships. The core quality of *cheong* is feeling rather than thinking. That is, *cheong* is more of heart-based than head-based, to emotion than reason, to synthesis than analysis, and to mind than act. *Shimcheong*, as a mental state of aroused feeling, is a concept and phenomenon embedded in feeling-based relationships. Koreans tend to *feel about* the others in relationship rather than to *think about*. Feeling is obscure and ambiguous and highly subjective compared to thinking. Internal feeling need to be validated through external examination. This takes external dialogue.

Often, Koreans pour out or narrate their *shimcheong* in order to justify and to earn sympathy on their own difficulties and points of view from the other rather than to improve their relationships. In these cases, Koreans express their *shimcheong* to a third person rather than to the partner involved in the conflict. This sort of pour-out of *shimcheong* is referred to as *Hasoyon*, meaning an appeal to a person for his or her sympathy. The effect of *hasoyon* is tantamount to the catharsis of psychoanalysis. This effect is achieved through obtaining social validation of their *shimcheong*. The social support and the sympathy obtained from *hasoyon* serves as a proof that one is not idiosyncratic or egotistic person.

In sum, for Koreans *shimcheong* discourses can verify their *we-ness* and *cheong*-based relationships, build up intersubjectivity between them, confirm goodness of their relationships as based on true mind, and help them to reconstruct themselves in the relationship contexts. Also, *shimcheong* discourses are constituted by words from heart, *weness*- and *cheong*-related words, and words indicative of no-distance, decayed boundary, and oneness.

### Discussion

*Shimcheong* is a complex cultural emotional state operating in Korean society. The key thread piercing through popular songs, poems, novels, and soup opera is *shimcheong* and its dynamic. Observations of dyadic interactions between Koreans uncover with ease that *shimcheong* is a phenomenological psycho-social reality. It plays a vital role in interpersonal relationship across ages, genders, and classes. Although *shimcheong* is psychology operating in private realm of life, it carries weight even in public area such as judicial court, labor-management bargaining table, and election. Daily use of the word, *shimcheong*, shows two meanings; an aroused feeling state at intra-psychic level and a feeling-into-other state at interpersonal level. *Shimcheong* is the psychological mechanism which underlies the dynamic fluctuation of relationship.

*Shimcheong* psychology is culturally unique in that it is nourished by folk belief and practice under the ambience of collectivism. In collective society with Confucian ideology, Koreans subjugate individuality for the sake of relational harmony. This suppressed individuality may stir up the value of self in the relationship (Choi et al., 2007). Due to folk belief that *maum* and *shimcheong* are pure beyond conscious control, people become sensitive to *shimcheong* of their own (otherwise, they will be alienated from the self). *Shimcheong* needs to be attended and cared for naturally in *we-ness* group. Although the primary setting for *shimcheong* is in dyadic relationship, its operation can be observed at the group level as well. People feel easy to co-experience *shimcheong* aroused in the mind of other persons involved. When *shimcheong*-based communication is readily available in spontaneous manners, Koreans evaluate their relationships as most satisfying because it proves strong bond of *we-ness*. In sum, it functions mainly to enhance the *we-ness* but also serves to attend the individuality. It looks paradoxical but *shimcheong* serves both functions complementarily (Han & Choi, 2007).

Psychological states similar to *shimcheong* also exist in Western cultures. Psychological concepts such as empathy, sympathy and compassion may include the elements of *shimcheong* as understood in the Korean culture. Since empathy has been important concept in psychology, a distinction should be noted here (see also, Choi et al., 2007). Borrowing the terminology from the perspective of dialogical self (Hermans, 2001, 2002; Hermans & Kempen, 1993), a synthetic *we*-marker develops in the *we-ness* relationship which should be distinguished from the amalgamation of the members.

*Cheong* functions as this marker of which formation takes some interactional history. *Shimcheong* always works in the background of *cheong*. Through the process of introspective analysis and external validation, *shimcheong* transforms to social reality from subjective state of feeling. Empathy, on the other hand, is “another-oriented emotional response congruent with the perceived welfare of another (Batson, 1990, p. 339). It provides other’s perspective to the self and thus, connects two individuals (Zabinsky & Valsiner, 2004). Despite this functional similarity, empathy is subjective emotional state occurring intra-psychic level. Empathy does not involve the evaluation of self as does *shimcheong*, nor does require culture specific script.

According to the frame of dialogical science (Hermans, 2001; Marková, 2003), humans make the world in terms of others and the entire existence of the self is oriented towards others’ language and world. Dialogicality implies, in Bakhtin’s word, that every individual lives “in a world of others’ words” (cited in Marková, 2003, p. 83). Words, voices, positions, dialogue, discourse are the critical media connecting two minds. Korean psychology of *shimcheong* and *maum* illustrates a prototypical working process of this media. As Marková (2003) puts it, “dialogicality is the fundamental capacity of the human mind to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of the Alter” (p. 85). Then it is not necessarily through words or voices. Aroused feeling state and the state of feeling into others may antedate reasoning and meaning. Authenticity of felt mind state opens up a new area of query for dialogical science.

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