

**Family Patterns,  
Attitudes and Behaviour in relation to  
the Upbringing of Children in South Korea:  
The Social Construction of Child Abuse**

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# **Abstract**

This study explores the ways in which the Western concept of child abuse is understood by parents and professionals in Korea and how it is applied to Korean society. In order to address this, attention will be focused on parents' and relevant professionals' attitudes and perceptions in relation to child rearing, along with their responses to the problem of child abuse.

Qualitative methodologies were used; semi-structured in-depth interviews with 50 participants.

The findings suggest that Korean society may be operating on assumptions about child rearing and family life which differ markedly from those in the West. In particular many Korean parents and some of the relevant professionals did not define or understand 'child abuse' as their equivalents in the West. Power relationships and familial collectivism seemed to be intertwined in creating situations which Western commentators would see as abusive to children. There was recognition that maltreatment existed and needed to be policed but this had not been internalised by all strata of society. Therefore, there was a deep uncertainty and ambivalence towards the concept of child abuse and good child rearing and its implication for child development. Notably, there was a sense of ambivalence about the appropriateness of using physical chastisement. In spite of the majority saying that it was not right, it was still viewed as a permissible or even necessary form of discipline. This suggests that both parents and

professionals face considerable confusion and doubt as to whether certain parenting behaviour is abusive.

This study concludes that there is a need for a meaningful national consensus as to the best ways of translating legislation into reality. The acceptance of a degree of intervention in family life by the state, programmes of education about child development and what children need to develop healthily, raising awareness of how children are harmed, and the legitimacy of corporal punishment should be addressed through national debate. The main aim has to be to promote the safety and welfare of children. The first essential is to put consideration of the needs and rights of children at the centre of policy and the development of policy and practice should be shaped by this.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

This study is mainly focussed on the concept of child abuse as it may be applied to children in South Korea (hereafter Korea). The main emphasis is on one aspect of abuse as it is defined in Western literature - the use of physical punishment. Particular attention will be paid to the educational aspirations of Korean parents and the connections between these and physical punishment. It is obvious, however, that this issue also involves considerations of 'emotional abuse' as a consequence of parental behaviour. The study will examine the relationship between cultural patterns of child rearing and parental attitudes and the Western concept of child abuse.

There will be consideration of a range of categories of child abuse, namely physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse, which are customised by Western concepts. However, these are not all discussed to the same depth as the issue of physical abuse, the reason for this is dealt with in more detail in chapter 3 (developing the research). Throughout the pilot study, it was found to be extremely difficult to explore issues of child abuse with the participants in detail and depth and it was concluded that society at large was not yet ready to address these issues.

For instance, although the Child Welfare Act<sup>1</sup> includes sexual abuse within the legal definition of child abuse, in Korea, it is a difficult area to research due to the taboo,

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<sup>1</sup> The revised Child Welfare Act 2000 recognises that child abuse may entail physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect. It defines child abuse as; 'any physical injury, sexual violence, or harassment that harms health and welfare; any psychological or emotional injury that impedes mental health and development; abandonment; or behaviour which neglects the basic care, nurture and medical treatment of a child by adults responsible, including the child's caretaker' (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003, p. 30).

secrecy, and shame surrounding it. It is also largely omitted as a category from the research studies of abuse in Korea which we cite below. Moreover, the discourse about neglect and emotional abuse as a concept is not fully understood. Thus, we decided, regretfully, that it would be impractical to discuss all four types of abuse in the same weight.

It is generally accepted that child abuse is a socially constructed phenomenon. This issue will be explored in the literature review. Unlike Western countries, in which child protection work, along with concern about abused children, has grown considerably during the last three decades, within Asian countries, including Korea, child abuse has not been viewed as a serious problem until recently. This seems to be associated with the power of the traditional culture, Confucianism. It is one of the most prominent factors that shapes Korean culture and it still has a very strong influence upon Korean life in spite of the fact that Koreans are constantly exposed to western culture, especially that of America, which has greatly influenced various aspects of traditional Korean culture (Macdonald, 1996; Choi, 1997; Lee, 1999c; Song, 2001; Park, 2001). This means that in what is a largely authoritarian Korean society, children's rights and opinions have tended to be ignored. Historically, children have been viewed as the possessions of their parents. In this context, Korean parents have absolute power over their children. As a result, what may be regarded in the West as abusive behaviour towards children has even been strongly supported by the traditional social norm, which upholds parents' rights to discipline their children in any way they wish. Korean parents generally think that physical punishment, quite extreme by Western standards, is, at times, a necessary part of parental love (Hong, 1987; Kim and Ko, 1987; Chun, 1989; Kim, 1990; Lee et al., 1997; Yoon, 1997). Therefore, until fairly recently, little limited public and professional attention has been paid to children at risk of being abused in the



name of discipline. Furthermore, Korean families have a negative attitude toward outside intervention in family issues (Choi, 1997; Doe, 2000; Park, 2001, Song, 2001). In particular, child rearing practices are considered strictly the family's own business, beyond the control of both the state and politics (Bond, 1986; Ahn, 1994; Nam, 1995; Hesketh and Lynch, 1996).

However, there has been an increased number of child abuse scandals since the late 1990s. The Korean Women's Movement proposed the enactment of legislation to establish an 'Act for Prevention of Domestic Violence', which included a provision for dealing with violence against children. In addition, academics in Korea undertook many surveys revealing, inter alia, the extent of excessive physical punishment. These efforts helped contribute to the passing of the Child Abuse Prevention Act, the formulation of the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse and an increase in media reporting on the subject. Recently, the government reported criticism of Korean society by outsiders, which claimed that Korean children are now growing up physically and mentally unhealthy because they are overburdened with the pressure of studying (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2003).

Therefore, there has been growing concern about the severity of such discipline. Child abuse is beginning to be viewed as a major social problem in Korea, and many professionals in the relevant fields are concerned with how it should be addressed.

The broad aim of this study is to explore the ways in which the Western concept of child abuse can be applied to Korean society and is understood by parents and professionals in Korea.

In order to do this, the following issues will be addressed.

- 1) Changes in patterns of family life in relation to children over two generations, with special reference to education;
- 2) Parents' and professionals' beliefs about the value of family life in relation to the upbringing of children, their understanding of child development, and what they worry about;
- 3) How far the concept of child abuse has influenced parents' and professionals' attitudes to the treatment of children;
- 4) The extent to which current practice, in particular attitudes to physical punishment, seem to be being influenced by Western concepts of 'good' child rearing and of definitions of child abuse;
- 5) The implications of the findings for social policy and professionals' practice.

The next chapter will explore the key considerations which underline the planning of the research. It will draw upon the relevant literature.

## **1.1. Organisation of the Thesis**

There is a total of twelve chapters in the thesis.



This introductory chapter highlights the core research aim of the study and will address the background work and rationale for the choice of topic. It also contains the layout of the thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to family patterns, attitudes and behaviour in relation to raising children and its implication on child development. In this context, family patterns and cultural background in Korea, the social construction of child abuse and changing attitudes towards child welfare and child abuse in Korea is discussed. Comparisons and contrasts to the Western situation are also drawn in this chapter.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. It explains why a qualitative study with in-depth interview was chosen; how the interview guides for both families and professionals were designed; what the sample was and how it was selected; and how the data was collected and analysed; how the pilot study was undertaken. This chapter also discusses the ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the research process. It presents what actually happened during the fieldwork period, including what the issues and dilemmas were, how they arose, and how they were handled.

Chapters 5 to 11 are organised around the various themes and issues emerging from the findings. Chapters 5 to 8 highlight the findings on the attitudes, and perceptions of the families and chapters 9 to 11 discuss those of the professionals.

Chapter 5 focuses upon questions about how parents manage their child care, what kinds of roles are played in raising children and how they acknowledge and perceive them through their personal experiences, paying special attention to discrepancies between their attitudes and behaviours.

Chapter 6 explores the goal of child rearing, paying particular attention to the educational aspirations of Korean parents. In addition, the potential influence of parental attitudes towards education on their children's daily life and their development is carefully examined.

The central concern of chapter 7 is to explore parenting practices and their impact upon child development. To achieve this, parent-child relationships, parental disciplinary practices and childhood experiences of parents is discussed. It also investigates the differences and similarities in child rearing practices between the old and current generations. The findings highlight the influence of cultural values upon child development and upon the way that these values are translated into practice.

Chapter 8 explores to what extent parents understand the term child abuse and what might constitute acceptable or unacceptable parenting behaviour.

Chapter 9 begins with an understanding of the underlying values in parental discipline of children based on what the professionals say. Then it considers the current trends in the Child Abuse Prevention Act, particularly, in relation to professionals' attitudes towards mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse.

The tenth chapter examines the various ways in which four different groups of professionals understand and perceive the nature of child abuse.

The eleventh chapter is concerned with professionals' working experience and perceptions of child protection. It includes an overview of the current legislation and policy framework in Korea and discussion of intervention, and dilemmas in dealing with child abuse case.

The final chapter begins with a discussion of the main themes of the findings and the various issues which need to be addressed further. It ends by suggesting fundamental and essential elements for development to safeguard and protect children effectively in Korean society.



## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

This review will consider four different areas relevant to the study.

- Family patterns and cultural background in South Korea
- The social construction of child abuse
- Western concepts in relation to South Korea
- Changing attitudes towards child welfare and child abuse in South Korea

### **2.1. Family Patterns and Cultural Background in Korea**

The nature of family life has undergone considerable change over recent decades in Korea. There are several major demographic and socio-economic changes that have influenced families. These can be summarised as follows:

- A decline in the birth rate;
- A decline in the number of marriages, an increase in the number of divorces;
- An increase in life expectancy, and an aging population;
- A diversity in family forms, including a growth in stepfamilies and lone parent families;
- A fall in the number of large families;
- An increased participation of mothers in the labour force.



Traditionally, the majority of the population in Korea lived in an extended family network. In line with Confucian philosophy the eldest son in the family was responsible for its dependants, and the family as a whole supported the welfare of its members. However, urbanisation and industrialisation led to a shift away from the extended and towards a nuclear family system. Therefore recent trends show that the nuclear family is the major family form, constituting 82.0 per cent of all households in 2000 (National Statistical Office, 2001). In a similar vein, the number of persons in a family gradually decreased from 4.5 per household in 1980 to 3.12 in 2000 (National Statistical Office, various years). This can be explained by a postponement of the age of marriage, a rise in the number of divorces, families separated temporally due to employment and education, and, most importantly, the decrease in the number of children in households (Kim, 2000a; Kim et al., 2000b; Byun et al., 2001; Shin and Shaw, 2003).

Another noteworthy pattern is that there has been a remarkable decline in the birth rate. It has fallen from an average of six children born to a woman over her lifetime in the 1960s to just 1.19 children in 2003, one of the lowest rates in the world (National Statistical Office, various years). This means that Korean women on average can expect to have fewer than two children in their lifetime. According to a recent report conducted by Korean Gallup on 1,033 women in their 20s and 30s, 15 per cent of those married said that they would not have children, while 50 per cent who had just one child said they did not plan to have another (Digital Chosun, 2003). The general trend is to have only one child, or have no children at all. This may be due to the inadequate social structure for supporting childbearing and child rearing, such as the high costs of raising children and discrimination against pregnant women or mothers in the workplace. In

addition to the falling fertility, unbalanced sex ratio has influenced changes in population structure. In 1990 the sex ratio at birth was 116.5:100. In 2003 it dipped to 108.7:100, much better than a decade ago but still well above international standard ratio<sup>2</sup> (National Statistical Office, 2004). The obvious implication of these figures is that female children may be being aborted.

Gender-specific abortions and the use of technology to determine the sex of a foetus are banned. In 1994 the government introduced legislation that forbade prenatal sex determination. According to the Criminal Act those that procure an abortion and those that administer an abortion may be punished. A woman who procures an abortion may be punished with up to a 2 million won fine and one year in jail. Also, a doctor who performs an abortion may be punished with up to two years in prison if no injury occurs to the mother, up to three years in prison if an injury occurs to the mother, and up to five years in prison if the mother dies (Chapter 27, Article 269). Additionally, a doctor may be banned from practising medicine for up to seven years (Chapter 27, Article 270). Concern about possible misuse of prenatal gender tests led the government to forbid doctors to reveal gender, but some still do. Thus, the government is cracking down on doctors who perform gender tests. Under the revised Medical Act 1996, doctors are subject to a fine of up to 10 million won or imprisonment for up to three years for conducting gender testing. Non-governmental organisations campaign on the negative effect of the sex imbalance and for improvement in the social status of women. However, there are a number of exceptions under the Maternal and Child Health and the Mother and Fatherless Child Health Acts 1973, which permit abortions under special circumstances. A physician may perform an abortion in the following cases: 1) if the pregnant woman or her spouse suffers from an eugenic or hereditary mental or physical

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<sup>2</sup> The global average sex ratio is 105 boys for every 100 girls.



disease specified by Presidential Decree, 2) if the woman or her spouse suffers from a communicable disease specified by Presidential Decree, 3) if the pregnancy results from rape, 4) if the pregnancy results from incest, 5) if continuation of the pregnancy is likely to jeopardize the mother's health.

Even though the Korean legal system may punish those that procure an abortion and those that perform an abortion, they are rarely prosecuted. Despite the criminalisation of abortion in Korea, abortion is believed to be fairly widespread. Yoo and his colleagues (1999), who performed a study among 481 women who had submitted to induced abortions at seven local obstetric and gynaecology clinics in Seoul northern area from May 1996 to August 1996, point out that about 58.8 per cent of married patients and 73.6 per cent of unmarried patients had one or more previous induced abortions. Also, according to the national fertility and family health survey, although 78.6 per cent of a sample of 6,408 women between the ages of 15 and 44 had expressed negative views on abortion, 39 per cent of the sample had experienced at least one abortion as of 2000. The most common reasons for abortion are unwanted pregnancies (55.4 %), which include cases of female foetus, possible disabilities to the baby, infectious diseases, rape, or incest, followed by creating space between children (13.1 %), pregnancies threatening the health of the mother (10.1 %), financial difficulties (6.5%), unmarried (5.1 %), and family problems (1.1 %). And, in the same survey, the induced abortion rate was highest, at 53 per 1000, for women in the 20-24 age group (Kim, 2000b).

Moreover, religion does not seem to be a significant factor. The survey on the general perception of the people who have a religious belief regarding abortion, conducted by

the Korean Institute of Criminology (1991), concluded that there are no statistically significant differences between the religious beliefs of individuals and the experience of abortion. Another study using interviews with 736 women patients who had experienced at least one induced abortion from March 1991 to July 1991 confirms that 234 women appeared to have had an induced abortion before marriage; those who were Catholics residing in a big city area had experienced a greater number before marriage (Lee et al., 1993). However, the statistics on the actual number of abortions performed may be underestimated due to the illegal nature of the act. Reporting is not mandatory, and most abortions are performed in private clinics. Estimates indicate approximately 1.5 million abortions per year; roughly the same number as in the United States, which has more than five times the population of Korea (Korea Times, 2004). Thus, it is very likely that the abortion rate in Korea is even higher than the reported rate. Such figures would be regarded as very strange and shocking by Western readers.

In fact, despite this, the issue of abortion is not a priority for the public, even for women's movement organisations in Korea. There are a number of possible reasons for this. First, the period 1960-1985 marked a rapid transformation of society under government policies designed to achieve maximum economic growth. At the beginning of Korea's First Five-Year Economic Plan in 1962, the Korean government implemented a national family planning programme that is now considered a model for many developing countries. However, it is now arguable whether the reduced population growth rate resulted from the family planning programme directly or from changing social norms resulting from economic growth, the move away from an agriculture based economy, and rapid urbanisation (Hahm and Plein, 1997). The authoritarian military government's economic development plan made family planning



a priority as the country is one of the most densely populated in the world. The average number of children born per woman fell from 6.1 in 1961 to 1.7 in 1987. However, the social structure and cultural norms have not changed sufficiently to support the economic development transition. When changes are so rapid, there is no time to think things through, and human values tend to be over shadowed by the task to hand. A second reason for the low priority the government gave to enforcing adoption of the law is that Korea has succeeded in stabilizing its population through family planning. Many felt the most expedient route was to drive down the fertility rate to a level found in more developed countries. In Korea, there are three kinds of family planning; use of condoms, various pills for women, or sterilization (Kim, 1993; Davis, 1995). Why are abortions so high if women are using these kinds of birth control methods? It may be that when these do not work women choose abortion as the last resort. Abortion has been one of the key factors in decreasing fertility in Korea. In fact, even nowadays, it is used as the easiest way of birth control (Kim, 1994; Yoo et al., 1999). A third reason may be the fact that sexuality is viewed more as a taboo subject than in some other societies because of Confucian values. Women tend not to speak much about sexual issues, and sexuality is one of the least publicized topics. Under Confucian values, chastity is the primary virtue and the best thing a woman can do is to shield herself from any knowledge of sexuality, to maintain sexual innocence or the appearance of sexual innocence. She is encouraged not to have any knowledge or control over her body. Even when women know about contraceptives and other options, they do not dare take measures. Elements of the Confucian mindset are seen in women's avoidance of contraceptive methods, including birth control pills. It seems that abortion may be more accepted than contraception. This may also be because women who use contraception cannot terminate based on gender. Yet if they do not use it, they can terminate if they

do not want a female foetus. It could be said that abortion reflects the issue of gender selection. For that reason, many studies suggest that it is necessary to change the attitudes of all social members towards induced abortion through public educational programmes or information about the ethical issues, practising safe and responsible sex and the adverse effect on maternal health (Lee et al., 1993; Shin, 1998; Yoo et al., 1999)

Life expectancy also rose dramatically to 75.6 years in 2000 from 62.3 in 1971 (National Statistical Office, 1997, 2002). Changes in the age structure are associated with changes in the proportion of the population. This means that Korea's ratio of those aged over 65 to those 14 or under, an indicator of a society's vitality, was predicted to jump from 23rd highest in the world in 2000 to second highest by 2050 (National Statistical Office, 2002). As these figures indicate, Korea is by far the world's fastest aging society. By contrast, the number of people 14 and younger fell to 9.71 million (20.3 % of the total population) in 2002 compared with 12.95 million (34.0 % of the total population) in 1980. As people live longer and have fewer children the proportion of the young in society declines and the proportion of the elderly rises. As a result, it can be said that children have become more greatly prized than in previous generations. Furthermore, all such issues take on a greater weight and significance and it will have a far deeper and wider influence on society than any other movement.

More recently, family structures have become more diverse and individuals are more likely to experience living in a greater variety of types of family during their lifetime. Although the importance of the family and marriage is traditionally strong in Korean society, there are indications that the family system is under stress, and this might be reflected in the gradual increase in divorce rates (Kim et al., 2001). The number of



divorces has risen more than seven times in Korea since 1975. It has increased from 0.5 divorces per thousand of the population in 1975 to 3.5 divorces per thousand of the population in 2003, one of highest in the world (National Statistical Office, 2004). Parents' divorce may lead to some children living with just one parent while others will be living in step-parent households. Although the majority of children continue to live in a two-parent family a significant minority do not. It is highly likely that they will experience stress in their childhood. The negative impact upon children from divorced parents in Korea cannot be stressed strongly enough, the blood relationship carries a more serious meaning than in Western societies.

Furthermore there is the unexpected increase in the number of lone parent family households with dependent children as a consequence of high levels of relationship breakdown. Lone parent family households were 7.8 per cent of all households in 2000 (fathers with their children (1.5 %) and mothers with their children (6.3 %)) (National Statistical Office, 2002). It leads to increases in the proportion of children living with a single parent, a tendency for households to be smaller and for family and kinship ties to be more numerous but looser. Many lone parents manage to bring up their children in a warm, loving and supportive environment in which the children's needs are met. However, single parent families may be affected by a series of problems, economic strain, burden of child care and discipline, and lack of emotional support from the spouse. This is because there is no other significant adult who is able to respond to the children's needs properly (Standing, 1999). In particular, female headed families have poverty rates far exceeding those of married couple families. Moreover, the relative income disadvantage of these families is increasing (Kim and Lee, 2001; Kim, 2001a). Therefore, poverty is much greater in female headed families than in married couple



families and hence there is a possibility of the problem of children in poverty (Lee, 1998b; Kim, 1999). Thus, there is great difficulty facing lone parents in trying both to raise children and to earn money. In addition, despite the rise in diverse families in Korea, there is prejudice against these non-traditional types of families, including single parent families, because the stereotype of the family consisting of a married couple with their biological children still exists (Kim, 2001a). Therefore, the stigma resting on such single parent families may have some effect on the psychological states of the family members.

These factors which have been discussed above have affected the family in many ways, especially bringing up children has been increasingly taken over by others. For instance, there are many fewer relatives available to look after children and other arrangements are made. Nearly half of the pre-school children are cared for by people outside the family during the day. The most commonly used forms of care by other than family members, in order of importance, include day care facilities and Kindergarten for pre-schoolers, and after school facilities and private academies (National Statistical Office, 1999; Kim, 2000b).

There are several problems in their provision when considering children's welfare. Firstly, the quality of these resources has not yet been guaranteed. Group size and staff-to-child ratios are often too high<sup>3</sup> and turnover rates of staff is also too high (Suh et al., 2002). According to the Infant Care Act 1991, the staff-to-children ratio, qualifications of child care workers, care programmes and physical environment such as space-to-child ratios and hygienic conditions should be inspected by the government at least once

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<sup>3</sup> Legally, the ratio of staff to infants is 1 to 5, which contrasts markedly to 1 to 20 for children aged 3 (Ministry of Gender Equality, 2005).

every five years (Ministry of Gender Equality, 2005). However, because of the shortage of personnel in childcare-related departments, a bureaucrat covers more than 50 facilities on average, and in the case of some urban areas such as Bucheon city, a bureaucrat has to cover around 350 facilities (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2002b), which means that quality control may be impossible. At present, although there is some monitoring of financial expenditure, physical environment or staffing level there is still very little inspection of quality of care. Secondly, when the main care arrangement for the day is finished and the mother is still working, children may be taken care of by someone else or, if of school age, they may be left to care for themselves. What is typically involved here is after school supervision or nothing at all. These children return from school to a house without adults present. It is thought that the percentage of school age children who go unsupervised may more than double in summer and winter vacation periods. This situation may look like neglect from a Western point of view. Finally, despite the increased number of female participants in the workforce, roles in domestic work and in child care are not yet shared. It is not uncommon to see working wives doing all the household chores and caring for children after work. As noted earlier, nurseries and schools are responsible for educating the younger generation but, when children display undesirable behaviour and achieve unsatisfactory academic results, parents, mainly mothers, are attributed sole responsibility for the child's problems. This reflects the fact that the family is still regarded as the basic unit of Korean society, despite a need for new ways of organising lives and roles due to the change in the family's functions. The fact that responsibility for providing care still lies primarily with the mother is unfair.



## **2.2. The Social Construction of Child Abuse**

It is generally accepted that the concept of child abuse is socially constructed (Department of Health, 1995; Gibbons et al., 1995; Parton et al., 1997; Prout and James, 1997; Stevenson, 1998b; Polnay, 2001; Buckley, 2003). There is no absolute concept of what is meant by child abuse and what actually constitutes it. Cultural variations in child rearing practices, and hence actions that are considered damaging towards children, differ significantly between countries and cultures and over time (Korbin, 1981, 1991, 1997; Garbarino and Ebata, 1983; Finkelhor and Korbin, 1988; Levinson, 1989; Ahn and Gilbert, 1992; Segal, 1992, 1995; Tong et al., 1996; Elliott et al., 1997; Chan et al., 2002). It is a product of 'social negotiation between different values and beliefs, different social norms and professional knowledge and perspectives about children, child development and parenting' (Parton et al., 1997, p. 67). The product of one's culture and history, it is constructed and constantly reconstructed from within the realms of 'discourse' (James et al., 1998, p. 213). Dingwall and his colleagues (1995) proposed that child abuse is seen as the product of 'complex processes of identification, confirmation and disposal rather than inherent in a child's presenting condition' (p. 31). For example, one earlier view of children was that they were passive, the combined product of nature and nurture, now the belief is they are active people in their own right and have control over planning and making decisions that affect their lives (Prout and James, 1997; Hendrick, 1997; James et al., 1998; Stainton Rogers, 2001a; Lavalette and Cunningham, 2002; Fawcett et al., 2004; James and James, 2004). For those reasons, it is not easy to have a clear understanding of this process without looking at changes to



the totality of social relations within society and how these affect perceptions and attitudes to children, and children's responses to them.

Whilst there is general agreement about basic children's needs and their development as children get older there is an ongoing debate about child rearing practices and how their satisfactory development can be achieved (Rutter and Rutter, 1993; Colton et al., 2001; Stainton Rogers, 2001b; Crawford and Walker, 2003). It is clear that these theories, although important to understanding child abuse as a concept, are not sufficient on their own to explain why certain phenomenon should become a social problem, and how concepts such as child abuse are constructed. If Western notions of child development have a normative application outside Western cultures, it can lead to serious difficulties. This is because assumptions about children's needs and development may differ depending on the beliefs and values held on what is best for children, the role of children within the family and parental expectations of their children. This means that while there is a very considerable degree of consensus that significant harm towards children can have a major long term effect on all aspects of the child's development, the way in which society understands and defines such harm is related to different personal and social value systems, perspectives and experiences (O'Brian and Lau, 1995; Korbin, 1997; Woodhead, 1997; Pearson and Rao, 2003). Korbin (1981) who provides the standard work on the anthropology of abuse points out that:

There is no universally accepted standard for optimal child-rearing or for abusive and neglectful behaviours. Child maltreatment, like other categories of behaviour, must be defined by an aggregate of individuals, by a community or group to be meaningful (p. 205).

Over the previous few decades, there has been considerable controversy about what is inadequate child rearing and what conditions are likely to cause significant harm in terms of children's healthy development. In particular, it can be said that socially constructed concern about children is associated with cultural relativity, whereby different norms are applied to different social and ethnic groups (Dingwall et al., 1995; Stevenson, 1998b). For that reason, the concepts of how children do, and should, develop vary over time within a culture and at the same time between different cultures. In a similar vein, James and her colleagues (1998) stated that 'the 'socially constructed' child is a local rather than a global phenomenon and tends to be extremely particularistic' (p. 214). In connection with this, there are a number of research studies which indicate there are various beliefs and assumptions that are held to in the UK. The central message of this research appears to be that the concept of child abuse as an objective reality is false: it is constructed through cultural, political, professional and ideological perspectives (Gibbons et al., 1995; Dingwall et al., 1995; Department of Health, 1995; Kiong et al., 1996; Parton et al., 1997; Stainton Rogers, 2001a; Corby, 2002a; McKechnie, 2002; D'Cruz, 2004).

Culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in child rearing beliefs and practices. In order to fully understand why certain kinds of parenting are considered unacceptable, it is also necessary to have information on what is normative within that culture (Korbin, 1981, 1991; Tong et al., 1996). Misunderstanding of cultural child rearing practices by members of the dominant culture can result in damage to certain ethnic groups because perspectives about child abuse can be different depending on culture. James and her colleagues (1998) give the following example of what this means in practice:



[if] child 'abuse' was rife in earlier times and a fully anticipated feature of adult-child relations, then how are we to say that it was bad, exploitative and harmful? Our standards of judgement are relative to our world-view and therefore we cannot make universal statements of value (p. 27).

Western countries may have cultural values that do not reflect Asian attitudes towards children and how they should be treated. Western attitudes towards child rearing are different from those of the Asian culture on a number of issues closely related to child abuse. Unlike Western cultures, which display a lower tolerance of physical punishment, several Asian countries have a generally higher tolerance of corporal punishment (Lin and Fu, 1990; Ahn, 1994; O'Brian and Lau, 1995; Kim et al., 2000a; Pearson and Rao, 2003; Qiao and Chan, 2005).

However, the struggle to reach a consensus internationally continues and is symbolised in the rise of the 'children's rights' movement and is reflected in the attempts of the Korean government to address the concept of child abuse in law and policy.

Behind the idea of 'child abuse' lie fundamental values concerning human rights and children's rights in particular. The position of children in society is in itself a part of the debate. Ideas about how children develop, how they should develop and how they should be reared are very closely associated with power relations (Kitzinger, 1997; Stainton Rogers, 2001a). Therefore, such issues as inequality, discrimination, or oppression can be seen as the background to accusations of 'child abuse'.

There is a sense in which all children are inherently 'unequal' because of their age. Kitzinger (1997) argues that:



Child abuse is not an anomaly but part of the structural oppression of children. Assault and exploitation are risks inherent to 'childhood' as it is currently lived. It is not just the abuse of power over children that is the problem but the existence and maintenance of that power itself (p. 185).

Western societies recognise that children are relatively powerless and laws to protect children in various ways are widespread. It is a fundamental concept of English law that children 'lack capacity' to give consent and make decisions in certain aspects of their lives. However, in recent years, there has been increasing recognition that children have a right to be consulted and have their wishes seriously considered, according to age and capacity (for example, in cases of divorce, with whom they want to live). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has influenced views about children as separate individuals and has been accepted in most parts of the world. However, the extent to which it is reflected in social attitudes is still vague.

In contemporary Korea, there seems to be a broad shift in thinking about the importance of children and the safeguarding of their welfare. However, it could be argued that although official societal values on the definition and awareness of certain behaviours as abusive may appear to have changed, actual parenting behaviour has not changed. Therefore, although the recent increase in the number of reported cases of child abuse may indicate a real increase in the number of child abuse cases, it may well result from an increased societal response to a perception of it as a social problem. It seems that awareness of child abuse still remains surrounded by questions and uncertainty.

### **2.3. Western Concepts in relation to Korea**

There can be shared agreement across cultures that adults should try to do their best in order to address their children's 'best interests'. However, there may be considerable debate about what constitutes those 'best interests'. This is because, as noted earlier, the consensus about what is acceptable behaviour or not towards children and what constitutes a significant difference between them is to a considerable extent culturally defined (Lau, 1998; Stevenson, 1998b; Colton et al., 2001; Lavalette and Cunningham, 2002). This means that in child rearing there are many different discourses operating.

Two different models of child rearing have been advanced. They can be described as different discourses (James and Prout, 1997; Hendrick, 1997; Stainton Rogers, 2001a). As Stainton Rogers (2001a) described, one is the 'romanticization of childhood discourse', which is enveloped in the concept of the 'innocent and wholesome child', renamed the 'discourse of welfare'. Within this discourse, parents try to do their best to protect their children from any harm and to make their children happy. Another approach to childhood is the 'puritan discourse of childhood', based upon the image of the 'wicked and sinful child', renamed the 'discourse of control'. From this point of view, controlling, regulating and disciplining are important actions in order to educate and train children (pp. 29-30).

Within the Confucian tradition, there are differing power relationships both in the wider society and within the family based on age and gender (Wu, 1981; Ho, 1986; Lee, 1998c; Lee, 1999c; Harm and Guterman, 2001). For instance, the oldest male has the



highest rank in the family and the youngest female has the lowest rank. This hierarchical subordination within the family provides for a social order that rationalises gender and age inequality. In addition, it became the essential foundation of Korean thought, feeling and behaviour and is greatly valued in Korean child rearing patterns (Park and Cho, 1995; Lee, 1999c). According to this point of view, it is important to ensure family cohesion, strong bonds, family harmony and hierarchical relationships in family life. In this respect, parents own their children at birth and children's duties to their parents are considered unconditional (Wu, 1981; Macdonald, 1996). Therefore, a child is regarded as belonging to her or his parents and family rather than as a human being with its own personality and rights. For children, filial piety is the most important virtue in the family. Obedience is viewed as essential to maintaining family harmony and functioning, it is the way to show one's filial piety towards one's parents. In this sense, the parent-child relationship is characterised by unequal obligations in which parents are always superior and children inferior (Ho, 1986; O'Brian and Lau, 1995; Choi, 1997).

For that reason, although Koreans may in principle hold that violence is unacceptable (Ahn et al., 1998), corporal punishment, the so-called 'cane of love', and strict disciplinary methods are accepted as a positive expression of parents' concern, love and care for their child rather than as a problem (Huh, 1993; Lee, 1997; Kim et al., 2000a; National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003). There are still many Koreans who hold the attitude that 'the more you love a child the more you should cane it. The less you love a child the more you should feed it', the Korean equivalent of the Western saying 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. This is only one of many Korean proverbs but it seems to illustrate the socially sanctioned oppression of children. Many Korean



parents think that if they love their children they must cane them when they do not behave on these grounds as a way not only of exercising discipline but showing love (Kim, 1991; Chun and Park, 1991; Kim, 1998). It is possible that it has been used as a justification for child abuse in Korea (Huh, 1993; Lee, 1997). However, it should be borne in mind that physical punishment of children has been common in Western countries until relatively recently. Thus, it cannot be said that this attitude is simply related to a particular religion or cultural context.

Confucianism's emphasis on the family has the effect of developing 'Weism' among the family members, a powerful sense of 'Togetherness' (Choi, 1997, p. 33). They are required to act not as independent individuals, but rather, as members of a particular family with their place in its hierarchy. 'Relationships' are between separate people and are just as important in the West. However, the point here is that in several Asian countries, a sense of collectivism is valued rather than individual autonomy, which is considered to be standard behaviour in the West (Hofstede, 1997; Choi, 1997; Bauzon and Bauzon, 2000; Song, 2001). Traditionally, in Korean society, the child is raised to learn his place in the social order. This second sense of 'Weism' is fundamental to the Korean self-concept and value system. Therefore, anything that would violate the relationship is morally wrong.

There is now a body of knowledge about child development, which reflects Western views and the optimal conditions for successful child rearing. However, it may not be shared by all cultures. For example, in relation to behaviour theory, which indicates that positive reinforcement is useful to change undesirable behaviour, there may be disagreement about the effectiveness of a behavioural approach when it is adapted to

non Western countries (Davenport, 1994). This is because agreement about which behaviours are to be reinforced may differ across socio and cultural contexts (Hackett and Hackett, 1994; O'Brian and Lau, 1995; Korbin, 1997; Lau, 1998; Koramoa et al., 2002).

Korean families share a sense of accomplishment, so the success of the child is considered a measure of the success of the whole family. The mother and child do not exist as two individuals, rather they identify themselves as a dyad. The mother and the child form a 'we' that becomes a kind of shared identity. This is very apparent in the case of education. In terms of the parents' expectations of success for their children, it is said that Korean parents view their children as a precious extension of the family, even part of their own body (Hong, 1987; Kim, 1990; Choi, 1997; Kim and Kim, 1997; Kim, 1998; Lee, 1999c; Song, 2001). This can be seen in the way that Korean parents, like many parents, may often use their children as a means of fulfilling their own aspirations and expectations (Hong, 1987; Lee et al., 1997; Park, 2001). The other area where Confucianism has had a great influence is in child rearing. Western parents may place a great importance on autonomy, encouraging their children to make decisions and take responsibility for them, whereas the emphasis of Asian parents is on filial piety and controlling their children's lives and decisions are made for them (Lin and Fu, 1990; Choi, 1997; Pearson and Rao, 2003; Qiao and Chan, 2005).

The teaching and disciplining of a child begins in the womb, even before birth. Koreans put great emphasis on 'education in pregnancy' and a woman is told to see, hear, tell, and eat the right things while she is pregnant if she wants a healthy and well-behaved baby. Most Korean parents are over protective, devoted and indulgent, expect



obedience and want to know everything about their offspring. They tend to support their grown up children emotionally and financially even after the child's marriage. Later, children are expected to take care of their parents when they grow old (Macdonald, 1996; Jung and Honig, 2000).

However, when children fail to meet their parents' expectations, their intense parental affection may quickly be replaced by strict sanctions and control in order to bring the offspring into line. Kim (1990) reported that parents' highly protective attitudes early in life rapidly change when children begin formal education, at which point children are expected to begin to follow rigid codes of behaviour and adhere to strict disciplinary standards. Due to the hierarchical nature of society, in order to prove their worth as parents, they want their children to be at the highest point of the hierarchical structure. Since the traditional class system<sup>4</sup> has been eroded, the most secure way to obtain a higher position in society is to get a better and higher education (Yu, 1982; Lee, 1987; Kihl, 1994; Lee, 1995a). Thus, as soon as a child gets some sense of the outer world, the parents try to make their child a little scholar. It reflects the fact that the social atmosphere of respecting scholars is still prevalent. In Korea, the universities have manifest rankings and to gain a place at the best university is a great honour to the parents as well as the child, and is regarded as one of the greatest demonstrations of

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<sup>4</sup> During the Chosun dynasty (1392-1910), traditional Korea was ruled by a monarchy, which maintained a highly centralised, Confucian oriented and bureaucratic system. The ruling class was clearly differentiated from commoners who were the ordinary people and all the privilege and political power was virtually monopolised by the '*yangban*' who were the civilian and hereditary aristocracy. Slaves also constituted a social class at the bottom of the scale. Other social classes were the merchants and artisans, as well as the outcasts, who were typically lower in status than that of commoners and even slaves. At that time, the civil service examination was open to all citizens, except for certain classes such as butchers, actors and musicians. It is the only way through which a man from the middle or lower class could become a government official and eventually pass into the ranks of the '*yangban*' class. Also, they regarded as scholars those who were located in the top layer of society and received great respect. Confucianism was the philosophy of the literal-officials who ruled the people, therefore, they did not value manual labour, technical matters, and practical things.



filial piety. Getting admission to a top ranking school means that a child would have more chance of being in a prestigious position, and thus have more power. The manifest hierarchic university system along with the parents' intense zeal for the best university for their child may result in Korean children having an early yearning for power. This need for power is compounded as they grow older in the concept of hierarchical social relationships. Therefore, parents, especially mothers, overpressurize their children to make them enter a good university. There is private tutoring as early as primary school because Korean parents believe that the school alone cannot teach their children to excel, and rich families move to areas where schools have a slightly better reputation for entry to the best university. It makes Korea a 'university examination hell' and causes many suicides related to educational failure. Joint suicides of a mother and child are not unusual (Lee, 1995a; Ahn, 1997). Mothers therefore are no longer indulgent but become very controlling. They intervene in all areas of their children's behaviour, and the daily life of their offspring is programmed by the mother. Mothers keep watch on the friends their children associate with, and they usually prohibit the forming of relationships with the opposite sex until their sons or daughters enter university. They are the managers of their children. The word '*chimaparam*' represents the overenthusiasm of mothers for their children's education (Lee, 1999c; Macdonald, 1996). In a similar vein, parents play a central role in planning, decision-making and making choices, because from their point of view it is in 'the best interests of the child'.

There is a generally acknowledged model of parenting styles, which provides a framework for understanding approaches to parenting and their implications for child rearing. Whilst parenting styles and practices vary considerably, researchers have broadly identified four key ways of parenting, each with different characteristics, and

different approaches to managing children's behaviour. Baumrind (1989, 1991) categorizes parenting styles as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive based on the degree of warmth and control. Similarly, Maccoby and Martin (1983, cited in Parke and Buriel, 1998) suggest that parenting style is assessed along responsiveness and demandingness. According to them these two dimensions combine to produce four parenting types such as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive. They are controlling but not restrictive. It includes high parental involvement, such as interest and active participation in the child's life, trust towards the child, parental acceptance, and high behavioural and monitoring control, including awareness of where their children are, whom they are with, and what they are doing (Henricson and Roker, 2000). Authoritative parenting also involves respect for children's psychological autonomy by providing an atmosphere in which their opinions and individuality are allowed to develop freely so that they have sufficient competence gradually to assume an independent role. Authoritarian parents are demanding but not responsive. They demonstrate less warmth and respect for their children's individuality compared with authoritative parents. Typical of their parenting is a low level of trust and engagement towards their child, a discouraging of open communication, and strict control which is adult-centred. Moreover, authoritarian families are characterized by a high level of psychological control, which can be described from the children's point of view as a feeling of being controlled, devalued and criticized (Barber, 1996; Henricson and Grey, 2001). In contrast to this, permissive parents are responsive but not demanding. They generally have a warm accepting and child-centred attitude towards their child. However, unlike authoritative parenting, permissive parenting is characterized by non-demanding parental behaviour and a lack of parental control. Parents characterized by



this parenting style do not require mature behaviour from their children, but allow them to behave autonomously and independently (Baumrind, 1989, 1991). Neglectful parents are neither responsive nor demanding. They do not support or encourage their child's self-regulation, and also often fail to supervise the child's behaviour. In addition to a non-controlling attitude, typical of them is overall disengagement (Cowan et al., 1998; Daniel et al., 1999).

Although these parenting styles have been described as patterns typical of certain families, they may have very different implications when considered in light of the culture, and may not be as useful for understanding Korean parenting. For example, Korean parenting could be described as 'controlling', or 'authoritarian'. While these styles of parenting have been found to be associated with poor school achievement (Chao, 1994; Aunola et al., 2000), many Korean students have been performing quite well in school. Therefore, several Korean researchers who have statistically analysed the relationship between parenting behaviour using the MBRI (Maternal Behaviour Research Instrument) developed by Schaefer in 1959 point out that the vast majority of parenting behaviour amongst Korean parents is affectionate and at the same time highly controlling (Lee, 1983, Park, 1996b; Lee, 1998c). This means that, paradoxically, they are controlling authoritarians who tend to use punitive strategies and emphasize absolute obedience from the child because they love their children. Korean parents are concerned with protecting their children from any significant harm and they are ready to do their best to address the children's best interests but, in practice they exercise control over their children's childhood in order to achieve the children's long term interests. Thus, in general, the concept of the 'discourse of control' is one way of explaining

Korean child rearing practices because of the emphasis on parental authority and the child's obedience. Yet another way is the concept of the 'discourse of welfare'.

In Korea there is a Children's Charter whose guiding principles, for example, are human dignity and equal rights without discrimination. Thus all children have the right to receive respect as the emerging future generation, and to enjoy the opportunity of developing.

In this respect, parents try to do their best to give their children every opportunity for a better life. Of course, what constitutes a better life differs from one culture and social context to another. This is a matter of the disparity in the degree that the power is wielded by parents between Korea and the West in order to achieve the same end, children's satisfactory development.

In Korea, children are faced with unacceptably high expectations and are often compared unfavourably with other siblings and peers without their feelings, thoughts, and developmental changes being taken into account (Hong, 1987; Lee et al., 1997). As a result, Korean parents have been criticised for putting their children under extreme pressure whilst yet overindulging them (Kim, 1990). Their children, on the other hand, want freedom from pressure and hope to be valued for themselves.



## **2.4. Changing Attitudes towards Child Welfare and Child Abuse in Korea**

The position of children in Korean society has changed significantly over the past few decades. Since the 1960s the Korean government has had urgent political and economic goals to achieve rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation (Cho, 1994; Kwon, 2001). The government has been concerned with the development of the country, a reduction in poverty and crime and an increase in the quality of health and education (Lee, 1993a; Shin and Shaw, 2003). As a consequence, the child as an individual has not been a focus of much interest in Korea until recently. However, this development has brought about enormous social and economic change in many areas of Korean society in both quality and quantity (Kwon, 1997, 1999; Helgesen, 1998; Shin, 2000). These include an increase in scientific knowledge, remarkable economic development, changes in other demographic factors and political changes. There has also been an emphasis on childhood and education, and changes in the legal status of the child.

As we have shown earlier (p. 8), over the last three decades, there have been significant changes in the nature of family patterns in Korea. As a result of these major changes, a range of social problems has appeared in Korea. The disruption of traditional family ties and roles, including a move away from the tradition of the extended family, has resulted in an apparent increase in social and economic problems, including alcoholism, mental illness, a high level of crime and delinquency, and behaviour to children in ways which would be generally regarded as abusive. This means that a growing number of

children fail to receive appropriate care and all these factors may contribute to a growing awareness of child maltreatment and concern about it.

In Korea, the voluntary sector, rather than any statutory body, has endeavoured to raise public awareness, identify child abuse and extend a helping hand towards abused children and their families using their own funds. The Korean National Council of Social Welfare created the first child abuse reporting centre in 1979 (Kim, 1990), but it was closed within a year due to no cases having been reported and a lack of public support. Afterwards, the Seoul City Children's Counselling Centre opened a child abuse reporting division in 1985, but this centre was also closed because, during the first 5 years, only 96 cases were reported (Ahn and Hong, 1987; Lee, 1997). In 1989, the Korean Child Welfare Prevention Association established 16 child abuse reporting centres nation wide, but after 3 years, only 239 cases had been reported (Lee, 1993a). Although it has held seminars biannually to raise public awareness of child abuse, the problem of child abuse in Korean society was given at that time very little public attention.

However, in 1998, a tragic child abuse scandal<sup>5</sup> appeared to galvanise some support and raise public and professional awareness. It might be said that it was the starting point in media coverage of child abuse incidents and a recognition of the need for a wider awareness of child abuse on the part of the public and professionals. Professionals, such as paediatricians, child psychiatrists, social workers, and child psychologists were

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<sup>5</sup> It involved a Korean dentist, whose neighbours reported to the police that they could not tolerate the constant screaming of his young daughter, whom he regularly beat. After a brief investigation, the police dropped the case because the father was seen as an educated man who was considered competent in distinguishing between discipline and abuse. The extreme physical abuse, at that time rationalised as discipline, continued, and ultimately, the child was found dead.



involved in identifying child abuse as a problem worthy of national concern. In spite of this, there seems to have been no change in the belief that corporal punishment is acceptable as a disciplinary action, often employed by parents and teachers. In a large-scale national survey of children's experiences of corporal punishment (Yoon, 2000), it was found that 90.3 per cent of children had experienced some type of corporal punishment more than once during a year and 16.6 per cent received punishment on a regular basis because they did something wrong. Furthermore, a serious increase in the number of abandoned children due to family breakdown, caused by financial difficulties, as a result of the economic crisis of 1997 has been reported (Cho, 1998; Noh, 2000; Kim, 2001b). These reports are an exemplary illustration of how children are affected by events such as unemployment, when the economy experiences a slump. Also, non-traditional family forms especially single parent families and child-headed families<sup>6</sup> have been observed on a large scale. With the steady increase in working married women without the support of the extended family or the state, child welfare has been challenged on an unprecedented level.

Consequently, in order to cope with these challenges, the Korean government has put in place child protection systems and procedures to raise public awareness, but these are still at an early stage. Nevertheless, over the past few years both professionals and the public have become increasingly aware of the growing problem of child abuse. It is out

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<sup>6</sup> The term is used to describe the household headed by a child aged less than 18 for whom the parents are not able to provide proper care, economically and emotionally. The reasons for this are that the death of their parents, critical illness or physical or psychological disability of parents, as well as abandonment by or the divorce of their parents, or other events. The child-headed household project was started in 1985 to prevent children in need of institutionalisation and to support them to enable them to live in their community. They are assuming chief responsibility for looking after their younger siblings or caring for their parents or grandparents who have a disability or long-term illness with support of livelihood aid, medical aid, educational assistance and appropriate support for clothing, food and transportation within their own home. In 2001, there were 8,060 child-headed households (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2002a).

of this growing awareness that the question of what is likely to influence both child rearing practices and attitudes to harmful behaviour to children has arisen.

Thus, a focus for the research, which is summarised in the 'research aim', began to emerge. We need to understand more about the circumstances, behaviours and attitudes of parents in contemporary Korea and consider how this may affect the social construction of abuse. This will involve:

- the changes in family patterns
- parental and professionals' beliefs and values
- child rearing practices

It is widely agreed that parenting behaviours can be harmful to children and may influence children's social development significantly. Parents' attitude and behaviour in terms of child rearing are formed by the interaction of a number of factors, including their own experiences during childhood, cultural beliefs and values about how the child should be brought up, their knowledge of child development, the mode of parent-child interaction and parenting practices. These matters have to be applied in this study to Korean parents. But little is actually known about how these differences manifest themselves in the daily pattern of family life and child development in Korea (Hwang, 1996). Since the 1990s, some attention has been given to the relationship between cultural patterns in child rearing and discipline and child abuse among Korean people (Ahn and Gilbert, 1992; Ahn, 1994; Doe, 2000; Park, 2001). Although limited attention has been focused on Korean immigrant families who have gone to the United States, these studies have indicated there may be ethnic differences in the prevalence and



severity of different types of abusive parenting style. They suggested that understanding cultural differences in beliefs and values related to child rearing is certainly important. Such studies can be helpful in discovering what child rearing practices are normative and what are unacceptable to people of a certain culture and how this is reflected in the daily pattern of family life.

In Confucian tradition, children are expected to respect and follow their elders' guidance. There is no mention of the child as an independent human being. Instead the child is only described as a son (no mention of daughters) or a student. Traditionally, sons have been more valued than daughters in Korea. They have been given the privilege to succeed in the family and society provides them more opportunities and privilege (Huh, 1993; Choi, 1997). The Korean term for 'adult' is literally 'to become a person' and the term 'child' means 'one who has not arrived at the age of majority'. Therefore, growing up means to become a person. It is often said that parents should help their children to become people and children can become people only through education and the guidance of adults. This means that the child needs to be controlled and guided to become a person through filial piety and education, which, as we have shown, are two areas of primary concern to Korean parents. For that reason, controlling can be seen as caring in Korea.

Since 1948, the Korean government has provided six years of free education for all children, and, as a result, there has been a marked improvement in the educational attainment of the population. In 1945, the school enrolment rate<sup>7</sup> was 64 per cent for elementary school, 4 per cent for middle school and 1 per cent for higher education,

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<sup>7</sup> School Enrolment Rate: (Students at Each Level of School / School Age Population) x 100

whereas in 2002, it was 97.3 per cent for elementary school, 95.0 per cent for middle school, 88.6 per cent for high school and 53.9 per cent for higher education (Ministry of Education, 1985; Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development and Korean Educational Development Institute, 2003). Although it is undeniable that Korean parents' zeal to educate their children has helped propel the nation to the rank of the 10 top trading countries, the problems besetting Korean education, which places so much weight on the university entrance examination, has become a matter of international concern. The UN Children's Rights Council recently reviewed the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child treaty among its member countries, and decided that the rights of Korean children are violated by preparation for the university entrance examination and the early education boom, both of which place enormous stress on the nation's children (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2003; Joong Ang Daily, 2003).

It is important to recognise that parents in Korea see it as part of their duty to provide education and their ideal governs the whole family. Korean parents, however, go to extremes in this matter in comparison with Western societies.

Over the last three decades, the number of empirical studies of child abuse has increased steadily in Korea although the number is still relatively few compared to other areas of social work research. Most have focused on definitional issues, issues of measurement, the prevalence and consequences of child abuse, and the area of intervention in relation to abusive behaviours, both in the school and in the family. Most are based on questionnaire surveys. In Korea, child abuse was brought to the public eye after 'the discovery' of child abuse in the late 1970s by a number of paediatricians and child



physicians (Oh et al., 1975; Chun et al., 1979). The early studies focused on the recognition of the existence of child abuse and its frequency (Ahn and Hong, 1987; Kim and Ko, 1987; Hong, 1987; Hong et al., 1988). For instance, a survey of physicians (Ahn and Hong, 1987) found 277 children had been identified as victims of child abuse, based on reports collected from 490 physicians. The most striking fact about this study is that, of the reported cases, 6 children were killed, 7 had skull fractures, 8 had cerebral haemorrhages, 16 had other bone fractures, 3 had multiple bruises, 1 had been blinded, 3 were severely malnourished, 2 had anoxic brain damage, and 161 had mild bruises on their bodies or around their eyes. In spite of the remarkably high incidence and severity of this 'abuse', at that time it was not viewed as a serious social problem by the general public. It is worth noting that a number of medical professionals nonetheless clearly accepted these instances as non-accidental injuries.

A large number of research studies, which drew on primary or secondary school children in Korea, have indicated that child abuse is influenced by a number of factors related to individual characteristics of the alleged abusers and the victims, such as gender, age, educational level, economic status, parental stress and other reasons (Oh et al., 1975; Chun et al., 1979; Lee and Lee, 1987; Chun, 1989; Park, 1996b; Kim and Kim, 1997; Lee et al., 1997; Lee and Lee, 1997; Yoon, 1997; Kim, 1998; Yoon, 2000; Um, 2001; Park, 2002b; Noh, 2002; Ahn and Kang, 2003). Studies by Kim (1998), and Lee and Lee (1987) each reported that Korean mothers use physical punishment more frequently than fathers. This may be because Korean mothers bear more responsibility for educating their children than do fathers, and more importantly, mothers believe that physical punishment is necessary for ensuring appropriate child development (Park, 1996b; Lee et al., 1997). However, in a later report on the status of child abuse in

Korea (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2004) the data showed that the number of father perpetrators (55.0 %) was twice as likely as that of the mothers (28.3 %). Although several research studies found a statistically significant relationship between a mother's educational level and the abuse risk, others did not. Lee and Lee (1987) reported that less educated mothers were more likely to use severe forms of physical punishment with their children. Yet, Lee and his colleagues (1997) found that mothers with a university education beat their children more often than those without. The existing research studies did not discuss the reasons for these contrasting findings, but it is probable that they resulted from different sampling strategies. Also, there were studies examining specific indicators of economic impoverishment, such as parental unemployment or living in rented housing, which had a positive correlation with physical abuse (Kim, 1990; Chun and Park, 1991). Concerning characteristics of the abused children, initial evidence suggests that children between the ages of 6 and 11 are most likely to be exposed to physical punishment (Kim and Ko, 1987; Kim, 1998) and the most common reasons for physical punishment were disobedience, 'making trouble' and poor school performance (Chun and Park, 1991; Park, 1996b; Kim, 1998; Lee et al., 1997). However, many children who were selected as a sample for the large scale surveys felt that they were being punished without understanding the reason for the punishment (Park, 1996b; Yoon, 2000). It seems that behaviour which we might consider abusive may frequently occur in the name of discipline. In terms of gender, parental discipline was more severe on boys than on girls (Kim and Ko, 1987; Park, 1996b; Kim 1998).

Since the late 1990s, there has been a change of research focus from defining and describing child abuse to attitudes towards it. Ahn and his colleagues (1998), who



surveyed attitudes towards child abuse and attempted to define the concept of child abuse more reliably, pointed out that the general public and teachers were more likely to define base definitions of child abuse by the extent of physical injuries caused by corporal punishment than were social workers and doctors. Similar results were obtained in a study conducted by Yoon (1997) in which a questionnaire was given to 372 general public and 410 professional groups of medical doctors, social workers and teachers. Although the survey results confirmed that both the general public and professional groups recognised, at least on a conceptual level, physical abuse, emotional abuse and verbal abuse as all being forms of child abuse, Koreans in general do not necessarily consider corporal punishment to be an abusive behaviour. Taken as a whole, these studies discussed above suggested the need for national consensus on child abuse, ensuring children's rights, a national survey on child abuse covering all age groups, and the establishment of a Child Abuse Prevention Act, along with the setting up of social services and social policy for it.

As a consequence, these efforts helped contribute to the establishment of the legislative framework in 2000. Afterwards, the government presented the official statistical record about child abuse for the first time (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2002c). According to its third report, during 2003, more than 3,536 child abuse cases were reported to the agency (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2004). Physical abuse and neglect were the most frequently reported type of child abuse and more than 83.3 per cent of perpetrators of child abuse were parents. Of these, 77.3 per cent were their biological parents. Furthermore, it is assumed that the hidden figure of child abuse exceeds the number of reported cases many times. Subsequent to the passing of the legislation, there emerged a large number of

unpublished dissertations for masters degrees on the awareness and attitudes of the mandatory reporters<sup>8</sup> and members of the general public, the development of programmes for abused children and their families, and the prevention of and intervention in child abuse. Most of these studies found that there is a need to increase awareness of the problem of child abuse and set up interdisciplinary work to address it.

However, there have been very few published reports directly addressing the attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards child abuse (Ji and Ma, 2000; Kim and Park, 2001; Kang and Chung, 2002; Kim and Yoon, 2003; National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003). Kim and Park (2001), who investigated 116 teachers' perceptions of child abuse, showed that, although a reporting system has been set up, teachers did not see reporting as their duty and they did not know about a Hotline phone number for abused children. Also they did not recognise emotional abuse and neglect as a serious problem compared to physical and sexual abuse, due to its 'invisibility'. On this basis, they recommended a programme of education for teachers about child abuse, for example, the impact of emotional abuse and neglect, with the necessary legislation and procedures. Similarly, a fairly recent national survey revealed that only 7.7 per cent of the 5,240 respondents who responded via the Internet considered all forms of physical punishment, regardless of its disciplinary purpose, to be child abuse (National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003). There was a debate about whether caning or slapping is abuse or not. The way to distinguish between physical abuse and 'cane of love' is based on the severity of punishment (56.0 %), the use of instrument (48.6 %),

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<sup>8</sup> According to the Child Welfare Act 2000, the mandatory reporters are designated and they are elementary, middle and high school teachers, medical professionals, heads and employees of child welfare institutions, professionals who are involved in counselling, treatment, training and nursing and child welfare and social welfare public service personnel (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003, pp. 20-21).



the intention of the parents (45.6 %) and the area of the body affected (36.7 %). Clearly, it is still a controversial issue and, until recently, little public attention has been paid to children at risk of being abused in the name of discipline. Although many participants supported the idea of reporting (90 %), there was no mention of the fact that there might be differences between positive comments towards reporting and actual reporting behaviour. This study concluded that in order to increase the rate of reporting to a Hotline and public awareness of child abuse, there was a need for a national campaign and public education. The indications are therefore that there is still a lack of social consensus about what constitutes unacceptable forms of parenting.

Even if these significant efforts are to be welcomed, agreement within Korea has not been reached about what actual behaviours might be considered harmful to children. Many of the empirical studies earlier referred to have suggested that there is a need to attempt to overcome practical problems in measuring child abuse and tackling definitional issues, while, at the same time, keeping Korean cultural influences related to family privacy and parental authority firmly in mind. It is also important to develop an understanding based on information gathered within the Korean context rather than relying on the findings of studies done in other countries, especially in Western countries.

In this chapter, based on existing literature, a question about how family patterns, attitudes, and behaviour in relation to the upbringing of children have influenced the construction of child abuse has been explored. To this end, it has addressed the background to the emergence of the issues of child abuse in Korea, examining the changes in family patterns, parental beliefs and values, and child rearing practices in the

light of a number of Western child development theories and empirical studies of child abuse in Korea. In conclusion, this discussion has clarified the underlying issues and leads to implications for the possible research objectives.



## **Chapter 3. The Methodology and Methods of the Research**

There are differences between qualitative and quantitative research, especially in terms of methodological principles and practices. This is clearly expressed by Denzin and Lincoln (2000). They proposed that:

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationship between variables, not process. Proponents of such studies claim that their work is done from within a value-free framework (p. 8)

This means that choosing adequate methodological approaches should be based on their appropriateness for a given research task because each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

### **3.1. Rationale for the Qualitative Approach**

Qualitative methodologies have been chosen for this study.

Most Korean researchers in the social work community have used quantitative rather than qualitative methods. As a result of this, the majority of existing research

concerning child abuse in Korea has been dominated by quantitative methods such as large scale surveys and the analysis of existing data sources (studies) (see Appendix A). In fact, these large scale surveys are not suitable for eliciting the deeper beliefs and feelings of people. People have their own complex belief systems supplied by their culture and influenced by their experiences. Therefore, any understanding of their behaviour and their reasons for their behaviour should begin by examining the sets of beliefs, rules and meanings which govern their daily lives (Armstrong et al., 1990; Lee, 1993b). For that reason, qualitative work tends to be more exploratory, more in-depth, and more concerned with the participants' experiences rather than absolute numbers. Thus, the qualitative approach seems particularly appropriate for this study.

More importantly, this study as a whole is concerned with perceptions and attitudes in relation to the upbringing of children in the Korean context and how these are translated into actions. As Bryman (1988) pointed out, one of the most 'fundamental characteristics of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, and values from the perspective of the people who are being studied' (p. 61). Viewing 'through the eyes of the people that they study' (Bryman, 2004, p. 279) is helpful in taking account of the way that the participants understand and interpret their everyday life because people can be expected to act on the basis of what they believe to be the case.

Most of the previous studies in Korea concerning the definition and measurement of child abuse have been based on the researcher's own assumptions of what constitutes physical child abuse and these definitions are derived from Western interpretations. The original or modified Conflict Tactics Scale which was developed by Straus in 1979



has been used (see Appendix B). Such research studies found that the majority of children had been exposed to physical punishment, such as being kicked, hit with a cane, threatened with a knife, and slapped at home and school.

Although these studies have limitations, the data provides valuable information, particularly in the studies of children's experience of corporal punishment. It seems clear that the extent and nature of such punishment is, by Western standards, exceptionally harsh. Hence, our exploration of parents' views is made against a background of some fairly 'hard' knowledge of the situations.

Mason (2002) noted that qualitative research is 'based on methods ... explanation and argument building which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context' (p. 3). Qualitative research places emphasis on the importance of understanding the phenomenon under study in the context of the culture, sub-culture, organisation or setting (Bryman, 1988, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miller and Dingwall, 1997; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2004). For this study, it is important to choose a method which will help to capture some of the more hidden attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, feelings and dilemmas in an area which is largely unexplored and which affects people's intentions and behaviours. Strauss and Corbin (1998) also noted that this method can be used to obtain 'the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods' (p. 11). The emphasis on process, context and holism within qualitative research is seen as particularly relevant to issues related to controversial behaviour towards children in Korean culture.

### **3.2. Sampling and Access**

This study adopts a purposive sampling strategy, which is guided by research questions and pragmatism (Miles and Huberman, 1998; Silverman, 2001). In contrast to quantitative research, which seeks to test hypotheses on a representative population, qualitative researchers following purposive sampling are generally looking to build theory from data. At the same time, the validity of the qualitative researcher's interpretations depends in part upon the quality and relevance of their in-process decisions (Finch and Mason, 1999; Peräkylä, 2004).

#### **The Extent of the Proposed Sample**

Bearing useful lessons learnt from pilot interviews, which are discussed later in this chapter, in mind, the sample was selected from two specific target subgroups, a range of professionals and parents with children. 50 interviewees were recruited. This was as many as I could manage (see Appendix C).

#### **Selecting Interviewees (see Table 3.1)**

The potential interviewees from families were married and had more than one child. Child rearing is seen as the mother's responsibility rather than the father's in the Korean family, while the role of the Korean father is limited under normal circumstances



(Macdonald, 1996; Park, 1996b; Doe, 2000; Jung and Honig, 2000; Song, 2001; Hahm and Guterman, 2001; Won and Pascall, 2004). However, recent social and demographic changes as well as increasing full-time employment of wives increase pressure for fathers to become more actively involved in child rearing (Park, 1989; Lee, 1992; Hong, 1995; Lee, 1995b; Cho, 1997). For that reason, in this study, it was intended that the attitude and behaviour of both parents towards the upbringing of the children should be assessed. I therefore made it clear to them that I planned to interview each of them separately from their spouses. This was because if there was any sort of disagreement between them, wives, in particular, might not easily express their own perceptions on topics as husbands are still considered to be the most powerful authorities within the family. The criteria for the choice of families were outlined as follows:

- Children's ages: 1 to 12 (pre school age 1 to 5 / primary school age 6 to 11)
- Level of parental education: non graduates and graduates
- Main carer of children
  - Mothers
  - Mother where child is looked after by relatives (e.g. grandmothers)
  - Mother whose child attends full or part-time day care facility
- Social class: our discussion of variables included the concept of 'social class'.

It appears that this is very different from a Western (British) context. We agreed to use those areas of Seoul, which have poorer and richer families. Richer parents move to areas which have schools with high reputations for getting their pupils to the best universities.

In terms of social class, the differences and similarities between the two groups of parents are discussed in the context of their attitudes and behaviours in relation to the

upbringing of children in the concluding chapter. Despite these attempts, it was recognised that the study could have been improved by being more thoughtful in the sampling process. In fact, although families in the North areas were relatively poor with low incomes relative to those people in the South areas, they could still manage to get by without state aid. In the sample of the present study, there were no families in poverty or under the poverty line. If they had been included in my sample, more diverse attitudes and behaviours would be elicited. This point should be acknowledged as a limitation of this study.

The selected interviewees for professionals were the mandatory reporters, namely doctors, social workers, school teachers and pre school staff.<sup>9</sup> Criteria for professionals were as follows:

- Ages: over 24 and below 62 years old (according to the time of their starting and finishing their working life)
- Type of professionals working in related fields to abused children and their families
  - Medical doctors: paediatricians and child psychiatrists
  - Social workers
  - School teachers
  - Staff of child care centres
- Number of years in profession: more than a year

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<sup>9</sup> Interviews were conducted with staff because of radical changes in the availability of relatives to look after young children and the large percentage of other arrangements involving kindergartens, child minders and nursery which were made.



**Table 3.1. The Plan of Sampling**

Professionals				Parents			
Social workers	Medical doctors	Teachers and staff		Parents in the South Area		Parents in the North Area	
		School	Nursery	Single-income parents	Double-income parents	Single-income parents	Double-income parents
4	4	4	4	9	8	9	8

**Gaining Access**

Gaining access to the potential interviewees is often difficult, and is ‘fraught with difficulty’ in terms of refusal and on-going negotiations (Bryman and Burgess, 1999, p. XV). It was likely to be even more problematic in Korea, where the radius of interpersonal trust tends to be restricted to primary groups (Fukuyama, 1995), so that it might not be easy for a researcher to access a range of (potential) interviewees without the aid of personal human networks.

Under these circumstances, it was necessary to have some contacts (or gatekeepers) who could introduce me to interviewees in diverse settings. Access was achieved through direct contact in some cases and negotiated with the gatekeepers who could permit or withhold access in others. Allowance was made for drop outs. Because of my existing contacts and experience, it was not anticipated that it would be difficult to access the professionals. With some help from the gatekeepers, the potential interviewees from families were selected from childcare facilities and primary school in Seoul, the capital city of Korea, and my personal network.

### **3.3. Data Collection**

#### **The Documents**

I had access to a variety of documentary materials that had a bearing on the problem. These include newspaper articles, legislation, Internet source material, and reports and publications from voluntary organisations as well as government.

Murphy and her colleagues (1998) pointed out that documents are a major feature of contemporary society and an important source of data. Like interview data, documents can be regarded as accounts. This is because they are products of the context in which they are generated. It was difficult to know the extent of accuracy and authenticity of some of the statistics obtained through these materials, but they provided some interesting data and a unique version of reality.

#### **Qualitative Interviews**

Interviewing is probably the most widely employed and most powerful way in which qualitative research attempts to understand human beings (Hall and Hall, 1996; Kvale, 1996; Dingwall, 1997; Fontana and Frey, 1998; Bryman, 2004; Mason, 2002). The approach is flexible (Bryman, 1988, 2004) and enables the researcher to have an understanding and knowledge of the interviewee (Kvale, 1996) rather than reflecting only the researcher's concerns. This approach is especially appropriate when the researcher wants to find out something that cannot be directly observed. Qualitative



interviewing tends to be seen as 'involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it' (Mason, 2002, p. 63). It is more 'humanist' and the informant's voice is more clearly heard than in data generated by a survey (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 157).

The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the interviewer will have an initial framework but to some extent can be guided by the interviewee's responses as to the succeeding sequence of topics (Murphy et al., 1998; Bryman and Burgess, 1999; Patton, 2002). New interesting issues may emerge during the interview. Also, the semi-structured interview provides a way of finding out what the participants know and think about their living world (Kvale, 1996). The characteristic of semi-structured interviews is that 'the interviewer asks major questions the same way each time, but is free to alter their sequence and to probe for more information' (Fielding and Thomas, 2001, p. 124). It was helpful to capture what the interviewee viewed as important in explaining and in understanding events, and forms of behaviour in detail, depth and richness.

In general, the semi-structured in-depth interview facilitates a conversation in which the researcher encourages the interviewees to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research questions. Establishing trust and rapport is also considered important (Finch, 1984; Jones, 1985a; Oakley, 1999).

Each interview was conducted over one day. It was found in the pilot that participants preferred to limit the time spent to one single session. However, it was decided to make a break between the first part and the second part of the interview because both

participants and researcher might face difficulty concentrating given the length of the interview.

### **An Interview Guide**

The interview guide was drawn from many sources, including literature and my own experiences with Korean families. The fieldwork focused on interviews with a range of professionals and families. The interviews for both families and professionals were divided into four sections, each with a different focus. The first section for families provided socio-demographic and historical information (interviewees' background, age, number and age of children, other persons in the household, and information on children). The second section examined the goals of child rearing in order to find out what is important to them. Questions about child rearing patterns such as play, education and discipline are included in the third section. The final section of the interview asked interviewees to discuss changes in family life and child rearing patterns noted over their lifetime in order to find out how this differs from their experiences with their own parents (see Appendix D). For the professionals, the first part dealt with factual questions such as the number of years they had worked in the profession and their level of education. The second part investigated their awareness of the national trends and international criticism. The third part explored questions about working experiences based on their professions. Finally, the interview with professionals concentrated on their attitudes toward child abuse (See Appendix H).



## **The Rationale for Adopting Vignettes**

It was decided to use vignettes in addition to the interview discussed above. There is evidence that the use of vignettes can be complementary to the qualitative interview (Miles, 1990; Hazel, 1995; Hill, 1997; Hughes, 1998; Barter and Renold, 1999; Poulou, 2001; Wilks, 2004). Finch (1987) presented examples of studies using the vignette technique in different ways and described them as ‘short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond’ (p. 105). The vignette technique is defined as ‘a method that can elicit perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes from responses or comments to stories depicting scenarios and situations’ (Barter and Renold, 1999, p. 2).

A number of advantages in using vignettes have been described (Alexander and Becker, 1978; Miles, 1990; Birchall and Hallett, 1995; Hazel, 1995; Hughes, 1998; Wade, 1999; Neale, 1999; Poulou, 2001; Wilks, 2004). These include: to enable respondents to talk freely about their attitudes and feelings; to elicit the cultural norms on which these attitudes and feelings are based and to elicit ethical frameworks and moral codes (Wade, 1999; Neale, 1999). Vignettes are usually employed as a complementary technique alongside other data collection (Hazel, 1995; Hughes, 1998). However, we cannot of course assume that the responses to vignettes reflect objectively how respondents think or feel or how they behave. They are bound in part to be affected by respondents’ perceptions of the research purpose. None the less, the vignette is less threatening than the direct question; instead of ‘what do you do?’ we ask ‘what would you do if you were...?’ (Alexander and Becker, 1978; Birchall and Hallett, 1995; Poulou, 2001). The use of vignettes also promotes reflection and critical thinking, because realistic

everyday situations are described. Thus, imagination, feelings and thoughts can be evoked in participants at the same time (Miles, 1990).

The use of vignettes seemed desirable to help participants feel at ease and to elicit their views, attitudes and feelings about key aspects of child rearing. They were especially useful for sensitive areas of inquiry that might not be readily accessible through other means.

### **The use of brief case illustrations regarding child abuse**

A series of brief case illustrations regarding possible examples of child abuse were also used in conjunction with the semi-structured interviews. The case illustrations were developed to find out what behaviour parents today may think is abusive to children and what is thought normal and acceptable. Several articles and Singapore monographs influenced this (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979; Christopherson, 1983, 1998; Segal, 1992; Ajduković et al., 1993; Kiong et al., 1996; Elliott et al., 1997, 2000, 2002; Fung and Chow, 1998; Tang, 1998; Chan et al., 2000; Chan et al., 2002). The researchers in these studies give a very detailed account of how they set about finding public and professional views on child abuse. They asked a series of questions about what behaviour parents and professionals would consider abusive or what they would think of as normal or acceptable. In addition, they explored parents' and professionals' views on any circumstances which might be considered as mitigating the abusive quality of the behaviour (see Appendix G)



However, during the pilot study period, several difficulties in the application of the original version, including cultural differences, were found, these will be explained in more detail later in this chapter. As a result, we added and modified some ideas taking into account cultural differences and, in order to help participants respond clearly, three categories for responses were provided. Eventually, the four major categories of child abuse, namely physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect were represented in the case illustrations and interviewees were asked to judge specific behaviours (an example in Appendix F).

In the main interviews, the revised version was used with all parents and professionals, but the list was not presented to participants in order to avoid disrupting the flow of the interview. Instead, they were asked whether certain behaviour is regarded as abusive or not. A detailed set of questions to elaborate the responses for mitigating circumstances which was used in the pilot was not used in the interviews. If they were not sure about their judgement, they were asked to explain why. Then, when the audiotapes were transcribed, I ticked and filled the boxes based on the participants' responses. In addition, it was decided that in the study it would not be appropriate to attempt to quantify the findings from my data as, even in the case of the parents (34), the numbers were too small to make any reliable statistical generalisation. In the case of the professionals, where they were divided into four groups, it was clearly out of the question to do so. However, I have indicated in the analysis where there were majority or minority views. Their responses are presented in chapters 8 and 10.

To sum up, the interview for parents consisted of three parts: the interview schedule, the vignettes to complement the interview technique, and the questions about child abuse as

framed at the pilot stage. The interview for professionals was in two parts, the interview schedule and the questions about child abuse.

### **3.4. Analysing Data**

Data analysis will evolve. Grounded theory which stresses discovery and theory development methods is utilised (Bryman, 1988, 2004; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Murphy et al., 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). It has been defined as 'theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 12).

All the interviews were recorded unless the participant refused to be taped. In addition, field notes, focusing on fundamental moods, describing the atmosphere, and my reflections upon the interaction, were made as soon as each interview was over. This was because, during the data collection, I needed to pay attention to many contextual factors, which did not get onto the tapes. These might include the crucial non-verbal data of posture, gesture, voice intonation, facial expression, or eye contact (Jones, 1985b) and emotional content such as laughing, crying or sighing. These paralinguistic and linguistic features helped not only to build rapport between the researcher and those being researched but also to obtain good quality of data. All recorded interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher because the production and use of transcripts was very important (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). In order to both familiarise myself with



the data and to get a fuller sense of what the data is about, the researcher transcribed the interview tapes personally, although it was a time-consuming process. After transcription of the data, some of the interviews were translated into English by the researcher, for use in supervision.

Then the translated interview transcripts were coded. Coding is the starting point and an essential part for most forms of qualitative data analysis. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), coding is 'the analytic processes through which data are fractured, conceptualised, and integrated to form theory' (p. 3). Rubin and Rubin (1995) pointed out that 'coding is the process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together similar ideas, concepts, or themes you have discovered, or steps or stages in a process' (p. 238). These definitions lend support to the assumption that during the coding process, new understandings and themes will emerge (Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Fielding and Thomas, 2001) and 'hearing the meaning in the data' will be encouraged (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 240).

A set of translated data was given to my supervisors in order to obtain their views and to reflect them in the data analysis process. It is often called an analytical triangulation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). It may be helpful to increase credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the research interpretation. When themes were identified I sought to verify them by trying to confirm or qualify the findings. At the end of the process, the main identified themes were discussed with the implications in detail in the chapters on findings.

### **3.5. Developing the Research**

At the initial stage, I intended to explore the issue of public awareness, and awareness and knowledge by the professionals of 'child abuse'. We spent some time trying to limit my focus because of the vagueness and broadness of the term 'child abuse'. Gradually, however, and following several lengthy explorative supervisions, we agreed that family patterns, attitudes and behaviour in relation to the upbringing of children should be examined. These will have influenced the construction of 'childhood' and 'child abuse' as concepts and therefore we needed to explore this in the field work.

The pilot interviews were conducted from April to May 2003. The research literature recommends that the research design, including its aims, rationale, and the techniques of data collection should be piloted before it is used for the main fieldwork to enhance the reliability and practicality of the interviews (Kvale, 1996; Marshall, 1997; Silverman, 2001; Mason, 2002; Robson, 2002).

During the pilot stage, the data was collected two ways, by individual in-depth interviews and by group discussions. Four 'ordinary' family members were interviewed in order to capture some of the changes in child rearing and attitudes to it in Korea today and to identify some of the basic traditional beliefs, particularly where those differ markedly from the West. In addition, a series of brief case illustrations regarding abuse were used in conjunction with the semi-structured interviews (an example in Appendix G). Group discussions were conducted with two groups of professionals, social workers and primary school teachers to see what might be regarded as abusive of



children. All the interviews and group discussions were tape-recorded and fully transcribed.

The pilot provided very useful. I had the opportunity to check whether interviewees understood the interview questions and whether there were any difficulties likely to arise from its application to the particular group. Other lessons learnt were in relation to the conduct of the interviews. The in-depth interviews lasted about one and a half hours; each involved taking the interviewees through the interview schedule and case illustrations. This knowledge was used in planning a timetable and in preparing respondents for participation.

However, the most important discoveries were that the respondents did not feel free to answer direct questions about their own experiences as parents and were not really at a stage where they could talk about the concept of child abuse. In the majority of interviewees neither parents nor teachers saw their own behaviour in terms of 'child abuse', i.e., what may be considered as child abuse when done by others, may not be so if done by themselves. Interestingly, as noted earlier, although a large number of researchers have reported that the child abuse problem in Korea is very severe, my interviewees did not agree that it was a serious social problem. This might indicate that, although the majority of studies constantly found that there was a need for awareness of damaging behaviour towards children, there was still a lack of social consensus about this. When very brief case illustrations about abuse were used in the pilot, the interviewees looked very uncomfortable, were reluctant to express their feelings and disclose what they considered private aspects of family life in front of the researcher and tended to give predictable normative answers to questions about various mitigating

circumstances of abusive behaviours. As discussed previously, the Korean cultural norms of shame, face saving, stigma, secrecy and keeping family problems within the family proved too inhibiting for parents to speak to strangers. Their responses to questions about child abuse were also unsatisfactory – it seemed that they were not able to respond to the concept meaningfully. This was evident even when discussing their problems with their children, without reference to child abuse.

Therefore, we decided that the concept of child abuse was simply not well enough understood to use it ‘head on’ in parents’ interviews. Given this, the focus of the study shifted to some extent, to obtaining information as to how far ‘ordinary’ parents are, or are not, aware of the discourse amongst educated professionals about child abuse as a concept and of the criticism of Korean society for being harsh to children. Thus, a significant shift in the content and style of the vignettes was necessary. We agreed that we would use the brief case illustrations about child abuse flexibly without the questions about ‘mitigating circumstances’ because of the inability of participants in the pilot to consider and explore the issues at this level of subtlety. Furthermore, in the interviews with parents, the focus changed from child abuse itself to parental views on the upbringing of children, with particular reference to issues surrounding behaviour. We accepted that much of this would centre on educational matters but it should also try to get at the parents’ perception of their role in the process. Consequently, two longer and multi-staged development vignettes were constructed to make the interviews less personal and take the focus off ‘child abuse’, in order to investigate the way people perceive cases in some detail and to find out how much, and in what ways the parents understand the behaviour of the two children in the vignettes and how they might deal with it (see Appendix E).



In these vignettes, there are three stages to the story related to child development. They illustrate a range of dilemmas or decisions which parents had to make when difficulties arose. At each stage the interviewee is asked a series of specific questions about what they thought the parents (or others) should do when certain issues arose. Also, this invites some subjectivity regarding child rearing practices in relation to child development and there is plenty of scope for choice by the participants themselves. The objective is to provide a basic description of the daily life of children and their behaviour and to identify what is most important to parents and, if possible, any particular areas of conflict or tension.

In this way it is possible to explore a number of different elements which interact in the upbringing of children, thus bringing choices nearer to the kind of situations which people face in reality. Underlining vignettes, there are various issues: the choice of disciplinary methods; knowledge of norms of child development; the weight which parents put on 'heredity' and genes etc; how parents think their reactions to their children affect children's behaviour; the impact of sibling relationships (see Appendix E). Hence, they have been constructed to attract the interest of the respondents and stimulate their imagination (Alexander and Becker, 1978; Finch and Mason, 1993). In addition, the characters and the story described are believable and contain realistic elements, in order to elicit in turn their true feelings and an honest and frank response.

The interview schedule for parents went well in the pilot and was used with little change. In relation to teachers, we thought that they could talk about 'real' situations

based on their working experiences with children and their families using the same 'domains' but not tackling child abuse head on.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

The subject of ethics has always been essential to social workers engaged both in research and in practice. A proposal for social workers' ethics was put forward by Banks (2001) who compared 15 national social work codes of ethics. The four values common to all the examined codes of ethics were respect for the individual person, promotion of user self-determination, promotion of social justice, and working for the interests of others. In addition, the British Association of Social Worker (BASW) and Social Research Association (SRA) have formulated codes of ethics. These are the basis for principles such as informed consent, non-deception, the absence of psychological or physical harm, privacy, confidentiality, and a commitment to collecting and presenting reliable and valid empirical materials (Clifford, 2000). It is crucial to be concerned about ethical issues which might arise in relations between the researcher and participants in the course of doing research because the qualitative researcher works with informants as individual human beings rather than objects or numbers (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Bryman, 2004). The researcher may affect people. For example, the process of being taken through a directed, reflective process affects the person being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they did not know, or least were not fully aware of, before the interview (Patton, 2002).



Therefore, research ethics, including ideas about informed consent, the right to privacy, prevention of harm and power relationships are discussed here. They were agreed between the researcher and the researched before starting the research.

### **Informed Consent: Self-Determination and the Subject's Right to Freedom**

To begin with, the principle of informed consent is one of the primary ethical responsibilities. The concept of informed consent can be summarised as the right of participants to be informed that they are being interviewed for research purposes and for them to understand the nature of the research. To this end, 'prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study' (Bryman, 2004, p. 511).

The informed consent of participants was obtained prior to the commencement of the study. Participants were informed orally and in writing about the intended study and their role. This meant that they had the right to refuse. To this end, a letter of information was included for the interviewees with the initial appointment letter sent by the researcher. The letter contained a brief explanation of the study and its purpose, plus a statement that I would be contacting the participants by telephone in the next few days to see if they wished to take part. Verbal consent would be ascertained on the phone and if the interviewee was willing to take part, written consent would be gained at the interview. It made clear that taking part was entirely voluntary. At subsequent interviews, if there were any, to ensure informed consent, they were redirected to the

consent form they had signed and asked to verify that the consent still stood. It is essential for any research study (Murphy et al., 1998; Shaw and Gould, 2002).

### **Respect for Privacy: Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The second area of ethical concern is related to the right to privacy. It may be linked to the notion of informed consent because it is provided on the basis of a detailed understanding of what the research participant's involvement is. This means that it is important to make sure that the participants' privacy will be respected before they allow access. It is a fact that the qualitative researcher may come into possession of more sensitive information about participants than those using quantitative methods. For that reason the assurance (safeguard) of confidentiality that is a major protection from invasion of privacy is crucial in qualitative research (Punch, 2000; Bulmer, 2001; Patton, 2002). My own training and experience as a social worker gives me an in-depth understanding of the central importance of guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality. Kvale (1996) has suggested that the protection of informants' privacy by changing their names and identifying features are an important issue in the reporting of interviews. All data was treated in a way that protected the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants involved in the study. In order to avoid invasion of privacy, tapes and transcripts were kept in confidence and only the researcher and supervisors had access to individuals' information. Individuals were not named in any report in order to secure confidentiality as far as possible. For parents, their family names were changed and for professionals, an impersonal numbering was given to each respondent. However, it is not possible to report findings in an entirely anonymous way. This is because, given the potentially small numbers of relevant people in particular settings, professionals may be



recognised, even when names are not mentioned. None the less, when I produce any kind of publication, pseudonyms for professionals and the organisations involved will be used to assure the anonymity of those who participate in the research process. In addition, I have transcribed the interview tapes personally in order to preserve confidentiality.

### **Prevention of Harm**

The third concern is harm to those being studied. As Fontana and Frey (1998) mentioned 'because the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them' (p. 70). Participants in qualitative studies are particularly vulnerable to invasion of privacy, unwanted identification, breach of confidentiality and trust, misrepresentation, and exploitation (Punch, 2000). Therefore, avoidance of harm will be considered carefully and special efforts will be devoted throughout the research process to ensuring the well-being of participants.

It is not easy to anticipate the nature of "harm". In this context, there was a possibility of potential harm to participants both during the process of data collection and as a result of the publication of data (Bulmer, 2001). Participants might experience high levels of stress, guilt, damage to self-esteem and anxiety as a consequence of being asked about their private family life, including their parenting beliefs, child rearing practices, their awareness of child development, and their own experience as a child. Also, it was at least possible that there might be participants in a position where they were or had been involved in abusive parenting or they had experienced abuse in their childhood. Because of this, they might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about the

issues (Murphy et al., 1998). As a result, the participants might withdraw from the study. That being the case, issues of prevention of harm are important to both the researcher and participants particularly when they talk about sensitive issues. Therefore, I tried my utmost to 'minimise disturbance both to subjects themselves and to the subjects' relationships with their environment' (Bryman, 2004, p. 510) and maximise protection for participation throughout by maintaining informed consent and guaranteeing confidentiality. Moreover, I had decided that if such harm did occur I would provide appropriate intervention such as referring participants to suitable agencies with their agreement or improving their access to social resources.

### **Power Relationships: Empowering Research Participants**

Finally, there is the question of power relationships. Feminist researchers have contributed to reducing the hierarchical relationship between researchers and their participants (Harding, 1987; Acker et al., 1991; Williams and May, 1996; Symon and Cassel, 1998). Traditionally, there has existed a form of hierarchical or power relationship between the researcher and the researched. It is probably because the researchers have considered themselves as experts and taken a dominant position over the interviewees (Acker et al., 1991). Under these circumstances, it is not easy to establish rapport and trust between the researcher and informants in order to facilitate the disclosure of information from participants. Feminists have attempted to deal with the issue of an exploitative relationship between the researcher and respondents. They believe that it is important to use the research as an opportunity to contribute to the



empowerment<sup>10</sup> of participants. It is helpful for research participants who are relatively disempowered or vulnerable to gain power over their lives through a number of strategies. These may include the researcher paying attention to the voices and feelings of the participants during the research process and through the results, treating them respectfully throughout the research, providing potential participants with information on research goals, process, or results, so that they can make a truly informed choice regarding participation (Thompson, 2001). Therefore, the main role of the researcher in interviews with participants is to act as an active informer as well as a good and interested listener. Yet, there are fundamentally different power relationships in different types of research between researcher and researched (King, 1994). This was less likely to be the case in interviews with professionals, where the researcher had relatively little power and participants were able to obstruct, refuse to cooperate and exert power over the researcher because they were characterised as authoritative figures in Korean society. In order to cope with this problem, it is necessary to be respectful of their expert knowledge and confident of the worth of what I am doing and of my own expertise as a qualified social worker.

It is important that the interviewer should attempt to minimise status differences and do away with the traditional hierarchical situation in interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 1998). In this study, I tried to equalise the relationship between myself as a researcher and the interviewees.

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<sup>10</sup> In this study, empowerment is defined as a process of enabling people to master their environment and achieve self-determination through the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and emotional as well as material resources, by which meaningful social roles are fulfilled (Banks, 2001; Thomas and Pierson, 2002).

In this chapter, the choice of qualitative research, its use in collecting data from in-depth interviews and the documents and the rationale for adopting vignettes have been discussed. In addition, the ways in which the data was transcribed and analysed and the research was developed have been considered. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations. Various ethical issues and dilemmas which actually arose during the fieldwork period are considered in more detail in the next chapter.



## **Chapter 4. Reflections on the Research Process**

These qualitative interviews undertaken during the fieldwork were based on face-to-face interviews with fifty participants. Each interview lasted from approximately two and a half to three hours for families and from one to one and a half hours for professionals and was tape-recorded with the respondents' permission.

### **4.1. Families**

Before each interview began I explained something of the aims of my interview and I indicated that I would like to tape-record the interviews so that I would have an accurate account of what they had to say. They hesitated but there were no interviewees who refused to be interviewed. However, before the interviews commenced I was asked several questions. 'What would happen to the tapes?' I indicated that all the tapes would be kept and would be transcribed by me. Further questions followed about what I would do with the material when I had transcribed it. I explained that the transcripts would be used to write my study and that the only other people who would be allowed to see the transcripts would be my supervisors after they had been translated into English. This was the turning point in overcoming their initial feelings (such as nerves and anxiety) about recording. Once I explained what would happen to the information, the participants did not mind any more because it would be translated into English,

names would be altered and the full version would only be published in England, not Korea.

## **Building Relationships**

There has been discussion concerning the importance of developing trust and confidence between the researcher and those who are researched when carrying out qualitative interviews (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991; Hyde, 1994; Burgess, 1997; Fontana and Frey, 2000; May, 2001). Relationships are crucial in Korean culture, particularly in relation to gaining access and carrying out the interviews. In order to access someone, a contact person whom the interviewees already know or whom they are likely to respect or accept as an authority should be identified. For that reason, an interview could not be set up without the intervention of a third party (a contact person) on my behalf. I tried to establish a rapport with the informants and to develop relationships characterized by openness and trust.

To this end, first of all, I had an informal chat with parents, exploring their relationship with the contact person and their family composition. I was often asked about my relationship with the contact person as well as my age, my career, and my marital status. It is essential to make small talk with people before a detailed conversation can occur to establish the trust, rapport and confidence of those with whom interviews are conducted. Secondly, the focus on relationships was invariably underscored by the sharing of refreshments. Eating together is a sign of trust and friendship in Korean culture. If I refused someone's offer of food, it would be a rejection of their friendship. This is the Korean way of building relationships.



## **Facing Challenges**

There were several challenges which I had to overcome during the conduct of interviews.

One of the biggest personal challenges for me in doing individual in-depth interviews with parents was the sense that the interview process often feels like an invasion of the informant's privacy. This is to be expected because child abuse is seen as a family responsibility rather than a wider societal responsibility. Being brought up in Korea myself, I could understand this, and therefore, I was prepared for the difficulties in getting informants to talk about sensitive topics, which they had probably never discussed openly before with others. As one interviewee commented, 'it isn't so easy to talk to you because I don't know you.' All the participants had never discussed these matters with anyone before, even close friends, apart from their spouse, because it was a family matter, not anyone else's business. As a consequence, I realised that there were limits to the candour which I could expect since I was a non family member. Thus I spoke to the respondents at length to reassure them about the respect of confidentiality and anonymity in research. Moreover, I approached the parents and conducted the interviews at various times of the day on various days of the week and at weekends and, as much as possible, interviewed the respondents privately, free from the distractions of family life. However a few interviews were conducted with the spouse present because they thought it was convenient for them. Most of the interviews were conducted in the kitchen, living room or dining room, but some interviews with respondents whose contact person was their children's teacher were conducted in the classroom in their

children's school because they did not want to invite me to their house. They may possibly have been worried about endangering privacy because their house is their private space.

The greatest difficulty derived from the limited number of fathers who were willing to have me interview them. At the initial stage of my planning, I intended to explore only the mothers' attitudes and behaviour towards the upbringing of children. I knew that they were much more accessible than fathers and I anticipated that it would be difficult to schedule a time when both parents could be present. Also, the mothers' responses were expected to represent the views of both parents because it is not the responsibility of men to be involved either with household work or caring for children, as mothers assume primary responsibility for child care duties (Macdonald, 1996; Doe, 2000; Song, 2001; Won and Pascall, 2004). However, in the transfer panel, two examiners recommended me to consider interviewing fathers. I was told that they understood interviewing fathers might be difficult given the settings I would be working within; however, there was the problem that, by excluding them, I might be unintentionally reinforcing my view that fathers have only a marginal role in the family. Of course, this was good advice. In order to reduce the likelihood of this occurring, I changed my plan so that I could interview both parents.

However, gaining permission from husbands for the face-to-face interview was not always easy. It was really hard to make an appointment with fathers. The majority of fathers were extremely busy due to the demands of work while participation in qualitative interviewing can be time consuming. They leave early in the morning and come back home late at night and even work weekends. They are always tired and



under stress. If they have time, it is only Sunday. It meant that they were only available on Sundays. On Sunday, I undertook four interviews with fathers from early morning to late at night. At that time, I usually apologized for disturbing them and I felt very sorry for their children because the fathers should have been involved with playing with their children instead of being interviewed by me.

Furthermore, some of those whom I approached to interview were not interested in taking part in the study. Fathers, compared to mothers, were very reluctant to spare some time to reflect upon and give their opinion on this issue. To overcome the men's hesitation, I had to use all my inventiveness and sensitivity.

I remember one case particularly. After the interview with the mother, we agreed she would inform her husband soon about the research study and me. Weeks passed without a reply. Finally, she asked me to call her husband to discuss the matter once more. When I called him to arrange an interview, he asked me whether he could be interviewed by telephone, because, rather than having to set up an interview time and make arrangements to be present, he preferred to be phoned. The reason given by him was that he did not have the time to participate in a face-to-face interview and it afforded a measure of privacy. From his point of view, it was more private. I was concerned that interviewing by telephone might have a negative effect on the data quality although some research has pointed out the advantages of telephone interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). I would be deprived of seeing the interviewee's informal and non verbal behaviours and cues from personal characteristics. The result of my struggle to encourage him to partake in the study has meant that he is represented within the sample. After I had carried out the interview

with him it became clear that he was scared and embarrassed to do so rather than the reasons given earlier.

On another occasion, one father, whose wife made the arrangement with me without listening to his opinion, tried to avoid me. To this end, he left home early and came back home at midnight and even went out at weekends. I assured his wife it was fine with me. If he did not want to be involved in the interview, I did not want to push him. His wife said, her husband told her he did not know anything about child rearing, so he could not say anything about it. His wife's opinions and thoughts would be the same as his because his wife carried the full burden of responsibility for their children. However, she wanted her husband's participation because she thought it could be helpful for him to have more of a sense of child discipline and education. Her husband cancelled the arranged interview without any notice. When I arrived at his home, I was informed by his wife that he was ill. When I asked to rearrange the interview with him, he did not want to. Clearly, rather than refuse to be interviewed, he became ill or feigned illness just before my scheduled meeting. This might be due to the fact that Koreans are nonconfrontational, sensitive, indirect, and concerned with preserving face. Therefore, of course, I never knew whether this was his way of saying no, or if he was genuinely ill although the former seems more likely. I could not make contact with him before I left Korea.

Thirdly, Koreans are not familiar with qualitative semi-structured interviews. As noted earlier, the majority of existing research in Korea, no matter what the topic, has been dominated by quantitative methods such as large scale surveys. In some cases, although interviewees were notified I would like to interview them, they understood it to be a



structured type of interview, such as that used in survey research. They expected me to bring a questionnaire, ask them each question and write down their answers. But it was not that kind of interview. Therefore, it seems to me, they found the interview with me fairly difficult, at least until we had started it. However, once the conversation began the interviewees talked very easily. They were encouraged to talk about details of their personal experiences and feelings. Another possible reason for them finding the interview difficult is that they were not used to thinking about the issues or discussing them with others. Traditionally, study has been done by rote memory and there has been no room for the development or cultivation of independent thinking or value judgements. This can be seen by the fact that since the aftermath of the Korean War, the American education system has been fully employed by the Koreans and, while some aspects of American educational practice fit well, some do not. Group tests and multiple choice exams have been successfully introduced. However, learning through discussion and one-on-one learning was introduced but failed, at least in part, because of overcrowded classes (Korea's high teacher-student ratio). Study by rote repetition is still prevalent in Korea.

This problem can be exemplified by the fact that when vignettes were used, most interviewees seemed quite nervous and they took them very seriously. It seemed to me they looked like children who were being given an exam paper. Some of them told me, 'I guess I haven't thought enough about it to give a good answer right now' or a head-shaking gesture which suggested that they found the question a hard one. It seems that, in response to vignettes, they were tempted to give me a socially predictable, desirable, carefully thought out answer which they thought I wanted to hear. Starting was, as previously mentioned, quite difficult, however all was well once participants became

more accustomed to the format of the interview. As I anticipated, they were able to talk freely about their attitudes and feelings because the stories which were used in the vignettes distanced them from their true life story. The responses gained from using vignettes were very encouraging and descriptively rich. Interestingly, I was able to recognize a change in response when they were asked what they would do if they were in that situation. What actually happened was that they altered their story slightly. For instance, when they were asked about the importance of a university degree, their first response was that if children do not want to study, parents should not push them and should help them to do what they really want to do. However, when I asked the question – ‘what would you do if you were their parents’, they hesitated for a while, and then, they told me, if the children were their own, they would probably not be able to give up on them so easily. They stated no matter what others’ opinions may be, the necessity of a university degree cannot be denied in our society. It gave me an insight into what they actually did in practice. Consequently, it could be argued that there were differences between their expressed attitudes and their parenting practice. Their anxieties about what they should discuss still remained even after the interview had finished. Most of the interviewees told me ‘if you had given me the vignettes before our meeting, I would have told you much more. I couldn’t think appropriately because I was quite nervous and perplexed about what you wanted me to say.’ It might be due to the fact that traditional Koreans are extremely sensitive to other people’s criticism, and are heavily reliant on external sanctions for good behaviour (Lee, 1999c; Choi, 1997). To respond to this, I showed appreciation of those who gave up their time and allowed me to interview them and ask questions about what they probably considered to be very sensitive topics. I attempted to reassure them that their answers had provided a rich source of data. I felt that the majority of the respondents were happy to discuss many



aspects of their views and attitudes, which could be valuable resources for my study, with me.

Another challenge which I encountered concerned my position as insider-outsider in Korean society. On the one hand, being a Korean affected the response of the participants and it was a distinct advantage. Cultural traits determine the child rearing method of a society, yet parenting also moulds and strengthens the traits of a certain culture. Thus, understanding the characteristics of a culture fully was quite helpful in comprehending child rearing practice in Korean culture. Moreover, one of the factors that may have encouraged my interviewees to give me valuable data was related to our age differences. My position was that of a married woman who has not yet experienced the raising of children. Under such circumstances, talking and teaching me about their child rearing methods as experienced seniors, became a source of pleasure for them. I attempted to remain silent while encouraging respondents with a friendly smile and frequent nods of agreement.

On the other hand, my outsider status enabled me to recruit some participants because they were curious about a doctoral student who is studying overseas. After the interview, I was often asked whether their parenting style was right or not, whether they had given me good answers, what I was studying, and whether my parents were proud of me. This was said, in an envious voice, although I never posed as somebody superior to them, or as a judge of their actions and I did not pretend to be smart. Furthermore, they called their children and introduced them to me, and then they said to their children something to the effect: 'Look! If you study very hard, you could be like her. She is studying abroad and will be a doctor. How wonderful she is!' They admired me all the

more for my status of doctoral student, which was the key to success from their point of view. I was already a good role model for them to encourage their children to study hard. In addition, before I left them, I was asked whether I could revisit them if I received a PhD degree in order to remind their children that if they put more effort into study, the better their performance would be, like me. That was an embarrassing situation for me.

Finally, the use of personal interviewing is a very sensitive area which often raises ethical dilemmas (Fontana and Frey, 1998; Punch, 2000, Bulmer, 2001). The feelings of the researcher about the difficulties and distress which informants may be experiencing must be managed, while, at the same time, it is also important to keep lines of communication open to those who are in a position to offer support or help. In connection with this, I had to be careful about how I approached the sensitive topic of the respondent's parenting style.

On rare occasions, one of my questions would provoke an angry response although I had anticipated this might be the case when dealing with ethical issues regarding emotional harm. On one occasion, one father demanded to know, in an angry voice, whether he was obliged to answer any and all questions, especially regarding his own experience as a child. At that point, I did not push him, to avoid worsening of the relationship and although I did not fully comprehend why he was so upset, I understood he was upset when we discussed abusive behaviour which might be harmful to children. It transpired, as he went on to tell me, that he had been ill treated emotionally in his childhood by his step mother. He was constantly denied affection and denied love in a number of different ways. He was continually shouted at, threatened, teased, taunted or



made to feel worthless. She failed to meet his basic needs such as providing food, clothing and warmth. It resulted in him being unable to enjoy a secure and happy childhood. His father did not know about it because he was very busy. He decided run away from home after his father was killed by a car while crossing the street. At that time he was 13 years old. What I learned from this was that when people react with hostility, withdrawal or eagerness this can usually tell me something about the dynamic of the situation. The interview made him think about his childhood. It is likely that he recalled painful events that perhaps paralleled his own. I feared disapproval from him and that my talking openly about child abuse might create panic, anxiety and discomfort in his mind and I was uncomfortable when my questions opened wounds. Remarkably, he had been able to manage his unhappy experience by himself without any help and share his feelings and thoughts openly. I acknowledged and supported what he had done to overcome his difficulties and impairments in the past. He was very proud of himself because he had overcome his difficulties and his wife agreed with that.

## **4.2. Professionals**

In order to address the research questions, a total of sixteen professionals were interviewed. These included medical doctors, social workers, and school teachers, as well as child care workers. Each group had four participants. All of them were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

Before the formal interview started, we had a chat to get to know each other for a while. They frequently asked me why I had decided to study abroad, particularly in England, and my career as a social worker. Usually they told me that they wanted to be helpful for my research, asking me what I wanted to know. The majority of participants were likely to be either sufficiently relaxed to enter into a thorough exploration of the issues under discussion, or trusting enough to share their thoughts with the interviewer. After the interview was completed, I was asked about the situation regarding child protection and what issues were given attention in social work areas in Britain. It seemed that they wanted to learn about the latest development in Britain in terms of the issues of child abuse from me. After finishing the real interview, I often spent time discussing this with some of the informants.

In general, all of them were very supportive of the research. However, despite this, several issues, including my own emotional struggles were encountered while doing the fieldwork.

With regard to power relations, some groups of professionals are characterised as authority figures in Korean society. They are also proud of their status and their professional knowledge. In contrast, my current relatively low status, being a doctoral student, could be a disadvantage in conducting the interviews with professionals in various settings. Under these circumstances, in order to handle the possibility that these kinds of problems could happen with them, I tried to remain as innocuous as possible so as not to cause 'offence' and to avoid showing off my knowledge in their area, while at the same time, not leaving myself open to being 'patronised' for being overly humble or



nervous (King, 1994, p. 23). I believed that behaving in this way could help to get relevant and appropriate data from them.

Contact with the majority of professionals had been made before I went back to Korea. With the help of several contacts, as noted before, after I gained the agreement of the professionals to take part in interviews, invitation letters together with a brief research proposal were sent to these professionals. All the professionals seemed interested in the interview and no professionals refused to answer a question or failed to treat a point seriously. Two of the doctors and the director of the nursery who agreed to meet with me to do an interview wanted to know what kind of questions they would be asked in advance. At that time I felt very uncomfortable because it was difficult to be sure what they really wanted to know. After consultation with my supervisor about how to deal with it, I replied telling him that I wished to deal with certain issues and then listed them, but not in detail. When I met them they seemed fine and the interview with them went well.

Although I successfully completed my fieldwork, the initial stages were fraught with problems concerning gaining permission to conduct research in the particular social settings. In order to get a sample of the professionals, I approached several service agencies and individual professionals in Seoul and attempted to convince them of the validity and confidentiality of the research and to gain their permission for the study to proceed. Most of the agencies and professionals were very helpful and encouraged my enthusiasm for this study. However, despite the expectation that the social work setting was more accessible compared to others, obtaining the informed consent of social workers proved to be more complex than I had anticipated. Only one agency of those

approached refused to participate in this study. This is one of the leading child protection centres in Korea. The first time I made contact, the manager of the agency seemed to hesitate about taking part in the interview, but she agreed to participate. However, on the morning of the date we had arranged to meet, I received a call from her. She said her agency could not cooperate with this sort of research on the grounds that they were concerned that interviewing might break the confidentiality of the children they work with and it might harm her agency. Rejection and opposition are most likely to occur when the people approached do not understand what the researcher is doing and what they wish to know (Burgess, 1991). I made it clear that if, occasionally, they revealed sensitive or personal information about their clients, I would try my best to shield the identity of individuals, and to reconstruct events from a variety of sources. In addition, I attempted to reassure her that I was not there to criticise their agency but rather to know how they work. Nevertheless, a guarantee of the confidentiality of a detailed interview was not enough to change her mind. I considered carefully why I could not get permission to interview. Perhaps, even though I had presented not only myself but also my proposed research, the sudden presence of a stranger raises suspicion as motives could be questioned. Or, she may have been reluctant to participate because the interview would involve a significant amount of her time. My impression was that she and her agency were trying to hide something and were not being wholly open with me. This may be due to the fact that, fundamentally, they may have had information that they were reluctant to share, they may have been mistrustful of me and my role or simply they lacked an understanding of qualitative research. However, the probable reason I was denied access, according to someone who was a member of the agency, was that the interview would have been a burden or risk to her because it is a qualitative one, rather than a survey research or pilot study. She



suggested that she would have done it if it had been either a survey or pilot study. She was worried about the fact that whatever she told me would be quoted directly in the study and the director of the agency was quite sensitive about that. She was concerned that she might be led to let something slip that she should not have said and that would cause problems for her with the director of the agency. For that reason, they decided that they would not take part in this study. The implication of this refusal is that the agency staff are not only anxious about the nature of the research but their procedures regarding child protection might be criticised.

Looking back, it seems as if the only uncomfortable feeling I anticipated was the anxiety of the first days in the field, the worry about professionals' approval. But other uncomfortable feelings arose too when I undertook the interviews with social workers. When I discovered one of the social workers who was working as a social welfare public servant had radically different attitudes from my own, there was tension and I became increasingly uncomfortable. It became clear that he supported the idea that parenting whether it is appropriate or not was a totally family affair that nobody should interfere with. The parents' conduct, even if this may cause harm towards children, was not seen as child abuse, according to him. In addition, he believed that the rights of parents to discipline their children should be respected. He did not think reporting child abuse was really his duty, although he was supposed make a report when presented with evidence of abuse. The reason was that, according to him, he was always busy and there was more important work waiting for him. I expected that, in some respects, our similar educational background would make social workers one of the easiest professional groups to interview for research purposes. However, this did not happen. We had a completely different perspective on many aspects. I felt a tension between

accepting what he said and wanting to hold onto a particular view. I was disappointed and, at times, angry and I even felt betrayed. My disappointment and anger made me feel like a stranger. Actually, I did not mind experiencing negative feelings because struggling with myself about the appropriate role for the researcher was not unfamiliar, given my experience of similar conflicts during social work practice. The problem was that these feelings should be directed against him. It was difficult to manage these kinds of negative feelings towards him but I knew it should be managed because it could make it difficult for me to sustain a close connection with him. To this end, I tried to understand him and managed my emotions mostly by putting them aside. He did not strive to make a good impression and just showed how he normally behaves which was what I wanted him to do. Getting close to the participants in a study is the only way to know what is really going on in the field (Kleinman, 1991; Hall and Hall, 1996). If I am not on their side, then I cannot fully understand why they do what they do. Ironically, however, doing so helped me keep my cool and maintain friendly, but not close, relations with him. I could not ignore my feelings of anger and disappointment. In analysing my reactions I recognise what I wanted him to say or what I wanted to hear from him and my emotions expressed my values. I asked myself, which of my values was being threatened, where are these strong negative feelings from? I knew that my anger meant I was making a moral judgment and that this was 'wrong' for social workers to do and I did so on the basis of social work values. Talking about feelings I fear is not easy, but necessary. In retrospect, I believe I truly understand what he is going through. It was found that dealing with the messiness of emotions is difficult and takes time, but emotional discomfort should be overcome. Now, I recognise that feelings also become resources for understanding the phenomenon under study. My expectations and feelings not only affect the research but



also become part of the process itself. Dealing with my fears and other unpleasant feelings may have a brighter side, for it allows me to gain a deeper knowledge about others and myself.

In addition to the above considerations, as far as interruptions are concerned, some interviews were interrupted by phone calls from family, students and friends of the interviewees. Ideally, I wished to complete the work without interference. The phone calls, on the one hand, did not take a long time, so the interview could start again easily. On the other hand, there was one situation which was difficult for me to gauge how best to handle. One Saturday afternoon, I interviewed a school teacher, Mr. Park, in a staff room where he was working. He was supposed to be alone there, but there was another teacher, one of his bosses, who was the deputy principal. This was not an anticipated situation. Unfortunately, there was only one warm room in the school on an extremely cold day. It seemed that the interviewee did not mind the presence of his boss, but I did. The interview with him was interrupted several times by the deputy teacher in response to a question about whether he believed in the effectiveness of corporal punishment in school, and what behaviour constitutes child abuse. Sometimes they expressed different views about these topics and continued to argue their point of view. In this circumstance, I should have asked the deputy principal to stop interrupting the interview and tell him that if he wanted to talk about the research topic, I would listen to his opinions after conducting the interview with Mr. Park. However, in this unwelcome situation, I tried to say that to him, but to be honest, I found it harder than I had anticipated. This is partly because, for me, as a Korean who is taught to respect older people, speaking like that to a senior is considered to be impolite. Similarly, for Mr. Park, it was also not easy to express his thoughts as the deputy principal is still

considered to be a powerful authority within the school. However, even though I hesitated about telling him because I wanted to be polite and did not want to upset him, as a researcher, in the end, I succeeded in making a comment about his behaviour. He said that he did not want to be involved in the interview as he had to leave the office soon and said with a smile he was just enjoying correcting Mr. Park's opinion. He left the room after 3 o'clock, and hence, we could continue our interview without any interruption.

Interestingly, it was observed that there was a certain hierarchy in the workplace. The interviews with the medical doctors, the director and deputy director of nurseries, and the head teacher were done in their offices during their busy working hours, as can be seen Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Where the Interviews were Conducted

	Workplace in working hours	Workplace out of working hours	Own home
Medical doctors	4		
Social workers		4	
Teachers	1	1	2
Nursery staff	2	2	

This was probably possible because of their higher positions in their work place. In addition, when the interviewees were introduced by someone in a higher position, the interviews took place in the workplace during their working hours. For example, the directors of the several nurseries, either private or public, helped me in making contact with one of their staff for the interview. Surprisingly, when I asked about the possibility of interviewing one of their staff, they made the arrangement with me immediately



without listening to their member of staff's opinion. They knew that if their staff were asked to participate in the interview, they would because staff are supposed to obey their boss. They were sure that their staff would do it and their staff did. It is assumed that even if their staff did not want to be involved in the interview, they could not say so in front of their boss. In those cases, the interviews were conducted in their working hours in their workplace with the permission of their bosses. These staff appeared to be very shy at the start of the interview because they had not taken part in this kind of research, but all was well once they became more familiar with it.

However, in cases where the contact was not in a higher position than the interviewees or was not connected with their work, I had to wait until they had finished their work and the interviewees preferred to have the interview out of their working time. For instance, I had an appointment at 6 p.m. with a front-line social worker, one hour later than she was supposed to finish her work. When I arrived at her office, there were still several social workers and my interviewee had not yet finished her work. After waiting three hours, she decided to bring her work home and then we could start the interview. I was very sorry for her but she said she normally took her work home when she could not finish it. At that time, two social workers still remained at work. It was not an unusual situation in the front-line social work practice field. Similarly, some interviews took place in the evening because of their long working hours. Several participants could not make the time for an interview during the day. Therefore, they took place late at night or on Sunday. This was a difficult situation both for the researcher and the researched.

In this chapter, I have tried to explain what actually happened during the fieldwork period, such as what the issues were, how they arose, and how they were handled. This includes my own self-assessment of what I have learned through carrying out the research. Once I had been in the field for a while and collected a considerable amount of data, I saw or heard things that have given me a deeper personal understanding than I had before. For example, throughout the fieldwork, I came to see how parental attitudes and behaviours are shaped and realised it should be understood as a socially constructed phenomenon. Furthermore, I realised my expectations and feelings not only affected the research, but also became part of the process itself. The process of engaging in qualitative research has been a very useful experience for me. I know that not all problems can be anticipated, but I believe my experiences contribute to learning about the qualitative social work research process.



## **Chapter 5. Parenting Matters: Gender related Issues**

In this chapter, I shall discuss and analyse some of the themes that emerged during interviews with both fathers and mothers and the attitudes and perceptions about raising children which were expressed along with related issues.

### **5.1. Strategies for Managing Child Care**

Throughout the interviews, it was found that the vast majority of women were primarily responsible for child care and household management. Evidently, they remain predominantly the parent who holds the children's well being foremost in mind and takes responsibility for ensuring that needs are covered. This situation prevails regardless of whether or not both the mother and father are employed.

There are various child care arrangements based on what kind of resources parents have and their beliefs about what is best for their children. These choices reflect a diverse mixture of carers, cost and quality. This is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Distribution of Sample regarding Child Care

Child care patterns	Single-income families	Double-income families
Mainly mother + (Care facility)	4	1
Mainly mother + Grandparents (maternal) + (Care facility)	3	
Mainly mother + Grandparents (paternal) + (Care facility)	1	1
Grandparents (paternal) + (Care facility)		2
Mainly mother + Maid + (Care facility)	2	
Housekeeper (living together)		1
Home alone		3
Total	10	8

Almost all single-income families seem to be very traditional when focusing on the surface organizational structure of who provides family income and who takes care of the children. That is, the father takes the breadwinner role and the mother takes the homemaker role, which includes being the primary caregiver for the children. Almost half of those who are at home full-time do not have anyone to help with the children and they are seen as providing care and nurturing the man and their children. They do the majority of child care and domestic chores. In most cases, men are oriented by stereotypical gender roles and the mother's work contribution at home is undervalued in the public domain. Ironically, even women themselves are not liberated from the idea that they have to do this alone and do not see care giving responsibilities as unfair. The reason is very simple. It is because their husbands work outside the home whereas they do not. Full-time housewives and their husbands respond typically:

*I take care of them [children] most of the time. However busy I am, I don't ask for favours from others because I stay at home, it's my job. I have been looking after them*



*ever since they were born. ... On the odd occasions, I can just leave them by themselves and they are fine on their own as our eldest son is quite big now (Ms. Ahn with two children 9 and 6 years old)*

*I believe that the mother should really take care of her own child till he/she is at least 36 months old, for stability (Ms. Choi)*

*He [my husband] is a very conservative person, and believes that a mother should raise the children and do the housework, and the housework shouldn't be divided even if the mother works. He insists that I should work if I can be confident about doing both raising children and housework well, and if I cannot, then I should give up the job and just focus on bringing up the children (Ms. Yang)*

*Traditionally, the father is the leader and responsible for the well being of the family. The mother spends most of the time with the children, and plays the role of educating and guiding them to grow up to be good people (Mr. Ban)*

However, the daily responsibility, the countless hours spend with the child, the work and caring involved in raising the child could be a source of stress for these mothers. Even if women do not participate in the labour force, as Ms. Choi explains, they find it difficult a lot of the time because parenting is a complex and stressful role, especially without their spouse's participation in parenting. Sometimes, for that reason, external support is given by their parents, either maternal or paternal, or maids, as some respondents mention:

*Although I am a full time housewife, without such help I would be too stressed out to stand it. In my case, I used to take our son to my mother's at least once or twice a week. ... I'd leave our son there, and go to the sauna or just relax some place once a week (Ms. Choi with one child 28 months old and a second expected soon)*

*Anything related to our children, including education has to be done by me. Everything is my responsibility. There are times when my husband is off work, for example, during a holiday, and he takes care of the children, but that does not happen often. Therefore, when I go out, my mother-in-law is in charge (Ms. Yoo living with her parents-in-law)*

One strategy for managing child care, as already mentioned briefly, is sharing care giving with grandparents. Interestingly, although industrialisation and urbanisation has shifted from the extended towards a nuclear family system, grandparents who raised their grandchildren or participate with day care were found in both single and double-income families. One reason is that Korean parents tend to view child care responsibilities as a personal duty rather than a social problem, they therefore accept the care giving role throughout the life cycle. Under Confucian familism traditions, the Korean welfare regime presumes that the extended family is the primary welfare provider. In particular, grandparents have been regarded as an important and feasible alternative for child care.

Another important reason for this is that the formal care service is inadequate in terms of accessibility and service quality. The practical reason for depending on informal care is associated with the lack of availability of formal child care provision. Public child care is targeted at the children of the poorest families, under the Livelihood Protection Act. Accordingly poverty is the basis for determining eligibility.<sup>11</sup> There are also other provisions for school age children, namely 'after school study groups' run by a local

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<sup>11</sup> According to the Infant Care Act (Chapter 3, Article 16, 17), priority for a place of public child care facilities is supposed to be given in the following order (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2004). That is, children in

- 1) The poorest families who qualify under the National Basic Livelihood Security Act,
- 2) Lone-mothers' families who qualify under the Mother and Fatherless Child Welfare Act and Lone-fathers' families supported by guidelines from the Ministry of Health and Welfare,
- 3) Low income families excepting 1), 2),
- 4) Broken families or double-income families,
- 5) Normal families.



community welfare centre and 16 primary schools sponsored by the government, but the conditions for those who can use those facilities are similar to day care facilities for pre school age children. Therefore, 'ordinary' (working) parents and their children are rarely considered for public child care services. Among the children of my interviewees, nobody had a place in a public facility operated by a local authority. Some of them may be eligible but they did not like the offer. Perhaps the most basic reason is that the quality of child care facilities is not guaranteed and there are no proper care giving adults parents can rely on. This is partly because there are various beliefs regarding public nurseries and nannies.

*I have not yet found a child care centre that I consider reliable ... the overall environment did not seem suitable, and the staff did not seem very enthusiastic either. My impression of day care is that there are not enough staff around so that each staff member has to look after many children. The children there did not seem cheerful or happy so I did not think it was good. I was not happy about many things (Ms. Choi)*

*My parents-in-law have heard from somewhere that the nannies feed the child some alcohol or sleeping pills and leave them to sleep all the time (Ms. Lee)*

*One of my friends said the nursery is terribly crowded, the staff let the children watch videos all day and they feed the children instant food (Ms. Kim)*

One mother who is a teacher in a primary school says she has been taking her 7-year-old son to the school at Kang-Book, where she works, ever since her son started primary school. They leave home at 7.30 a.m. and come home together after she gets off work at 6 p.m. Mr. Chang and Ms. Seo could find someone look after their son, but they were not satisfied with the quality of care. They had a nanny for their son till he was 3, and started sending him to an all-day nursery from 7 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. when he turned 4.

At that time, their son used to hate waking up early in the morning and did not want to be apart from his mother, and whenever he got frustrated, he used to be nasty to his friends. They were quite concerned to see their son behave like that, but once Ms. Seo took her son to her workplace he improved greatly. His parents know the present arrangement is not the best solution, but their son seems fine compared to sending him to the all-day nursery till he was 5. He seems confident and emotionally stable and is at ease with friends.

*If our son went to school in Kang-Nam, where his school catchment area is, he would have to spend the whole afternoon alone without anyone to take care of him (Mr. Chang).*

*It is not pleasant to see the child's daily routine made to fit his mother's, but he has actually become much more cheerful and confident, and emotionally stable compared to when he was attending the nursery. ... Although the school is located in Kang-Book, he says he likes travelling with me and I can see him in the afternoon, which is less stressful (Ms. Seo)*

The majority of parents send their children to a kindergarten or private nursery on a part-time basis in order to develop their social skills and get them ready for school rather than for caring.

*Kindergarten is a small society in which the children play with friends and learn to cope with being with others ... Making speeches and learning to express oneself cannot be easily done at home, but it is possible at kindergartens during lessons (Ms. Kwon)*

*I think the right time to start proper education is when he's old enough to go to kindergarten. That is 2 years prior to going to school. ... I'd like to send him to kindergarten for at least the morning period, if there are any good educational facilities around. He usually watches TV while he's at home; it's not good for him.*



*So, I will send him in the morning and he can return at around 2p.m. He can develop his physical abilities and friendships by playing with his peers. I want him to arrive at school ready to learn (Ms. Lee whose child is raised by his grandparents)*

*It would be helpful for K to get adjusted to group life and spend time with other children his age. Right now he plays on his own. ... I think it would be better for him emotionally to spend some time with other children, and he can learn the social skills which he needs (Mr. Hahm)*

With regard to the double-income families whom I interviewed, it is probable that working mothers could be particularly stressed if their husbands spend a long time at work. It could be more difficult for those women to reconcile work, child care responsibilities and housework. For that reason, they have to decide how to cope with it. One possible solution is that one of the parents, mainly the mother, quits their job to look after their children themselves. Other ways of overcoming these difficulties are hiring a housekeeper, which costs a large amount of money, sending their children to facilities with a good reputation, or leaving them alone at home, if they are older. However, as we have already seen (Table 5.1), when there are grandparents in the household, or an extended family member is available, they usually take over the task of child rearing.

Half of the full-time housewives state that they left their job to have more freedom to be involved in family life, following the birth of their first child. This is partly because they could not find someone to help with child care and partly because they did not trust the quality of child care facilities.

*I worked full-time as a nurse until the birth of our first child. I then chose to stay at home with the children until they were older (Ms. Yoon)*

*I used to have a job, but I quit after having our first child because there was no one who could take care of her. I heard that nurseries take babies from 2 months old, but I could not trust them (Ms. Yang)*

*My wife used to have a job, but quit mainly because of the children. There was no place to leave them while she was at work, and we both thought physically being around the children all the time before they start school would be good for them (Mr. Wu)*

There are two grandparents who share the burden of parenting responsibilities and participate fully in child care because their daughter-in-law has entered the workforce. Those who are raising their grandchildren are paid for their care giving. One set of grandparents living close to their adult son is very pleased to do it, as Ms Lee indicates:

*My parents-in-law insisted on bringing him up no matter how hard it may be for them and they said JK is their only grandson and as long as they live, they should take care of him (Ms. Lee)*

According to Ms. Lee, her parents-in-law mention family relationships and the need to provide the grandchild with a nurturing environment. As a result, they do not want their grandson in day care facilities, with a nanny, or in any other care arrangement.

In another case, the grandmother is caring for her two grandchildren because she lives with her eldest son and working daughter-in-law. The parents of her grandchildren cannot send the children to a day nursery even if they want to because the hours are not suitable. Therefore, the grandmother believes that she is the only one who can bring up her grandchildren in this situation.



These two working parents are lucky because they have the most suitable person to look after their children in place of them. However, if there is no choice available several double-income families leave their school age children at home on their own or hire a housekeeper as a way of dealing with the lack of available and reliable formal care services or/and the unavailability of the grandparents.

Three couples who both work full time say they leave their children at home after school without supervision because they think they are mature enough to take care of themselves. They usually arrange some private lessons during the daytime based on what is most appropriate and safe for their children. For example, Ms. Kho's 11-year-old son attends classes. After school he goes to Tae Kwon Do (martial arts), English, and Maths lessons by himself, then stays at home by himself until his parents get back. It could be said that this is not an unusual situation in double-income families with relatively older children.

In this study, some interviewees use a domestic helper such as a paid maid or housekeeper, either on a part-time or full-time basis, in their own homes. Two mothers in single-income households delegate some functions such as cooking, laundry, and housecleaning to a maid, but they say child rearing is their job. Similarly, one double-income family employs a housekeeper to relieve them of most of the household management and provide child care.

*We are both so busy that we have a housekeeper in the house. There have been a few changes of staff since the children were young, but right now we have someone staying*

*with us and she takes care of the children during the day, fixes meals and does the laundry and other housework (Ms. Noh)*

Despite privately purchased child care, they still negotiate their schedules on a daily basis to juggle both their work and caring for the children. Nevertheless, there are problems in hiring a paid maid or housekeeper. Based on the interviews undertaken, there is a great deal of cost variation among the different arrangements, depending upon service hours and the children's age. As might be expected, paid maid care is much more expensive than other forms. Because of that, accessibility is limited to (working) mothers who can afford it. There are wide gaps between richer and poorer locations. Those who hire a paid maid or housekeeper live in rich areas in this study. This means that this form of child care is not available for somebody who lives in a relatively poor area.

In short, from the evidence of the interviews, the majority of the respondents manage their child care by either getting help from family members or care giving adults they can trust or doing it themselves. This reflects the lack of state support. Those respondents who say they have nobody to help with child care tend to have children who are aged over 4, so the children could either go to nursery or primary school during the day. However, the responsibility for child care before and after school is borne by the mothers. It is also evident that the mothers do most of the caring for the children and coordinate their activities during the day, an issue I turn to in the next section.



## 5.2. Sharing Parenting between Parents

Throughout the interviews with female and male respondents, a clear boundary between rigid gender divisions of labour in child care responsibility is confirmed and this extremely unbalanced participation in child rearing between them exists regardless of whether women are involved in paid work or not.

All of the male respondents, except one father,<sup>12</sup> say that they are not actively involved in the daily responsibilities of child care, while almost all the mothers interviewed describe themselves as taking a caring responsibility, including domestic tasks. With respect to the men's share of child rearing responsibilities, a similar situation between single-income and double-income families is observed. This means that the breadwinning role of the father is still of great importance for the welfare of the family, even if the mother is also involved in paid employment. The majority of fathers regard child care as helping or doing their wives a favour, rather than sharing the family responsibility with their wives.

*I offer my help when my wife asks me to. I go to work early in the morning when the children are all asleep, and get home late at night which only leaves me with a couple of hours to spend with the children. So, if she needs anything, I try to give it to her*  
(Mr. Han)

*Sometimes, our children's mum cannot manage both of them, so I do her a favour and lend a hand* (Mr. Nam)

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<sup>12</sup> Mr. Hong and his wife, Ms. Lee, are in their early 30s, with one child who is 15 months old. They both currently work full-time in a private company. Mr. Hong is very actively involved with the daily child care and household routines.

There is no doubt women still do considerably more child rearing and household chores than men. Ms. Seo's account also shows that mothers take more responsibility for caring for children than fathers even though the mothers are also working.

*We are both busy and have not worked out how to share the caring for our children that well. I am responsible for about 99 % of educating them, and my husband is always caught up in his work. He just does the odd thing, such as taking our daughter to cram schools, and playing with our son from time to time, if he can manage it. He hardly ever scolds them. That is usually my job, probably because I spend much more time with them (Ms. Seo)*

Interestingly, even though mothers carry the main responsibility for day-to-day decisions and care of their child, nearly all fathers still play an important role in major decision-making in the family. For instance, when there is a disagreement between husbands and wives regardless of the issue the final decision usually goes to fathers.

*The children's mum does not always agree with my views, but she ends up supporting my opinion. For example, my wife says she doesn't send the children to learn Mathematics and English because the children don't want to do it whereas they want to learn dancing and drawing, but I don't think being so lenient is a good idea. Even if the children don't want to do Maths and English, they have to be persuaded to go and sent (Mr. Nam)*

*We don't really discuss many things. In general, my opinion carries more weight, and whenever there's a conflict of interests, I tend to persuade my wife to follow my lead. She usually ends up agreeing with me and tries to do as I say (Mr. Hong)*



According to the husbands, their wives' ideas are usually more reflected in everyday life than theirs, but if something is going badly, from their point of view, they consider interfering in their wives' approach.

*I leave most of the decisions to the children's mum, but I do interfere when it comes to certain strong beliefs. If I see something that is not right from my point of view, I have to raise the issue, and at times like that my wife and I may disagree strongly (Mr. Chang)*

*We are quite similar in the ways we think. We tend to have a lot of discussions on education but other than that, we just agree silently with each other. We do have differences of opinion about small things, but I usually let the wife decide on most things, except big things (Mr. Cha)*

In fact, all the wives interviewed state that there are times when they need to get their husband's consent, when they are not comfortable about how or what should be done or when they need to decide on big issues, such as family expenditure and discipline methods in relation to their children's education. For example, they discuss 'crammers'<sup>13</sup>, what kind of private lessons their children should take, what books they should buy for their children and how and whether they should punish their children. On these occasions, wives agree to do what their husbands suggest.

*I say what's on my mind, but I tend to listen to my husband more. I think he's better than me in a lot of ways. I'm also educated, but I feel that my husband is still better... I don't have a standard by which I make my judgements, I just think what he says has a point and although I may feel that it is not the best solution, I usually just follow his decision (Ms. Yoo)*

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<sup>13</sup> A crammer is a private institution which prepares students for an exam by teaching them academic subjects such as Korean, Maths, or English lesson.

*I tell him about the big issues. If the children need to start a new course of question booklets, or an entire series of books, I always discuss it with him. He says he'll judge for himself if they need to have them or not. If he tells me to buy them, I buy them, if not, I don't. I think it is important to discuss when it is a matter of a large sum of money (Ms. Huh)*

*Our children's dad is more or less only interested in the big picture, and does not pay attention to little details such as the daily routine and what they learn (Ms. Kim)*

*My husband makes the essential decisions and I do small jobs like taking care of the children. My husband has his own beliefs and ideas about the children's education, which are very strong. So most of the time I go with my husband's opinions even though I may not always agree with them, but what can I do? (Ms. Yang)*

This may reflect that husbands continue to exert a considerable influence on their spouses' decisions although the role of women in Korean society has changed considerably in recent years. In addition, the traditional Confucian patriarchal family system with its strong and efficient mechanism to maintain the female position as subordinate to males still continues to demand that the husband is supreme and the wife must obey and put his and her family's needs before her own (Chan, 1992; Park and Cho, 1995; Lee, 1999c).

Another lack of balance in power relations can be found in the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Their relationships are unequal and more complicated. Under Confucian familism, the power relation in the traditional three-generational family structure is constructed and exercised through generation, age and gender with power being bestowed on the mother-in-law through her son, who carries on the family line. In this way it can be seen that power flows from fathers to sons, from older to younger, and from men to women (Gelb and Palley, 1995; Won and



Pascall, 2004). This structure can lead to conflict between family members, particularly between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, where the former may feel the latter is failing in her duties of obedience and sacrifice to her husband.

According to findings, mothers-in-law have contradictory attitudes towards their working daughters-in-law. While the majority of mothers-in-law value their daughters-in-law having a career in that it reduces pressure on their sons as they are not the sole breadwinner, they also do not wish to abandon traditional gender roles in relation to their working daughters-in-law; they should be obedient daughters-in-law, dutiful wives, and sacrificing mothers.

According to working mothers interviewed, their mothers-in law are vehemently opposed to their son's performing domestic chores and playing an equal part in the division of labour in the family. Ms. Kwon states that her mother-in-law strongly adheres to the traditional gender division of labour and insists that her son and daughter-in-law accept it.

*My husband does nothing when he comes back home, while I do 'everything' after work ... My mother-in-law always says that he's really tired from work ... If so, what about me? (Ms. Kwon)*

It seems that, under the visible or invisible power of mothers-in-law, there is a discrepancy between men's views towards involvement in domestic tasks when their mothers are present and when they are not.

*I think I am comparatively actively involved in domestic tasks when my mother is absent, whereas I don't do anything when she's present ... because I know my mother*

*doesn't like it. She finds it intolerable to see me participate in domestic work when there is my wife there (Mr. Hahm)*

Also, the majority of women who are in paid employment reveal that they are treated differently by their mothers-in-law and their own mothers. They say that their own mothers always attempt to reduce their multiple burdens, whereas their mothers-in-law do nothing. In this respect, two working mothers' experiences draw our attention:

*My mother helps me in various ways. She usually does the grocery shopping for me. When she visits us she cleans the house, washes our laundry and brings some side dishes and puts them in the fridge. She makes me feel comfortable and I can take a rest when she is in my house (Ms. Noh)*

*I get up at 5.30 a.m. to prepare breakfast and my husband and I eat first and leave the house at around 7.30 a.m. in the morning. ... I have to spend about 40 minutes everyday after I get back from work helping my daughter with her English lesson and I have to prepare the family's meal. Then, I wash the dishes and do our laundry. I still have one or two additional chores to complete. It's a little too hectic for me. I don't have time to relax. My mother-in-law just takes care of the children during the day and my husband fulfils our financial needs, and the other things are mine (Ms. Kwon)*

An interesting point is the ambivalent reactions from working daughters-in-law towards their mothers-in-law. Despite their uncomfortable feelings about their mothers-in-law's attitudes, they hesitate to go against their mothers-in-law. They raise it as an issue with their husbands, but, eventually, they agree that they do not want to be any trouble to their mothers(-in-law) because they are educated they have to make their parents(-in-law) as comfortable as possible and they are also expected to create harmony. These attitudes of husbands and wives towards their mothers(-in-law) may be interpreted as a result of Confucian values, such as respect for the elderly and an appreciation of



harmony or solidarity in the family (Choi, 1995; Chang 1998, Lee, 1999c). In the Confucian family, there are particular difficulties about challenging husbands, and challenging a mother-in-law from a younger woman's lower position in the Confucian family hierarchy. It can be understood in terms of patriarchal socialisation. Not only men, but also women, tend to accept gender inequality within the family and society at large.

In addition, the inequalities between mothers and fathers are even more problematic in the double-income families. Working mothers have a dual identity as carers and earners. Many working mothers retain greater responsibility for planning, monitoring and anticipating the needs of the children, and take over when they arrive home from work. This means that maternal employment does not necessarily lead to increased paternal participation in home and child rearing. In terms of home teaching, in most of the cases, apart from one father,<sup>14</sup> the mothers are the sole teachers at home for their children. All the fathers describe their busy working day. They have less time to be with their families and children because they are too busy working. This may be true. However, the ultimate reason for the gendered division of domestic labour can be found in traditional norms.

*Fathers tend to play their typical roles. I work hard and lead a busy life to support my family, and though I don't get to spend much time with the children, I still remain as the head of the family, the protector. I think that's what I am, and as for their mother, even though she works, she still plays an important role in caring for the children (Mr. Moon)*

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<sup>14</sup> Mr. Oh who is a single earner in his family participates in his two children's education (aged 12 and 10) directly, but does not do the domestic chores.

Another interesting point is that despite the stress arising from balancing work and home and difficulties when not supported by their husbands, the majority of wives accept that their husbands are not available to help them with domestic chores at home. They do not expect their husbands to share household tasks. Couples interviewed regard them as the woman's responsibility. This echoes previous studies (Oakley, 1974; Louie, 1995; Kim and Han, 1996; Sullivan, 2000; Won and Pascall, 2004). However, there is a clear expectation that both parents will share child care tasks on a more or less equal basis. They acknowledge that fathers as well as mothers should contribute in various ways to the development and well-being of children. Yet, women do most of the unpaid work such as childcare and household chores regardless of whether they are involved in paid work or not. This is partly because both the men and the women themselves fundamentally accept that women should assume primary responsibility for child rearing and housework.

*I do wish he'd help, but I work too and know how tiring it is for him ... he gets home late, around 9, and after eating and watching the news, he hardly has any time left. I would argue with him if I didn't know that, but I do so I cannot force him to help, but the children's father does well in all other aspects (Ms. Choi who works full time)*

*Of course, both of the parents bear the responsibility of bringing up the children. But, I think, basic child care, education within the home, and domestic chores fall into the mum's job description (Mr. Nam)*

In a similar vein, feminist discourse often suggests that men are overidentified with their work and that their relatively limited participation at home stems from a lower interest relative to their work (Lewis, 1986; Braun, 2001; Sung, 2003). This may be true to some extent, as something similar to this point of view is also found in this study. It is important to consider, however, that the attitude of some men is changing



and they are becoming more involved. Although fathers play a minimal role in the upbringing of their children, from the evidence of the interviews with fathers, there can be no doubt that they would like to be involved with the children as much as they can, especially when they are at home in the evenings or weekends (mainly Sunday). This desire to be involved has clearly increased, partly as a result of their wives letting them know they need their husbands' participation and the acknowledgement that their children need them (fathers) around.

*The father hardly has time with the children. If possible though, I ask him to help the children with their studies, and maybe take them to the public bathhouse on Saturdays. But that rarely happens in reality. I know that it is hard for him as he is so tired. Yes, I do understand. But now that S's older, there is a limit to what a mum can do with him, and he needs his dad as what the dad can do for him is different (Ms. Seo)*

*He's only available to play with the children at the weekend, but he usually wants to leave me and the children to play on our own as he is tired. So on his days off, I send him out with the children even when I'm around. I make him take them in-line skating, or to the park or to see an exhibition (Ms. Huh)*

They believe fatherhood is about more than just the financial support of their families that fathers should have an equally important role in the emotional, social and psychological development of their children and the support of their children's mother. This is more fundamental than sharing the childcare and domestic work (Coleman et al., 1989; Holland, 2004). Most men in this study feel the pressure of being the primary financial support for the family and this worries them. This is because they find themselves missing family time, such as the opportunity to have leave of absence to participate in their children's development, due to the demands of work.

*In general, the mother and the father just live in one house, and the mother and the children tend to think of the father as a money-making machine. It's not completely incorrect, but I do try to get out of such stereotyping. ... I don't have much spare time to spend with my child hence it is hard to have much influence on him ... the typical father figure we normally picture, is someone that gets home and eats the meal that the mother prepares, and just asks 'how's the child?'. Sometimes he says 'be quiet' and watches TV and goes to bed'. ... I really want to avoid being that figure. (Mr. Song)*

*It's true that I don't get to spend much time with our children, but I do try my best to spend some time with them. I also believe that showing them how hard working I am sets a good example for them (Mr. Moon)*

In most cases, every decision made by mothers and major steps of progress in relation to caring for children are reported to husbands, but it is not enough to help fathers feel intrinsically important to their children. Therefore, they struggle to find their place in the family. They agree about the need for more flexibility in balancing work and family life, but it is not easy to achieve in reality.

*When I get home, sometimes I get home at midnight, but on average I get home between 9.30 and 10 p.m., my children tend to start asking me to do things for them. I read books to them, hug them, play with them and so on, but the reality is that, because they go to bed at 10p.m., we don't get to spend much time together. We have only half an hour ... Because we have such a short time together, I do the things that they want me to, but if they don't mention anything, I don't interfere much with their activities during weekdays. I take the children out during the weekends and play with them, but it's hard to do that on weekdays (Mr. Wu)*

*I probably spend less than 10 % of a day with the children but I try to spend as much time as I can over the weekends. I work every other Saturday, and the Saturdays that I don't work, I spend with the children (Mr. Hahm)*



*Well ... providing for the financial needs of the family is a very important role for the father, but I'd like him to do a little more ... I want him to have some time alone with C, but he is not too keen on the idea. I know that he [my husband] feels exhausted by the end of the day, but I can't help pushing him as I believe C needs to learn the 'male' things from his father. I also want my husband to do things with him that are useful to the child, but he only wants to do pointless things that he can do just lying around (Ms. Seo)*

In connection with this, it is noticed that men are talking about the desire to participate actively in all aspects of family life, especially child caring. By the same token, many women are talking about wanting their spouses to be more involved in all aspects of parenting and family life, including domestic chores. Hence, men's involvement is still not considered enough. I often heard men relate feelings of uncertainty and ineffectuality. At times, they seem unsure how to go about doing and managing child care, and the other routines of everyday family life-all while remaining committed to their work outside the home and respecting their wives' ways of doing these things.

*The children's dad takes them out sometimes. It's not enough, but I know he is trying. He goes to work at about 8.30a.m. and comes home at 11p.m. We don't have much time to talk about our children during weekdays, and he talks to them on the days he gets to stay home and he talks to me a lot over the weekend. The things that their father usually wonders about is whether or not the children are okay with their friends and how their school lives are. He knows that I'm doing fine on my own (Ms. Ahn)*

Two interviewees had sharply contrasting points of view. As mentioned before, although the majority of fathers stress that they keep trying to participate in caring activities, only two men actively involved in parenting were found. One father with two children 12 and 10 years old participates in his children's education directly. He teaches them English, Maths and Korean every evening when he finishes work.

*I alternate between night shift and day shift 365 days a year. I feel exhausted when I am home, but I help my children with their studies and take them out to play too. On holidays I try to take them to faraway places. ... I try to spend as much of my free time with the children as possible (Mr. Oh)*

Another father has been doing most of the daily living and household management routines, as well as the daily childcare since his child was born. He covers most of the caring for the child on Saturday because he works five days a week but his wife still needs to work then.

*Bringing up a child is not done by one parent, but by both the father and the mother together. I am only able to play with him because I am home now. If I had work to do outside I wouldn't be here to take care of him. I try to be simple about this .... Our society still pushes the responsibility of raising a child upon the mother, and the father figure is seen as the leader of the family who's just there to give her a hand. The idea should be for parents to take care of the child together, not one helping the other to do it. The same applies to housework. We do not divide the work between ourselves, or take our turns to do it, but do whatever we need to do because we have to eat and wash the dishes.... I may seem different from other people, but I believe division of responsibilities is not something a family should do. Because we are a family, it is okay for me to do one more thing than my wife (Mr. Hong)*

His wife also confirms it:

*Whoever gets home first cooks, cleans and does the laundry. He's better than me when it comes to handling the child, for example washing him and playing with him. He cuts S's nails, massages him, feeds him and helps him with his milk. He even cleans the milk bottles. He's also good at teaching him things. Other fathers would just read the books out loud, but my husband tries to be dramatic to make it more fun for him (Ms. Lee)*



Unfortunately, these two cases are extremely rare in the Korean families. Therefore, from the point of view of men's participation in sharing parenting, these men are special, even though they do not try to be seen as special. In general, the strong message of the interviews is that family work continues to be primarily women's work.

It could be argued that there are several obstacles which potentially constrain people from moving towards sharing parenting in Korea, although, as this study shows, there are men willing to engage in family life and parenting fully with their wives

First, government policies are not particularly supportive of men's active involvement in family life. It is clear that there are the gaps between policy and the everyday lives of men and women. For example, there is recently enhanced legislation aimed at developing and extending childcare service, regulating working time, and expanding maternity and child care leave.<sup>15</sup> However, the problem is that it is not implemented, and even the limited provision, such as workplace nurseries covering a small proportion of workers,<sup>16</sup> and care leave is biased towards women.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, working hours make a difference to how much involvement fathers can have with their children, as Mr. Song stresses.

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<sup>15</sup> Legislation to regulate child care leave has existed since 1987, under the Gender Equality Employment Act. According to Article 11, an employed woman or her spouse 'taking her place', with an infant under 1 year, is eligible to apply for childcare leave for 52 weeks maximum (to include maternity leave) (Ministry of Gender Equality, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> The Gender Equal Employment Act and the Infant Care Act require employers with more than 300 women workers to establish childcare facilities. Although the government has provided a certain amount of support since the mid-1990s to establish workplace nurseries, by 1996, of 329 companies with 300 or more women workers, only 5 per cent have nurseries at work (Yang, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> Although policy was reformed to extend the responsibility to fathers as well as mothers, it still seems to reflect the traditional idea that women have more responsibility in taking care of children and doing domestic labour. In law, eligibility to apply for parental leave is first for the working woman and then her partner.

*One of my friends reads a lot of books to his children and teaches them many things when he gets home. He of course gets off work at 6 p.m. while I don't. I don't think I can do all that. I don't get to have much time to play with them. So I think this lack of (free) time has a huge impact (Mr. Song)*

According to the OECD Employment Outlook (2004), Korea is at the top of the league for the average amount of working hours. The average Korean puts in 2,390 hours a year, which is almost two times that of France which is at the bottom of the league. Many Korean companies expect their employees to work on Saturdays. For most Koreans, therefore, long working hours and a single day off have long been an accepted way of life. The evidence of interviewees is that working 12 to 16 hours a day is common. As discussed already, men state their long working hours prevent them from taking care of the children while employed women discuss working hours as creating extreme tensions between the demands of employers and the demands of their children.

*I hardly ever get to spend any time with my children, and figure out how they've spent their days by listening to the children's mum telling me about them. ... I cannot teach them at home because I don't have much time to spare due to work, and can't find the time to get myself organized to teach them in the most effective way, I don't have the energy for it either. On the weekdays, I spent an average of about 10 minutes each day playing with them after I gets home ... It's very little. I remember hearing that fathers get to spend less than 30 minutes with their children, and I am living that right now (Mr. Nam)*

*I am so tired. I work hard every day and need to spend one day a week, Sunday, sleeping and resting. But I do try (Mr. Moon)*

*I am under a lot of stress, and in the evenings I have to do paperwork that has been left undone during the day. I hardly ever get to have dinner at home. I'm determined to try my best to become really good at what I am doing. It's a highly competitive world and, even if it means I get home late everyday and only get to sleep there, I have to do*



*it to be successful. My wife doesn't like it as it has now become the daily pattern, I don't blame her. She says I will only end up harming my health and nothing will come of it, but I started off as a salary man and I want to become the boss one day. My job is equally important as raising children. With this in mind, I cannot conduct a normal family life, as it would jeopardize my work (Mr. Chang)*

*I think the reason why he leaves the child entirely to me, is because he does not have the time. ... Basically all he knows about the child is what I tell him (Ms. Choi)*

Furthermore, drinking parties are quite prevalent in Korea's working society. It is difficult to find a social or family gathering that does not feature alcohol. People drink when they feel stressed, they drink to celebrate when they complete a task that has been giving them stress, and they drink to bond with friends. Koreans cannot refuse a drink when their friends offer it to them because of feelings of affection, reluctance to offend, and togetherness. They are then obliged to go to a second gathering of people from the initial gathering, usually to drink. The values of obedience and subjection to authority figures make it difficult to refuse an offer to drink from a supervisor at work or a senior, and it encourages those in higher positions to use their authority to make others conform to their wishes. Perhaps, by western standards, more than half of Korean husbands are alcoholic. But Koreans say that they like to drink and many workers take it as a part of their job description rather than say they are alcoholics. Drinking has become a part of the job for the salaried man,<sup>18</sup> fathers, therefore have less time to be with their families and children.

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<sup>18</sup> A few years back, the Supreme Court of Korea made an interesting decision. A primary school teacher was returning home from work, drunk after a meeting with other teachers, and was killed when he tottered off a bridge. The court reversed the decision from the trial court, which had held that the teacher's drunken state nullified the claim of this being a job-related accident. In other words, the court was ready to recognize the drinking culture in Korean workplace and consider accidents resulting from drunkenness to be job-related. This is a reflection of the overall Korean mindset on drinking.

*I go for a drink with my colleagues from work two or three times a week (Mr. Moon)*

*After work drinking is quite important in business. Sometimes matters of business are negotiated during the drinking party (Mr. Sung)*

Secondly, the rigid gender roles are mainly based on Confucian teachings, which accord a public status to men and a domestic role to women. For that reason, mothers have the major responsibility for children and housework and this is still reinforced by Confucian socialisation. Mr. Song's account indicates how men are educated in the Confucian family:

*I don't particularly feel like I have the ability or the right mind necessary for bringing up a child. My father worked and my mother was a full time housewife, and I think it had a strong influence. I only got to see my father last thing at night if I managed to stay up till then, or for a short while in the mornings, hence what my mother used to say that I should do, had the ultimate authority. I automatically began to assume that raising the children is the mother's job. I can see that it isn't so, but I still cannot get the idea out of my system (Mr. Song)*

For example, in a patriarchal society husbands implicitly reinforce the perspective that child rearing is ultimately a women's responsibility and women undertake paid employment through choice. As a consequence, career-oriented mothers suffer anguish and guilt in leaving their children because they have much less time to devote to child care.

To sum up, Korean society today is not as dominated by Confucian ideas as in the past. As noted above, there are now changes geared to achieving greater equality between men and women in society. However, it seems that Confucian ideology in terms of the



traditional roles of parents still presents a contradiction between the changes and the traditions. On the one hand, women being involved in paid employment and men trying to be involved in parenting can be seen as a sign of the contemporary changes. On the other hand, married (employed) women are also expected to play the role of primary carer and domestic worker in the family.

### **5.3. Gender Disparity**

Korean society has undergone rapid economic development with the associated changes in industrialization, urbanization and demography (Lee, 1993a; Holliday and Wilding, 2003; Hwang, 2004). With such improvement, most Koreans in general have also experienced a gradual change in their lives. These changes, in particular, have led women to more active participation in social activities, increased employment, and improved education. In fact, Korean women have been introduced to the concepts of equal rights between males and females in status, role, educational opportunity, social participation and family values (Louie, 1995; Macdonald, 1996; Kim and Han, 1996; Keats, 2000)

This is supported by the findings of interviews with parents. Throughout the interviews, it was found that parents in the current generation were more accepting of the idea that everybody, regardless of gender, should be treated equally. In this respect, in the study, all the parents responded in a similar way when they were asked if they treated their male/female children differently.

*I don't treat them differently because one's a girl and one's a boy, the same with expectations and the roles I want them to play (Mr. Nam with a girl 7 and a boy 6 years old)*

*We do not treat him differently from our elder daughter just because he is the boy that we've always wanted. The age gap between them is rather big, and she absolutely adores him and takes care of him (Ms. Seo with a girl 16 and a boy 7 years old)*

*I never actually treat our son and daughter differently (Ms. Park with a boy 12 and a girl 10 years old)*

These findings show that there is a perception that boys and girls should be treated equally, in contrast to the participants' own childhood. Their own parents, according to the interviewees, did treat girls and boys differently.

*Our parents' generation treated girls and boys differently. In general boys were not allowed in the kitchen and so on, but I used to wash dishes (Ms. Kim)*

*My parents' lives revolved around my brother so my sisters and I were not happy with that. My brother was given more food, and we got scolded much more if we ever fought with my brother. They never made my brother run errands. Even when we grew up and were in university, we cleaned his room for him. I used to think a university student should be able to clean his own room, but if we ever made him, our mother would jump in and say she'd do the room for him and scold us for making a boy do cleaning. Even now, my unmarried sister still cleans his room for him (Ms. Yang)*

*I was the eldest daughter in the family, so my parents had high expectations of me. But it wasn't like they wanted me to succeed in the real world, just to go to a decent university, meet a nice man and get happily married. That's about it (Ms. Noh)*



Furthermore, this view is widely shared by the interviewees when they spoke about their own educational opportunities regarding university. Most parents of my interviewees made higher demands where educational attainment was concerned for sons than for daughters. They educated their son first if their financial situation could not stretch to education for both a son and a daughter. The following comments illustrate this:

*I believe my parents treated my sisters differently from me. None of my sisters went to university because they and my parents had to support me. My eldest sister was better at school, than me, then my second sister, but only I made it to university because I am the only son in our family. My father used to say graduating from high school was enough for girls, so they didn't have the opportunity to learn any further (Mr. Ban)*

*My parents said that it wasn't necessary for me to go to university because I'm a girl. They just wanted me to get married, have children and live happily. However, my brother was told that he should go to the university because my parents wanted him to become a doctor or lawyer even though he was not smart (Ms. Lee)*

At that time, it seems that sons were highly valued and treated better than daughters because their own parents thought that only the sons could carry on the family line. Even now, grandsons are more important than granddaughters to them, as Ms. Lee mentions:

*The people from that generation still adore sons, and my father-in-law was the happiest man in the world when S [his grandson] was born (Ms. Lee)*

With regard to gender roles, the majority of parents in this study firmly contend that it is not necessary for sons to be reared in a masculine (strong and tough) way and daughters

in a feminine (gentle and domestic) way. However, in a small group of families the parents still emphasize the stereotypic gender role, as Ms. Kho stresses:

*I do think that girls should behave in a certain way and that boys should behave in a different way though, which is quite similar to how my parents used to think (Ms. Kho)*

Here we must face a crucial question. Is there really a significant intergenerational difference in the treatment of children and preferential treatment of a male child? Has, as appears from the study, there been a significant shift in attitudes between the generations? In order to address this question, there is a need to look at the available evidence, such as the sex ratio and abortion rates. Interestingly, although the majority of parents whom I interviewed say they would not discriminate against their children based on gender, the distorted sex ratio and widespread abortion of unwanted female foetuses in contemporary Korean society suggest otherwise, and may reflect Korean's deep-rooted preference for male children.

According to the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (2003), a serious imbalance in gender ratio in the classroom is seen across all grades. Therefore, finding women to marry is expected to be a problem when the current young generation reaches marrying age. The ratio of men in the marriageable age group to women<sup>19</sup> will be 128 to 100 in the year 2010 leading to a serious shortage of brides (Planned Parenthood Federation of Korea, 2003). Furthermore, a sharp reduction in the female population will extend to the age gap between wife and husband, an increase in remarriages and may even lead to the importing of brides from foreign countries. It is also feared that sexual violence will spread across society.

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<sup>19</sup> The marriageable age group for men is 24-29 and 20-24 for women.



The global average sex ratio, or the number of boys naturally born for every hundred girls, is in the range of 104 to 106 regardless of Western or Asian countries. However, in Korea, once prenatal sex determination was introduced in the late 1980s, the ratio began to increase, so that by 1990, 116.5 boys were born for every 100 girls. In some parts of the country the discrepancy was far greater. For example, in 1988 in the city of Taegu, the ratio was 136:100 (National Statistical Office, 2001). Furthermore, the difference is especially pronounced for the second, third, and fourth births. Among babies born as first children in 2002, the ratio of boys to girls was 106.5 to 100. The ratio was 107.3 to 100 among babies born as second children, 140.0 to 100 among babies born as third children and 152.5 to 100 among babies born as fourth and over (National Statistical Office, 2003). In other words, parents and their families tolerate girls when they are first-borns, but for further children want to ensure that they have sons. The statistics confirm that the situation has improved, but still remains unbalanced, as we have shown in chapter 2. For instance, in 2003 it dipped to 108.7:100, much better than a decade before but still well above international standard ratio (National Statistical Office, 2004). The obvious implication of these figures is that female children may be being aborted.

Thus, the traditional preference for sons over daughters does indeed still appear strong. Sons are necessary because they are perceived to be the male breadwinners, and it is their duty to take care of aged parents. Last but not least, only sons can perform offerings to the ancestors' souls (Choi, 1995; Macdonald, 1996; Choi, 1997; Lee, 1999c).

To a large extent, it can be said that parents are still influenced by the traditional favouritism of boys. This belief is reflected in the following:

*My husband's friends would boast about their sons at gatherings, which made my husband wish for a son. His family also wanted a boy to carry on the family name, so we finally ended up having C quite late. Because we had him so late he is precious to us and seems like a baby all the time (Ms. Seo)*

*My husband is the eldest son in the family, so it's important that he has a son. Apparently my mother prayed fervently for a son for me, and I put in a lot of effort such as seeing a doctor. Finally, I was so relieved when a son was born. My brother-in-law also has a son, but the eldest son has to have a son to carry on the family name (Ms. Choi)*

*I used to want a boy quite desperately when I didn't have one (Ms. Yang)*

Similarly, the survey research on Korean women's attitudes towards sex roles, marriage, and child rearing points out that Korean women prefer sons as a son carries on the family line and they can rely on the son in their later years (Kim and Han, 1996). This issue is explored in the final chapter.

In conclusion, although Korean society has undergone changes for equality between men and women, the traditional and stereotypical gender roles are still prevalent among them. Unbalanced participation in raising children and doing domestic chores between parents has been found. Thus, women, regardless of their working status, still continue to bear the majority of the responsibility for them. In addition, even though there is a perception that boys and girls should be treated equally, available data, such as the sex



ratio and abortion rate clearly show that a preference for boys over girls appears strong. This suggests that Confucian ideology still prevails despite the changes.

## **Chapter 6. Parental Attitudes towards Education**

In this chapter, special attention is paid to the educational aspirations of Korean parents and their impact on a number of aspects of their children's lives. Dissonance between parental attitudes and actual behaviours are discussed.

### **6.1. Educational Aspirations**

Koreans have placed an enormous importance on education as a means for success in life. Nowadays Korea boasts of one of the highest literacy rates in the world, and it is well known that well-educated people have been the primary source of the rapid economic growth that the nation has achieved for the past three decades (Cho, 1994; Macdonald, 1996; Helgesen, 1998; Lee, 1999a; Kwon, 2001; Holliday and Wilding, 2003)

Education is still regarded by Koreans as the key to success and this trend is also confirmed by the responses of the interviewees in this study. Nearly all the parents interviewed state that healthy development, building a good character and good daily habits and manners are the most important issues in raising children. However, they admit that in practice they put more emphasis on the need to develop good study habits; especially consolidating learning by repetition. In addition, contemporary parental



concerns focus on a single outcome, academic success. The vast majority of parents who have school aged children and/or children attending kindergarten, at the age when it is considered right to start proper formal education, say that studying is the most important issue for them. The following examples suggest a contrast between what they should want and the underlying preoccupying concern. They state:

*I want our children to focus on building up their personality till they reach the higher grade at [primary] school ... I'd like our children to play much more than they should at their age, but the atmosphere around is that they should spend more time studying. [So] I make them study too because I know that they'll fall behind everyone if they don't (Ms. Yang)*

*Health comes first, and I also believe that social skills are important, so I try to make them participate in as many activities as possible. ... Well studying is something that they have to do themselves. I often tell them although they don't enjoy studying, they'll have to study some amount as, if they don't study at all, they'll fall behind everyone instead of keeping up with the pace. Studying is their job (Ms. Shin)*

*Being sociable with friends and doing well enough in school. Of course as a mother I hope that they'll do really well in school (Ms. Ahn)*

*He needs good health and strength to be able to study hard. It's basic for him so that he can manage to keep up and work hard when he gets to middle and high school (Mr. Chun)*

This suggests a contrast between what they should want such as health and social skills and the underlying preoccupation about educational success for their children.

'Being number one' is the common expression used to describe parents' evaluation of their children's academic status. Their rank in class is a concrete sign of academic

excellence for the parents, who support their children in order to help them survive fierce competition, as Ms. Noh explains:

*One has to study well to get into a top class university. If one's grades fall in school, it also means one's grades have fallen nationwide too. Grades are hard to pull back up once they drop as everyone is competitive. Being stressed out is inevitable ... I would want to pull my grades back up if I was in her shoes. That's normal, isn't it? (Ms. Noh)*

However, most parents are reluctant to admit this ambition. This is probably because such explicit acknowledgement creates too much pressure on the children to remain 'number one'. Only two sets of parents say that they want their children to be number one, like the following respondents.

*The children's mum always talks about how health is everything and that people cannot do anything if they are weak, which is true. I do think it is true and right, but there is something else I'd like to add. Health is the basic criterion, and I also tell our children not to get defeated in anything. I tend to express the importance of being in the 1<sup>st</sup> place in anything, as 2<sup>nd</sup> place is useless in life (Mr. Chang)*

In contrast, almost all of the other parents deny that they want their child to be number one, but they continuously compare their child with other children around him/her.

*I'm concerned that our children will fall behind compared to the other children (Ms. Yang)*

*When I was getting off work at around 10-11 p.m., all the cars on the streets were out there to pick up the children from crambers. The shuttle buses are massive. Looking at those children who are in a different district, from our point of view, we realise that our children are already behind them at the start line. I don't want our children to be*



*behind, so instead of convincing ourselves that what is happening is not right, we try to get our children into that group so that they can go with the flow (Mr. Song)*

They usually say they do not mind if their child is not number one but expect their child to belong in at least the top ten per cent in the class. Or they just hope their child will have a good reputation in her/his field whatever he/she chooses in the future.

*I would feel proud of her for working so hard, but I would still tell her that being on top is good, but even slipping down to the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 10<sup>th</sup> place is also okay (Mr. Yoo)*

*Just telling her that she shouldn't get lazy with her work and she should keep trying her best would be better, and coming up with an agreed plan. For example, maybe the parents could advise the child that as long as she maintains her place between 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> spot in school, it's okay (Ms. Kwon)*

Or

*I just hope that he becomes someone that gets recognized in his field, someone professional who is respected for his professional mind and expertise (Mr. Hong)*

*I want them to live happily, doing things that they want to do. I'd like them to be the best in the field that they work in. In order to achieve that, they'll have to work hard (Mr. Oh)*

The overwhelming majority of parents, in a similar vein, explain that choosing proper occupations is also an important issue because the choice of occupation determines wealth, honour, and status. Professional jobs such as doctors, lawyers, managers, and professors are popular choices for parents.

*I want them to have professional careers in the future, which they want to do ... If they actually want to get a PhD, I'll also support them till the end (Mr. Nam)*

These particular attitudes towards the upbringing of their children reflect traditional values, such a preoccupation with study and with rank, and with the privileges that come with education. As we have seen in the previous chapter, under the influence of Confucianism, education developed into formalized teaching for a group of youths preparing themselves to be government officials. This was the only possible ladder to social promotion at that time (Lee, 1993a; Choi, 1997; Lee, 1999c). Interestingly, this emphasis on education between past and present seems to be quite similar. The assumption that, if you graduate from a good university, you obtain a good social position can be found in all my interviewees' responses.

Furthermore, the emphasis on education is equally high among richer and poorer areas, regardless of their financial situation. All the parents in this study feel that a university degree is valuable. However, the reasons for placing a high value on education are slightly different between the two groups. In the present study, there are three fathers and five mothers who did not attend university as opposed to the many who had (and all of the former live in relatively poor areas). The non-university attenders believe that they encounter a variety of disadvantages because of their level of education. Therefore, they feel that their chances for upward mobility are slim even though they work hard. Their accounts of their lives are somewhat unhappy. They do not want to pass their lifestyles on to their children.

*I feel sometimes people who went to university tend to look down on people who haven't attended university, like me (Ms. Ahn)*

*If I had graduated from a university, my life would be better than now, I think (Ms. Hwang)*



*Having a university degree would help our children get a better job and better life than may be I had (Mr. Um)*

A key to understanding this segment of these parents can best be illustrated by the following statement by Mr. Chun who works as a factory manager.

*My parents only managed to send our eldest brother to university, as the eldest should carry on the responsibility for the family. None of the other siblings made it to university. We all had to give it up. Some of us managed to get a degree while working, but I couldn't even do that because I couldn't afford it. I think my eldest brother has it the easiest right now. I believe it's because he went to university. I think my life would have been different if we had been better off financially and I had also gone to university. I wouldn't be living such a hard life as I am right now. Whenever I hear people talking about their university lives, I wonder about it very much. I don't know what it is like because I haven't experienced it. I don't think it would be such a bad idea to get a chance to see what it's like, and what people do in universities. So I really want to send our children to university. It'd increase their choices in life (Mr. Chun)*

They want their children to acquire a university degree because of the benefits of a university education. In contrast, for more educated parents, the reason for the emphasis on education is that they believe the pursuit of higher education is central to increasing one's social standing and wealth. For them, this is a natural rite of passage. According to many of these parents, their own parents assumed that they were going to attend university. In turn, many well-educated parents assume that their children will also attend university.

*It is not a matter of whether my child will go to university, but simply which university. It's not an issue for our children (Mr. Cha)*

There is also another strong underlying trend of cultural continuity in Korean society, affecting many basic aspects of family life. For instance, Confucian education holds that there exist ordained inequalities between adults as well as children. Confucianism emphasized that 'rulers should take the ideal father as their model, and subjects should similarly think of themselves as dutiful children' (Pye, 1985, p. 73). From this, it is easy to imagine that authority and loyalty are seen the key elements in relationships between superiors (parents) and inferiors (children). In this study, the parents are the sole decision makers in deciding the future for their children. The children themselves are not supposed to be involved in deciding their own future. They are supposed to follow the parents because they are mere inexperienced children and the parents are experienced experts. This gives parents enough reason to decide for their children and control their lives. Most parents say that it is their responsibility to help their children find that right path, to enable them to have a secure future. The following examples, from interviews by Mr. Nam and Mr. Chang, highlight this aspect well:

*To be able to do what they want to do eventually, they'll have to equip themselves with the basics that they need while they are in primary school. When they are in university, they'll have to reach a certain level of excellence in order for them to be able to have the jobs that they want. So I think they should learn practical things, such as Korean, English and mathematics which I feel are necessary for children, rather than what they want to learn such as dancing and drawing. It's pretty pointless to be good at drawing in preparing for an exam. I feel the need to make them just absorb what they are being taught until they reach a certain age, and after that, in the future, they can do whatever they want. We have to prepare them with the necessary skills before that time comes. Even if children don't want to follow our lead, we have to try to persuade them. By showing them things. These days whenever I am taking a walk with my wife and the children and we come across a homeless person or a beggar, I tell them 'look at them, that is what happens to you if you are lazy and don't study hard.' I try to get this idea into their heads. So now they think that if they don't work hard, they'll live poorly, and become beggars (Mr. Nam)*



*I tend to correct him and demand that he follows the way that I feel is right. By any means, I persuade him to agree with me because I'm right (Mr. Chang)*

Other interviewees echo this situation in terms of expectations of the future occupations of their children.

*I don't think Y is a very bright child, but she works very hard ... I think the government exam would be the best way for her to go. She can study hard for it, and if she passes the test and becomes a high level civil servant, she'll be able to work in an environment where sexual discrimination does not exist much. I have talked to her about it and she seems to lean towards the idea too (Mr. Moon)*

*He is good at English, so I hope he will aim for the exam to become a foreign officer (Ms. Huh)*

## **6.2. The Credential Society: Examination "Hell"**

All children are supposed to work hard for entrance to the best university which is regarded as one of the greatest example of filial piety. It is a great honour to parents as well as a child. According to a national survey, 98.8 per cent of middle and high school students want to get a Bachelor's degree or higher (National Statistical Office, 2003). However, only 74.2 per cent of high school graduates<sup>20</sup> advanced to higher education in Korea (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development and Korean Educational Development Institute, 2003). This huge discrepancy between the reality

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<sup>20</sup> Advancement Rate: (Entrants to Higher Level School / Graduates of Each Level of School) x 100

and expectations makes competition extremely strong and children are heavily burdened. Also, it causes many exam related suicides among adolescents every year. An increasing number of Korean scholars point out that heavy demands for academic excellence on children could have a seriously negative effect on their children's psychological and emotional well-being (Lee, 1994; Lee, 1995a; Lee, 1998a; Park, 1998; Kim and Kim, 1999). Despite this, however, parents force their children to study hard and overpressure them to ensure they enter a good university. This could be understood as a survival response in a highly competitive society.

Preparation for the university entrance examination begins at primary school. In the past, high school students formed the major group taking private tutoring for it, however, private tutoring for young children has been increasing during the last few years. Ms. Shin explains how Korean children in primary school work hard to get a good result, offering her friend's case:

*I have a friend whose child was advised to be put into a preparation class for entering the high school for foreign languages, and the child was only in its third year in primary school. My friend is keen on education, and said that the children have to start preparing from third year in primary school to go to a good university. They have to learn middle school materials while in primary school, and the high school materials while in middle school, and only study and repeat mock exams while in high school (Ms. Shin)*

Learning things at least 6 months in advance is not unusual for children of all ages. For example, 5<sup>th</sup> graders in primary school are learning 6<sup>th</sup> graders' mathematics; there were even some students who had already finished learning middle school mathematics. In order to keep up, private tutors and lessons are thought useful for children. The academic progress of children and their eligibility for moving to higher grades is tested



in a continuous stream of examinations. This continues in middle and high school and even beyond graduation from the university.

There are a number of important reasons for what appears to be an overemphasis on higher education. Educational background is crucial for those who seek jobs in bureaucracy, the professions including medicine, law, or school teaching, and private enterprise. Examinations for those professions are open only to university graduates. They have also become essential for entering into any white-collar position. Many private enterprises require job applicants to take an examination, which is often open only to university graduates. A Bachelor's degree has become the basic qualification for entering into these kinds of jobs. Many interviewees agree that although educational background is not necessarily a guarantee of a successful life, it is unlikely that Korea's education-oriented society will change. In fact, it could be said that the attitude of parents who believe higher academic performance as the sole way to achieve social and economic success is not yet changing.

Typical reactions from parents with regard to the necessity of higher education are as follows:

*I do agree ... my child should go to university at least. No matter what the opinion is, the necessity of an undergraduate degree cannot be denied in our society. People find it hard to get hired even with a degree these days, but having it at least opens up a wider range of opportunities (Mr. Hahm)*

*The idea that people should go to university is accepted by at least 90 % of parents. The reason I think this is that when people apply for jobs within this country, what the companies base their judgment of character upon are their resumes, and their appearance. Out of all the people that apply, they will obviously choose someone that*

*is better than the others, and the standard by which they decide who's better is the name of the university. Because of this, university education is more or less forced upon children, and it would actually help the children to broaden their views as well (Mr. Song)*

*These days, people need university qualifications to make a decent living and be treated as decent human beings, hence studying is something that everyone should do no matter how hard it is (Ms. Ahn)*

*I wouldn't be able to give up our children's academic education easily. I think they [children] should at least go to university, or college. It will be hard for them to find a job and make a living if they don't. If our child couldn't go to university, I would be so depressed (Ms. Noh)*

There may be several more basic reasons for this educational zeal. Mr. Chang, who failed twice to get into S University, which is regarded as the best university among Koreans, and the third time got into K University, offers his own experiences.

*University education is essential ... I went through 3 re-tries at the university entry exam ... My father always used to say that I should try my best, but I rebelled against the constant nagging for more studying so I refused to study, on purpose. At that time I thought study was not everything and I would just do whatever I could to make a living, but while I was serving in the army, I changed my mind. I figured that I needed a degree to be given an opportunity in society to do something decent, and people's opinion about me would depend on it too. When I was going through re-trials to get into university, I felt as if people looked on me as backward and I felt useless. It was hard on me ... [so] I believe that once children get older, they will understand why their parents push them so hard to study (Mr. Chang)*

This account gives some important clues as to the life of those who are not in the academic stream. The idea of knowledge in Korean Confucianism is that children would grow to be good through reading and writing. One of the main duties of the child



is to show filial piety by working hard and entering the best university and, hence, passing the exam is the parents' and their children's sole aim. In this social environment, someone who fails to enter the university may be considered to be a failure, useless, and bring shame on her/his family, a nobody. Everybody would think they had not done their best whether or not this was true. In addition, their parents would think that they had failed in their child rearing and would be considered to have failed in helping their children to be well enough equipped in their academic subjects.

Another reason is that university graduates have the opportunity to build both their knowledge and social connections. Social connections are made through kinship, one's birthplace, peer groups, and the school from which one graduates. These connections can be used in social relationships and to influence decisions when a person is seeking a job or a favour. Alumni connections can be an important part of a career path (Choi, 1997; Lee, 1999c). A university degree gives one entry into a profession or company. University origin directly helps employees get onto the Board. This is another sign that the influence of Confucianism remains in Korea. According to Confucianism, one's educational background is an indication of social status.

In contrast to this need to foster strong social connections, in primary and secondary schools, considered to be a vehicle for preparation for the university exam, the competition is so intense that students have to compete against their classmates; they cannot learn to cooperate with others. The system fosters selfishness in order for students to survive.

### 6.3. Dissatisfaction with the Education System

According to the Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development (2003), the core of education is not only teaching knowledge but also nurturing a healthy morality. From this point of view, ideally, children should be educated in this way when they are very young and good habits should be formed as early as possible. In reality, however, the school has focused on teaching academic work, namely Korean, Maths, and English and they have been the major subjects of the university exams. Ranking of universities reflects a teaching practice based on a hierarchical world view and justifies social elitism.

In recent years, the formal education system<sup>21</sup> in Korea has had to face a number of challenges which derive from public dissatisfaction with the education system in general. It could be argued that the education system has failed to meet the wider needs of children and families. This can be shown by the fact that the majority of parents interviewed express their unhappiness and dissatisfaction over it. There seem to be two strains. Despite the fact that schools focus so exclusively on academic subjects, the majority of those I interviewed believe that schools should be more academically competent so that crammers and parents do not have to do so much.

*In our time, supplementary classes were available at school for students who had fallen behind. Whereas nowadays if a student falls behind like that in class the teachers first recommend extra teaching at home. But there is only so much we can do*

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<sup>21</sup> The education system in Korea consists of six-year elementary schools for free, three-year middle schools, three-year high school including general and vocational high school, and four-year universities, which also offer graduate courses leading to Ph.D. degree. There are also two to three-year junior colleges and vocational colleges as well.



*at home, so when parents complain again that their children are not doing well, the teachers then casually recommend sending the students to crammers or private tutoring for extra study. Basically study revolves around those extra classes at crammers or private tutoring (Ms. Yoo)*

*I want the school to be responsible for schoolwork so it won't be necessary for children to go to cram school (Ms. Chung)*

*What I want from the school is that they focus more on academic study when the children reach higher grades. I don't think they teach the children enough things right now. They learn more in crammers and their homes than in school. When it comes to mathematics, the teachers instruct the students to do the questions at home and get them marked by the parents, but I cannot handle 4<sup>th</sup> year mathematics myself and yet I am supposed to mark the homework too, so I just sign it even if some of them are incorrect. It is quite embarrassing when he comes home with a comment that he has done them incorrectly. I hope the whole education system gets reformed, although I realize that that would be quite hard (Ms. Ahn)*

Parents are also dissatisfied with schools, believing that they ignore discipline and moral education.

*Teachers obviously play the role of educators. But I feel disappointed because I believe an 'educator' is also partly responsible for teaching them about morals and correct conscience. However, these days the school is only considered to be a place that stresses good grades and academic work, and the teachers don't do much about students behaving badly either. It's not the same as the old days (Mr. Chun)*

*I think schools neither focus on academic things nor socialisation. They do nothing. Everything, including teaching knowledge, character development and discipline, is the parents' responsibility. Their role is just care, nothing more. Nowadays, many parents I know don't expect anything from the school (Ms. Kho)*

*School is just a place where children can have a chance to develop peer relationships throughout the life of the group. That's enough. I think school teachers can do nothing for our children (Mr. Moon)*

Another consideration is that although the average primary school class size is gradually reducing from 62.4 in 1965 to 32.1 in 2002, they are still quite large in comparison with western countries such as the UK (21.2), the US (15.8) and France (19.8) (Ministry of Education & Human Resources development, 2003; National Statistical Office, 2003). It makes it difficult for teachers to pay attention to each and every one of the students. However, most parents simply hope their children get more attention from their teacher because they think their children are more important than the others.

*I sincerely hope that there will be more teachers who do not only pay attention to students who are good at studying (Ms. Kim)*

Private tutoring has become a necessary part of the educational system in Korea. In this study, the overwhelming majority of children, both pre school age and school age children, are attending a variety of private lessons. In addition, almost all the parents teach several subjects which seem to benefit their children for preparatory school. If parents are not available to teach their children, they start to consider alternative solutions. Tutors are hired or the children are sent to crammers with a good reputation. Children have to learn many things at the same time. They take at least two or three kinds of private lessons. There are some children who take seven private lessons. The following example illustrates the children's daily routine occupied by private education.

*Our daughter [aged 11] goes to her primary school at 8a.m. and comes back at about 3:30p.m. Normally she takes the shuttle bus that waits in front of the school to the crammer to take English lessons on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and comes*



*back home at 5p.m. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she takes lessons on subjects for middle school. She takes writing classes from 7 – 9p.m. on Tuesdays, she walks to the place on her own, and I take her home with me on my way home from work. We finish at a similar time. On Monday and Thursday evenings, she has mathematics tuition from 7-8:30p.m. at home. She eats dinner, does some work and goes to bed at midnight. That's her week, and on Saturdays she gets off school at 12p.m. and takes science tuition from 4-6 after having lunch. She goes to church on Sundays in the morning, and has physical education tuition for an hour and a half starting from 2p.m. About 10 children form one group, and they learn sports subjects. Our daughter is okay with other subjects but she's not too good at sports, so her average mark is lower than it should be. Then, on Sundays, after her sports classes, she learns to play the flute from 5-6p.m. Her bedtime is around midnight, but around exam time, she may go to bed a little later (Ms. Noh)*

This is only one case but it reflects a common pattern in private tutoring education, which is conducted either by parents or private tutors, as the following comments confirm:

*Apparently even kindergarten children take 2 to 3 private lessons. That is depressing, and I think something should be done about it. It is out of control. My sister-in-law's child is in kindergarten, he's just 4 years old. After kindergarten, he stays behind to take some extra lessons. I do not think that is right (Ms. Lee)*

*After 24 months, some children of my friends have already begun a number of lessons. I also takes some, but other children are already doing question booklets, or have tutors for lessons or are going to learning institutions. I feel that it's still too early. It's all about the mother's greed and pressure. So I don't really make him learn much, I just focus on the books he reads and buy him many of them (Ms. Choi)*

*My nieces and nephews go to at least 2-3 institutions. They get home at 10p.m. They are only in the primary school, and the mother is a teacher. She says that they can stay at the top of the class because they learn so much. From that I realize that the initial investment in education does produce an outcome (Mr. Song)*

Even though the lesson fees can be a burden, many parents make sacrifices for their children's extracurricular private lessons because they believe they are necessary to further their children's experience.

Many parents are anxious to have their offspring placed in one of the famous universities, and are willing to pay large sums of money to employ as tutors those students who are already attending these institutions. They worry that, if they do not, their children may fall behind their peer group because everybody they know is doing these things. This kind of tension can be explored as follows:

*I think it'd be a little weird for a mere primary school student to focus on the study part more, but these days, everyone's overreacting to children's education. It's a pity (Mr. Wu)*

*The fact is that in this area, most of the children her age [6<sup>th</sup> grader in the primary school] have already finished learning the middle school materials ... These days, the children have to be good at everything to get decent marks at school. Just imagine if my child was the only one not doing that. In school, the only criteria by which a student gets judged, is her grades. The teacher wouldn't care about her if her grades were not good. Even the children themselves tend to get put in groups of similar level of grades. It hurts the children's pride. It's a vicious cycle (Ms. Noh)*

*I know of a child in the kindergarten who takes 6 extra lessons, and apparently 6 isn't much at all in that area. The child seems exhausted. He barely has a chance to get to know his peers. He doesn't have any friends, and whenever there is a test, the child is a little behind and the parents get more anxious and make him learn more things like everyone else (Ms. Lee)*



*All this private education stuff is to get rid of the anxiety that I feel. I'm concerned that our children will fall behind compared to the other children, they all go to those institutions ... I send our children to those institutions because everyone else is doing it and if I don't, I'd feel like I am not paying enough attention to our children and that I am neglecting them or something. I'd feel anxious and concerned that our children would not get on and go up to the next level (Ms. Yang)*

The responses from two interviewees provide an important clue to understanding the reality faced by parents and children in relation to education. Even those parents who are against private tutoring argue that they are compelled to conform.

*Our daughter is in her last year at high school, and we have consulted a person currently running a learning institution for the university entry exam. We believe H has been working hard so far. [However] the consultant said that it was too late for her. He said that H really should have finished learning all of her high school material while she was attending the middle school. But she has only been learning things about 6 months in advance. She has been good in school, but apparently that is not enough and there is no way she can get near to the university where she wants to go. We regret telling our child that she could get into the university of her choice if she worked hard at school. We feel sorry for her, as we've now come to face the reality. It's upsetting for her and a great shock to us too (Mr. Chang and Ms. Seo)*

*We thought early education was not good for our children and we tried to keep to our beliefs. So we didn't make him study too much and we just let him play as much as he wanted. However, his school teacher said he should study hard and that he needs extra help. She recommends sending him to cram school or his taking private lessons, especially Maths and English. Now he is attending crammers although he doesn't want to (Mr. Doe and Ms. Kho)*

The competition to pass the university exam requires high school students to achieve very high grades. Students who receive high scores on the national standardised exams given at the conclusion of high school education are not automatically guaranteed

admittance to university. The emphasis is not on achieving a certain minimum number of points but rather on reaching the top five to ten per cent of those taking the exam. As the competition gets hotter the scores needed to make this top five to ten per cent increase. Thus, the need for tutoring grows more each year.

Parents firmly believe they need to hire private tutors to make their children excel and prepare them for school work although many believe that private tutoring distorts the Korean educational system, as Mr. Nam indicates:

*These days the media and the other parents express the view that they do not have much faith in public school education, and other forms of private education have to be used to make up for the inadequacy of public school education for the children, but I really don't agree with this view. Public school education has become undermined because of the expansion of private education, not because its foundation is weak. Private education has become so common that children learn everything at crammers and such places, and go to school to play (Mr. Nam)*

Since they believe that the school cannot teach their children to excel and they have to rely on private tutoring instead, they have begun to have less respect for school teachers than in the past. The old saying that you must not even step on the shadow of your teacher<sup>22</sup> does not have the same credence nowadays. At present, primary and secondary education curricula are designed to help students pass the university entrance exam. This means that the university exam influences the direction and quality of the whole educational system. For that reason, although higher education is very expensive for people of low socio-economic status, the parents perceive education as the only way to upgrade their children's social position and sacrifice financially in order to send their

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<sup>22</sup> This means, literally, that students should walk around the shadow of their teacher when they pass by her/him. Students must pay utmost respect to their teacher in all ways.



children to university. They do not mind sacrificing the present and even their own life for their children's future. It is admirable in many respects to see the parents' devotion to their children's education. In support of that, many interviewees quote the widespread saying that 'elites no longer just pop out of nowhere', that is without their parents' absolute support both financially and emotionally, children are not able to join the elite. Ms. Noh describes it clearly, citing a popular proverb:

*This is not the time that 'a dragon pops out of a small stream'. This life of the children depends on the amount of support they receive [from their parents] and the investment that we make for them, it is tough at times, but it can't be helped. Everyone else is doing the same too (Ms. Noh)*

The old saying 'a dragon pops out of a small stream' means a person of humble station who lives in a poor family (a small stream) may become a successful and outstanding person (a dragon) by her/himself. In the past, it was possible to make one's fortune by one's own efforts, while at the present time nobody believes it anymore. Without proper support, especially financial, it cannot happen. An elite or an outstanding scholar can no longer just 'pop out of nowhere'.

However, some parents do not agree that the education system is at fault.

*Blaming the education system is just an excuse. It really just depends on the person. I was able to get rid of my stress even when I used to study in the library with only about 3-4 hours of sleep a day. If one has a clear goal in mind, one can overcome all obstacles on the way. It's not true that the Korean educational system is full of problems, and the children just live to get into a good university. As for us, my wife is a little greedy and makes the children take all kinds of lessons, but the children themselves want them as well. It's because they have their goals and they know that they need the lessons to achieve them (Mr. Chang)*

This creates a big financial burden for these parents because of the high price of tutoring.

*From last year, about 60 per cent of our income was being spent on [private] tutoring. It's a lot, but we have to spend it. Especially for our daughter, she only has 10 months left till the university entry exam, and those 10 months could determine her life. We can always earn money as time goes by (Mr. Chang and Ms. Seo)*

*The cost of what the children are learning right now does not even take up 1/3 of our earnings but it is not a small sum of money. Even if we have to go through a tough time supporting our children, if they have things that need help with, we'll have to be there to give it to them. Even if it becomes a burden to us, I am sure we'll be able to handle it with a great deal of effort. We'll have to try our best till we can go on no more (Mr. Nam and Ms. Yang)*

#### **6.4. Some Reflections**

The attitudes that place such importance on academic achievement have an effect on various aspects of family life.

A considerable number of Korean families are known to have separated temporarily in order to provide a better educational opportunity for their children. This type of separated family is called *Girugi* (a wild goose) family. The father is left behind in Korea after sending his children and wife to a foreign country, mostly English speaking ones, for the sake of their education and with their mother to take care of them. The



fathers live at home alone to provide financial support for their children's tuition fees and living expenses by sending monthly payments and living by themselves in single rooms. This may be an escape mechanism for both parents, especially mothers who are too fatigued to help their children achieve high grades at school. Also, their children are almost suffocated by the competition that is beyond imagining, characterized by private tutoring outside school to enter prestigious universities. There is no official data on how many *Girugi* families there are at the moment, however, increased arrangements for transfer of money to foreign countries and the number of primary school children who have left school to study abroad could be a source of information on this (Choi et al., 2003). Ironically, *Girugi* is a symbol of the ideal husband and wife. They mate for life and when the female dies, the male goose will care for its offspring on its own and they fly together like close siblings. But in Korea the term means something else. *Girugi* family refers to the inevitably separated family despite their good and warm relationship. The final goal of these families is to provide a secure future for their children through better educational opportunity. For that reason, fathers and mothers sacrifice themselves by investing in their children's future and suffer the strain of separation voluntarily.

In this study, some parents state that:

*When my friends and I meet, we always talk about our disappointing educational system. Our children's education is totally up to us. It's our responsibility. Too much private tutoring, high competition [with peers] ... They are always tired and look unhappy. The whole education system needs to change, but we can do nothing about it. My friends' and my thoughts are the same that this is really not good, but the responses are different. They are divided into two types. One type has made the decision to follow the current movement which emphasizes private tutoring to survive, although they know it is hard for both parents and children. The other type is*

*seriously considering sending their children abroad to study with their mum. They think that within this country, their children have no chance to develop properly (Mr. Sung)*

*If we are wealthy enough, we hope to send our children to America to get a better education. I think America has a better quality of education and educational environment than ours. Tuition fees are very expensive but it's ok because private tutoring is also expensive. So, I think, if we can send our children abroad it is the best solution (Ms. Yoo)*

However, such arrangements are not always successful in reality. The father lacks the support of his wife and children, and feels lonely and increasingly estranged from his loved ones. He may be distressed by the economic strain whilst the mothers are distressed by the burden of child care and discipline. According to the newspapers, several lonely fathers are suffering from depression and have committed suicide (The Washington Post, 2005). In addition, the cost of separation is not just limited to the parents. The children in such families must also sacrifice much. It is during those years in primary school and the age of puberty, that a child needs the presence of a father figure. (Lewis, 1986; Ruter and Ruter, 1993; Davenport, 1994; Choi et al., 2003). Also, there may be a conflict between children who form bicultural values and parents who retain Korean values such as respect for elders, obedience, maintenance of harmony and family obligation between children and parents as well as between the parents themselves. This can result in increasing divorce rates and financial burdens. For those reasons, the *Girugi* families are a distinct social phenomenon that has been caused by the failure (abnormalization) of the Korean educational system.

Most importantly parental attitudes towards education have the potential to influence their children's daily life. First of all, daily life habits such as cleaning up, not being



forgetful, or keeping promises are important to parents of pre school children. However, it was found that when children entered primary school the parents shifted their interest from these important and necessary life skills to academic performance. This has led to the problem of good academic performance but poor life skills. Some parents say their children never help with the housework or clean up because it is not a priority to prepare for future success. Parents successfully educate their children intellectually but overlook fostering in them the ability to acquire the practical and social skills they need. The overemphasis on academic performance has produced many children with poor life skills who get high scores on school exams.

*Nowadays, children are overprotected so they become very rude and they think they are the best in the world. I don't think it's good. There need basic and strict rules (Mr. Hong)*

*Children's intellectual development is good because their parents focus on it. However, in terms of personal characteristics and social skills development in children, most kindergarten children are the only son or daughter in their family, they are selfish and lack the ability to share something with others. They do not know how to compromise and most of them are obstinate. The kindergarten staff told me that sometimes children argue with her and very rude (Ms. Byun)*

Secondly, the interviews reveal that children's lives are so highly structured that there is very little time to 'chill out' in any way. This raises questions concerning the underlying assumptions about how children develop best. Children need to study and the parents need to help. Yet, the Korean parents interviewed do more than have high expectations or give help. In fact, they are directly involved in everything including deciding the future for their children. For instance, parents, especially mothers, select what subjects their children do and how they are taught to them. Based on the subject's

importance in the university exam, they decide which subjects are more crucial and which require more time than others. Korean parents are not the only parents who take private tutoring for their children seriously. However, what is at issue here is the intensity and degree of their involvement in their offspring's education. The parents' intensive dedication towards their children's education shows the emphasis of 'togetherness' between the parents and their children. The mothers and their children work hard together to fill in any gaps in the children's abilities. For example, Ms. Kang describes her typical night routine.

*At night, I sit by our daughter [aged 14], waking her up when she falls asleep. When she finishes her study at around 2 am, I also go to bed (Ms. Kang)*

The children are not encouraged to be independent, self-directed, and self-motivated. Instead Korean parents focus their children to follow their instructions. The parents justify their stance by saying that well prepared children would be more confident and have more job choices. As mentioned before, in many cases the choices are made by the parents, not the children themselves. However, there is a growing debate on children's rights. A few interviewees argue that children should be respected as human beings with their own rights.

*Our husband and I think that we do not hold the sole ownership of our son. He believes that the child is a separate individual being, and if we are considered to be the earth, he's a new life growing out of it and is separate from us. Our role is to provide help for him to grow up safely without any harm done to him. That is what we consider essential (Ms. Lee)*

Unfortunately, this is still a minority opinion and clearly, there is little room for respect for children's opinions either in the family or in schools. They are the objects of their



parents' love and their sole purpose in life and are expected to be the obedient followers of their parents' guidance. At the same time, the parents give their own lives to their children and providing a secure future for their offspring is their most important desire. The parents are ready to do anything for their children and to provide a good educational environment while pushing their children to study hard. These children are coerced into studying hard. As a result the children do not have enough time to play with their friends, and are too busy studying. To maintain a good academic performance, free time for playing tends to diminish or be abandoned altogether.

*Our son does not get much time to play with friends. One of the main reasons for sending him to cram school is for him to make some friends and stay in touch with his seniors there (Ms. Seo)*

*When I ask my nieces, they say that going to those cramsters gives them the chance to hang out with their friends otherwise they never get to play with them. It's quite sad (Mr. Song)*

In some other cases, parents feel sorry for their children because they know their children are under such stress.

*I feel a little sorry for our children these days since they have so much to learn. I often hear them say, 'I am so tired' (Ms. Kang)*

*There are fewer children in a family nowadays. I wonder if children will be able to enjoy life when they spend so much time studying from early childhood. But if they don't study, they won't get ahead (Mr. Bang)*

*Our daughter [aged 7] always said 'I don't want to go to school. It's not fun. I hate it. Why do you make me study too much?' I feel uncomfortable, but it is something she has to do (Ms. Yang)*

In short, the desire of the parents for the educational success of their children is profound and it has a huge impact on their actual behaviour towards their children. The children's developmental needs for leisure, pleasure, and sleeping are overlooked. Their psychological and emotional well-being tends to be ignored. While parents largely control their children's lives throughout childhood and adolescence they expect them to live their own lives when they reach adulthood. This control has the sole aim of pushing their children to study hard in order to have a professional career in the future. It could be said that children in present day Korea are denied a childhood as it is sacrificed to the future. The findings clearly suggest that Korean parenting tends to emphasize the underlying influence of Confucian ideology, which has led to the importance of goals such as filial piety and academic achievement.



## **Chapter 7. Parenting at a Time of Rapid Change**

In this chapter, parental beliefs, values and behaviour in relation to parenting practices are explored. Focus is placed on parent-child relationships and the parents' own childhood experiences and their impact upon their children's satisfactory development.

### **7.1. Parent-Child Relationships**

It is generally accepted that there is no single universal right way to bring up children and that 'care must be taken to avoid value judgment and stereotyping' (Department of Health, 1990, p. 7). Appropriate skills for parenting vary over time and between different cultures. There are, of course, some basic ideas about behaviour that nearly everybody seems to agree on. Most cultures, for example, encourage their children to be honest and polite and discourage them from being rude and aggressive. However, people from different backgrounds have different ways of teaching their children how to behave, and to some extent different views on what constitutes 'good' behaviour.

Koreans say children need to be well-taught at home. This is called 'family education'. It means that if a child does not behave or shows bad manners, it is viewed as a reflection of poor family education and parents often become the ones to be criticized for not being able to teach their child properly. By the same token, when a child is

well-mannered he/she is believed to have received good and proper family education. Often the term teaching or education has been used synonymously with rearing, and hence a child who is well-taught is one who has been well brought up. Along the same lines, the majority of parents in this study tend to emphasize family education in their child rearing practices, as the following cases show:

*I think the most important role the mother plays right now is being the one responsible for family education and teaching them [children] morals and the appropriate or expected behaviours. (Mr. Nam)*

*Parents help to form the child's personality and morals before entering the world of school. All the basic knowledge and manners are taught at home. Family education is the base for that (Ms. Chung)*

In this respect, children are given very extensive experience of what is expected of their behaviour in general. From a young age they are exposed to explicit examples of proper behaviour. The concern in raising children focuses on proper personality development, along with academic achievement. It has already been discussed in the previous chapter that the parents interviewed pay special attention to promoting the ability of children to perform well at school. In this study, a large proportion of the children of the interviewees are told to be grateful, thank others, be respectful and polite, and show loyalty to their parents as well as elders.

*I tend to get mad when they are rude (talk back, start to eat before their elders, not greet people, etc), don't do what they are told to do, and don't keep to the agreed time (Mr. Chun)*

*He ignores his parents when they talk to him, pretends not to hear them and doesn't answer. I could never accept that behaviour (Ms. Choi)*



*I wouldn't call it a rule, but they have to mind their manners. They have to respect their elders, and be polite. They have to keep to curfews. Things like that are what they have to live with (Mr. Um)*

*... Using polite forms when speaking to us, the parents. They aren't too good at it yet, but they cannot be rude and disobedient. We keep reminding them about the things that we will and will not allow (Mr. Ban)*

In addition, the children are taught that their duty is to fulfil their filial obligation which is to achieve standing or be recognised as a very important person, which brings honour on their family. Children's actions are perceived as direct reflections of the parents' own worthiness and ability as parents and people judge the success of others by the achievements of their children. This is the way to measure the success of parental intervention. Therefore, their children should be prepared to function adequately in society. From this perspective, being unable to succeed or function in society at large brings disgrace to the family, while being successful is seen as a means of fulfilling one's filial obligations.

*I don't tell our children what type of person to be, just to work hard and be respectable in order to bring honour on our family (Ms. Seo)*

*What a daughter! 1<sup>st</sup> place in the school! Honestly speaking she's a good daughter. She has done well. The parents should be really happy that she's working so hard. Other mothers ask me what the secret is (Ms. Yoo)*

*Whenever our children do well in school and win awards it is a reason to show off and be proud and treat my friends to drinks. I am recognised as a parent who raises his children well (Mr. Moon)*

In regard to parental rules, there is a set standard of conduct. Parents are very clear on what they expect from the child, and what the child is not allowed to do. Fighting with a sibling, failing to do homework, and talking back to parents are regarded as a legitimate reason for punishment.

*I nag them when they spend the whole day just playing without doing any study (Ms. Kim)*

*I think the fact that he's disobedient and disrespectful towards his parents is the biggest problem. I cannot stand that. I try reasoning with him and even physically punish him in order to make him listen to us (Ms. Seo)*

*If J pushes his sister, or if they fight amongst themselves we scold them whenever they do something rude and naughty (Mr. Nam)*

Cleaning up after playing, keeping promises and being instilled with regular daily habits and manners are considered to be important as well.

*I'm making him take his meals on time in one place. I hate him being naughty while eating (Ms. Choi)*

*I want my children to get up earlier in the mornings and to keep their room tidy, but they tend to go to sleep late and get up late ...it isn't always easy (Mr. Ban)*

*I get quite angry if they play the whole day without having done their work up to where I've told them to do, or they don't do it properly (Ms. Kwon)*



From a parent's point of view, the purpose of these kinds of rules and guidelines is that it keeps the family running more smoothly and fosters family harmony so that the integrity of the family unit is preserved.

Different aspects of parenting may be influenced by different factors. Confucianism is one of the most influential in shaping the behaviour patterns and structure of the family and the community in Korean society. Bond and Hwang (1986) summarize the three essential aspects of Confucian thought as the following: 1) a person is defined by his or her relationships with others, 2) relationships are structured hierarchically, and 3) social order and harmony are maintained by each party honouring the requirements and responsibilities of the role relationships. Confucian tradition carries certain relationships. These include the relationship between a sovereign and a subject, a father and a son, an older brother and a younger brother, a husband and a wife, and friends. Because these relationships are structured hierarchically and dictate appropriate behaviour, the subordinate member is required to display loyalty and respect to the senior member, who is required to govern, teach, and discipline responsibly and justly (Pye, 1985; Hong, 1987; Lin and Fu, 1990; Macdonald, 1996; Lee et al., 1997; Choi, 1997). In particular, filial piety towards parents and elders is strongly emphasized in Korea. In fact, lack of parental control and disobedient children are frequently mentioned as problems in families. Most parents say that they want their children 'to be good'. When they are asked what it means to be a good person, most of them say children should listen to their parents, study hard and not offend others.

Rules for setting boundaries are an important part of everyday life (Adcock and White, 1985). However, the findings in this study suggest a potential problem in Korea in that

most parents set the rules and restrictions on the children without having any concept of negotiating with their offspring. The needs of children and the possibility of negotiation may vary with age, but, despite this, parents believe that they know what the standards are and what is best for their children and believe that children should be expected to conform to the rules they set. For instance, if their children misbehave, the parents feel it is their parental duty to try to turn their children into a decent person. To this effect, they use any method they can employ while pushing their children to do what they want them to do. They do not allow their children to make a choice. If, in spite of their efforts, it still does not work, they eventually try to listen to what is important to their children and why.

*I would do anything I could to encourage him with his academic work, but if he still didn't listen, I would be very strict. I would scold him and cane him. I wouldn't give up on him. I would not treat him as my son but as a sort of enemy ... But ... pushing him to study when he really didn't want to would have a really bad effect on him. That's not what I want. He may just want to learn a technical skill. I'll ask him about that, eventually (Ms. Yang)*

*Parents should try talking to their child. If that doesn't work, they should try caning him, grounding him or maybe sending him abroad for study. If he still cannot behave, they should just let him do whatever he wants to do. That would be tough on the parents. But he'll realize one day that the parents were right when he is living a hard life (Mr. Moon)*

One possible explanation which may influence parental control and discipline of children could be the assumption that 'parents are always right'. For this reason, children are conditioned to docility, receptiveness, and obedience under the hierarchical relationship between the parents and the children. The interaction between them is one way without open communication. Parents emphasize their authority rather than a



democratic relationship. Sometimes, when making decisions in the family, democratic participation may be used first, however, when children's opinions challenge parental authority, more control may be used, as Mr. Chun states:

*My family motto is 'you cannot be better than others by trying just as hard as them.' In other words, try your best to be the best. I say that once they set their mind to do something, they might as well do their best and be the best. The kids and my wife, however, seem to think that it's better to live in harmony in society, instead of being competitive. They say that because they don't know the world out there. There's always someone better than you, you have to be number one in the field that you are in. Only the strong survive. I'm sure I'm right and it should not be questioned (Mr. Chun)*

Some parents give reasons for their children not doing something, instead of just telling the child to stop doing something because they say so. However, this is not invariably successful and it is not easy for parents to put up with their children's disobedience. They may then finally resort to physical punishment. The comments from the mothers provide a clue to understanding this situation:

*I set the rules and tell the children to follow. I measure the rules against my own standards and decide on them rather than listening to the children too much. I tend to cane them when it comes to daily habits. 100 hits when they tell a lie. I cane them 10 times at each go. It makes their legs a bit red, but almost has no effect. Well it does have some influence, but sometimes not. So I have tried some methods other than caning – explaining to them why lies are bad, but that was useless too. I try not to cane them too often, but I go ahead with it if I feel it necessary (Ms. Yang)*

*SH [aged 3] is still too young for verbal communication to have any affect on him, so we use the cane to make him listen to us. We cane his backside, legs, arms, feet and back, but that doesn't happen often and most of the times we just talk (Ms. Kwon)*

In the sample, there are only two sets of parents who accept that giving children a good explanation when deciding on a rule and making them promise to keep it makes it much easier for the children to accept the consequence. In these families, the rules are negotiated between the needs and rights of the child and those of the parents. These parents also have a principle that it is better for children to learn through rewards rather than conflict and punishment, when their children reach the age of understanding. According to the parents interviewed, this may be as early as 3 or 4 years old.

*The most effective way to decide on a rule and make a promise on it with the child, is to communicate with the child and agree with each other. If you just say no, the child can never understand why (Ms. Choi)*

*If you and your child know the rules for particular situations, before they happen, it helps. In our family, there are sets of rules that we've worked out together (Ms. Kim)*

However, this is not common in Korea. This means that there is a widespread sense of uncertainty in terms of how they discipline their children.

Physical punishment is used to teach children to be good and is often quite severe.

*I hit the bottom of their feet about 10 times while talking to them, and if they repeat the same mistake, I cane them another 10 times and try to make them really understand their faults. When they realise what they have done wrong and feel sorry, I hug them and tell them I love them (Mr. Ban)*

*We take out the cane when we are really mad (Mr. Doe)*

*When I get really angry I beat them (Ms. Yoo)*



This may be viewed as harmful behaviour by western standards despite its positive intention. In Korea, however, parents believe that parental strictness is a sign of love and that parents who loves their children will teach them to behave properly.

*The parents only mean to do him good, there are no parents in the world that would want to harm their own children. If they don't care about them, they won't bother to govern them. It makes them stay on the right path (Ms. Hwang)*

*If parents ever need to punish their children, they should do it verbally, and if physical punishment is inevitable, it should be done with the sole purpose of correcting the children for their own good using the cane of love (Mr. Chang)*

*Even though we were punished a lot, we always knew that our parents were doing it for our own good, so we didn't feel defiant or anything (Mr. Han)*

Obedience towards parents is viewed as essential to maintaining family functioning and harmony. Thus, children should obey their parents and need to be educated to enable them to better serve the hierarchical order.

## **7.2. Parental Disciplinary Practices**

The overwhelming majority of parents in this study currently use a degree of physical force to ensure their children's good behaviour. As well as strict discipline, the beliefs of parental control, obedience, filial piety, family obligations, and respect for elders are all attributed to the influence of Confucianism (Bond and Hwang, 1986; Chao, 1994;

O'Brian and Lau, 1995; Lee, 1999c; Jung and Honig, 2000). Such beliefs have been shown to influence the child rearing methods chosen by parents. When children break the rules the first time, most parents tell the children not to do it again. If their children persist in the behaviour, a scolding or being shouted at follows. If these earlier attempts fail, they will eventually be caned or smacked regardless of whether it may work or not.

*It doesn't look good when a child sucks her thumb, and it should be corrected because it could deform her teeth arrangement as well. The parents should talk to her first and, if that doesn't work, try punishing her (Mr. Chun)*

*At first I talk to them quietly, but start yelling and caning them on their hands and legs if they don't listen to me. I explain to them why they are being punished and ask them how many times they deserve to be caned, and cane them as many times as they mention. That way they know that they are being punished for doing something wrong. My yelling and shouting doesn't really work on them, I have to use the cane to get them to pay attention (Ms. Noh)*

*If he still doesn't listen to me after a few warnings, I tell him that I will cane his legs (Ms. Shin)*

*The younger one [aged 30 months] is being very stubborn these days, so I smack her from time to time. I do it whenever I feel that she is being too much, but most of the time I try to resolve the situation with verbal communication (Mr. Ban)*

*It's the things that I tell him [her son] not to do. For example, I tell him not to jump off the sofa, but he keeps jumping off the sofa as well as the bed, and sometimes I end up grabbing the cane (Ms. Yang)*

*When I scold them, at first I try talking and then my voice grows louder if talking doesn't work. If that doesn't work either, I slap their backsides a few times. I was advised to hit their backsides. There really isn't anywhere else to hit them (Mr. Wu)*



Some of those who sometimes cane their children also use other positive methods as well, for example, verbal reasoning and time out.

*Prior to punishing them, we tell them to stand with their arms in the air in order to make sure that they don't repeat such behaviour. After about 10 minutes, we ask them to tell us about what they think they have done wrong. Sometimes they are caned 10 times on the legs. The kids try to avoid being caned. Caning leaves some marks, but they soon disappear (Mr. Nam)*

*In some cases they fight with each other, this usually involves punching each other's head, slapping each other and kicking. I tell them to stand on the balcony with their arms up or I send them to their room. If they continue to make a noise even out there instead of feeling sorry for what they have done, I ask them to come in and tell me what they did wrong and how many times they deserve to be caned and I cane them both because they both did something wrong. When they don't listen to me, I also refuse to give them things that they want, such as snacks, for 2-3 days a week. It's not a rule, just something I feel like doing because it tends to be effective (Ms. Yang)*

*I didn't give them many compliments, but I know how important they are, so I am trying. I notice the difference in the way the children perform a task when they are under pressure, and when they are being praised for their task (Mr. Wu)*

Surprisingly, only five interviewees among the participants take different approaches to managing their children's behaviour by using behaviour approaches such as removal of privileges and time out. Of these five, two were a couple and the others were individual parents. They also use non-punitive methods. For instance, they favour praise and reward because these techniques are shown to be effective ways of helping a child behave well.

*They have to keep their promises. For instance, they have to stick to it if they have made a plan with me to do something at a certain time. I'll buy them things that they want if they keep their word (Mr. Doe)*

*I tend to reward them if they do something good. For example, if my children get 100 % in their dictations, I buy them chocolate and ice-cream at the very least, so they are beginning to ask me what I'm going to get for them if they get it all right in dictation again ... I say very calmly, 'it is your life so you can decide to do whatever you want. If you don't want to do this, then quit it all right now! It doesn't matter if you do.' and then I leave the room. To tell you the truth, it would be a bit of a problem if he really decided to quit, but he never does (Ms. Huh)*

*They are both good at doing their own tasks. If they don't do a good job, I tell them to do it properly, and if they do a good job, I make sure to praise them (Mr. Cha)*

*When he was young I might have slapped his backside a few times, but I hardly ever do that these days (Mr. Han)*

However, these responses are rare and there is lack of alternative ways to scolding, shouting, threatening, smacking, and caning. It seems to be associated with a lack of knowledge and support for parents in positively managing their children's behaviour. Discipline is an important part of loving and caring for a child. In fact, most of the parents interviewed acknowledge the importance of discipline, as Ms. Shin states:

*If children do not learn how to behave, they will find it very difficult to get on, both with grown-ups and other children. They will find it hard to learn at school, will misbehave and will probably become unhappy and frustrated (Ms. Shin)*

However, when parents are asked how they discipline their children, they usually start to talk about how they punish them. It seems that parents do not know how to discipline without too much conflict and without punishment. Whilst they may



sometimes have to stop their children doing certain things, nearly all the parents in this study do not consider that there are different and effective ways of helping a child behave well. Most parents are likely to practise mainly authoritarian or controlling parenting (e.g., restrictions, control, and physical punishment). A minority also employ a few aspects of positive parenting (e.g., warmth and involvement) in different situations and at different times. Parents believe that both can be used as a means of teaching and educating their children in a positive way.

There is an interesting finding with regard to sharing their difficulties with professionals. Most parents believe that child rearing is a family matter and that they and their family can make the decisions about what ways to deal with their children without involving outside agencies.

*I think it is a little funny to seek professional advice at this stage. It's up to me to decide what I do for my kids (Ms. Yang)*

*It doesn't matter how slow his development is. He will probably grow up to be a better being than the other kids later on so I don't worry about it. I wouldn't take the child to a hospital (Ms. Ahn)*

In contrast, a small number of parents say they would discuss the matter regarding children with a professional.

*The formation of personality at a young age is very sensitive and important, so any misbehaviour should be corrected immediately. I would take the child to seek professional medical advice (Mr. Hong)*

*I have heard that many children do visit hospitals because they are disoriented. I think I've seen somewhere that medication can help them... well... it would be necessary to take him to a hospital (Ms. Shin)*

Perhaps parents feel that asking for help brings shame on the family as it means they cannot cope; or perhaps parents worry about the possibility of stigmatisation as a result of the family or their child having behavioural or psychological problems.

### **7.3. Childhood Experiences of Present-Day Parents**

In order to more fully understand parental involvement, it is helpful to look at the intergenerational similarities and differences in child rearing practices and attitudes. To do this, I examined the parents about their own childhood experiences.

Nearly all the participants spoke about how busy their parents were. This is related to the social and economic conditions in Korea during the last few decades. Korea was a Japanese colony from 1910 to 1945 and in the days following the Korean War (1950-1953), poverty was widespread. At that time, Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, but the economy has developed rapidly since the 1960s. Korea has grown to be the world's 11<sup>th</sup> largest economy and to become the 29<sup>th</sup> member of the OECD (Hwang, 2004). At the heart of this dynamic emergence of the miraculous economy of Korea was a high quality and low cost labour force, together with strong state intervention that drove economic growth (Lee, 1999a; Kwon, 1999, 2001). These changes in the socio-economic and political structure have had an impact upon family



members. In order to make a living and rebuild the country at large, their parents had to work very hard. The interviewees in this study, therefore, believe that their parents tried hard to spare time for their children, but in reality this proved impossible. According to them, at that time, parenting issues may have become secondary to issues of daily survival.

*Everyone was busy making a living when we were young, and our parents didn't have much time to pay attention to us (Mr. Doe)*

*I don't remember spending much time with my parents. Just living as a family was being together. There was neither amusement parks nor toys ... I think my parents didn't pay enough attention to us because they were so busy (Mr. Wu)*

*My father never used to play with us. He just scolded us ... I don't remember going anywhere with him, or eating out with him. I don't recall doing anything with him. (Ms. Kwon)*

*The way I grew up is so much different from the way children grow up nowadays. When I was growing up in the 60's, parents thought providing basic physical care was good enough for raising children because they were going through hard times (Mr. Nam)*

During those years, Koreans developed the idea that education was the best means to escape from poverty. They put a high value on education. Most interviewees confirm that their parents stressed the importance of academic work. In this respect, according to the interviewees, the parents of the past generation believed that higher education could ensure economic security, as do the current generation.

*I think what my parents considered important was to live a good life. Our family lived poorly in the countryside by farming. In order to educate us, the entire family moved up to Seoul to gain access to the best schools. My parents didn't want me to become a doctor, but they pushed me to study hard (Mr. Wu)*

*My father was obsessive about studying. Studying was everything to him. If I ever asked him for money to buy some snacks, he wouldn't give me any, but if I asked for money to buy books, he'd give it to me straightaway (Mr. Chang)*

*They didn't say what type of people they wanted us to be, but just said graduate from a good university and become someone that can manage her/his own life ... Above all, they used to put the most stress upon the point that going to a good university would enable us to get decent jobs and earn money. So they always used to tell us to study, over and over again. We could neither watch TV nor listen to music, it was hard for us (Ms. Yang)*

*I don't know if it was just my parents, but they never really told me specifically to become a certain type of person. They just wished me to go to a university and get a job as they thought that was the best way to go. They just wanted me to study hard, it's as simple as that (Mr. Doe)*

In order to have a prestigious occupation which may lead to economic security, their parents wanted their children to work hard to become respectable and successful people.

*When I was in high school, I discovered my aptitude for science and at that time being a specialized engineer, such as an IT job, was highly recommended by everyone, so my parents had no objection to it. Even if I had wanted to be a lawyer or a medical doctor, they wouldn't have objected. But if I had dreamed of working in the agricultural field, art or music, they may have objected (Mr. Song)*

*As I got older they [my parents] told me to study hard. They told us to be good people and to enter a certain type of profession (Mr. Hong)*



The older generation also wanted their children to gain opportunities for a better life than they had had, as Mr. Moon says:

*My parents always used to say to us, that we should be better off than themselves. I agreed with that. I wish for my kids to be successful and live better lives than us (Mr. Moon)*

Based on data from parents' responses, it appears that some parents of the interviewees placed great importance on academic achievement as a means to acquire higher social status, wealth, and respect in society, while others had a great desire to realise their unfulfilled dreams through their children, since Koreans perceive their children as their other self and as a precious extension of the family rather than independent beings.

*My parents haven't got much formal education, and it was their dream to see their child go to university, and work in a decent company after graduating from the university. Then meet a nice girl and get married and have a few children and live happily. That was what they wanted for me (Mr. Wu)*

*My father had to discontinue his university education because his family couldn't afford it. Using his own words, he was hungry for knowledge. Because of that hunger, he used to buy us all the books we wished for. He wouldn't buy us any toys, but he always bought us books (Mr. Hong)*

*My parents were so enthusiastic about studying, they stressed it all the time to us. We grew up listening to my parents constantly telling us to become a doctor, an attorney or judge. I believe that my parents wanted to provide us with the opportunity to receive the education that they couldn't get themselves (Mr. Bang)*

In contrast to the present time, they fully trusted and relied on schools for their children's discipline and education. At that time, the school was a place which everyone had absolute faith and trust in.

*In those days, no one asked for favours from the school, as the teachers were so powerful. We thought going to school everyday and doing what the school wanted us to do was everything then (Ms. Ahn)*

*People believed that everything became possible once they went to the school. The teachers were mighty beings to us. I thought they were like gods. You know the old saying that we shouldn't even step on the shadow of the teachers. Back then the teachers were people of such a high standing, and respected greatly. Nowadays, it's not the same (Mr. Nam)*

*We used to just do our homework at home and were taught more about character building subjects, and studied much more at school. I think that because my parents were so busy, they more or less relied entirely on the school for our academic tuition (Ms. Yoo)*

The parents of participants in this study valued and desired control of their children. Thus, they used to be quite strict with them. They were not as eager to show their affection, as parents now would have liked. However, although they appeared strict and were not demonstrative, many interviewees in this study say that they could feel the depth of their parents' love.

*They were never very affectionate, just like other parents from that generation. Because of that I just remember them being very strict with us. They were not rich enough to buy us nice things, but just tried to feed us all the time and tried to show their love by that (Ms. Yang)*



*Well... feeding and dressing us well was the way to show their affection. Different from the way I show it now (Ms. Kwon)*

*I doubt there was any way of showing affection then. The parents loved their kids just the same, but ... (Mr. Bang)*

In this respect, severe corporal punishment was used to make sure of their children's obedience and conformity. Perhaps some of this sternness may be seen as demonstrating parental responsibility or that parents were highly involved, caring and concerned.

*We used to get scolded when we didn't listen to our parents, and were caned when our grades at school fell in the exams. My parents used to say that grades didn't matter as long as we were well-behaved, but we still got caned a lot about our report cards (Ms. Yang)*

*I remember a lot of scolding and caning and not much praising. My mother was known as the tiger lady in the neighbourhood, she used to beat me with a cane and a belt (Mr. Hahm)*

*I suppose all the fathers from that generation were just the same, but my father was so strict and conservative, and if I didn't do something he wanted me to do, I always got beaten till my legs were all bruised. He didn't sit down and explain things to us (Mr. Chang)*

*We used to be beaten badly whenever we fought amongst ourselves. We used to be hit on our backsides by a bat, and my father used to throw any objects he managed to grab. Once my younger brother got hit by an ashtray that he threw, and had to get stitches. Most of my childhood memories are about being beaten up in school as well as at home (Mr. Chun)*

Interestingly, the care and discipline of the youngsters was not the sole responsibility of the parents but was shared with the older siblings, especially the older sisters. They were also permitted to physically punish their younger siblings.

*My older sister was punished not only for her own misbehaviour but also for the misbehaviour of youngsters, like me, that she did not successfully control (Mr. Song)*

*I was hit by my older brother instead of my busy parents and my older sister and I smacked our younger siblings because they didn't study, fought with each other, and didn't listen to us. I only did it for their own good. We looked after each other (Ms. Ahn)*

*The age gap between my eldest sister and me is 19 years, apparently she practically raised me on her back. There are many people that ask us if she is my mother if we ever go out together. My sister paid me the attention that I needed (Mr. Nam)*

#### **7.4. Dissonances**

Most parents in this study show somewhat ambivalent attitudes towards their parenting practices. There is a great dissonance between the reality of their behaviour and how they say they want to be.

The main difference between the two generations is that the current parents may not be comfortable using physical punishment although they believe that caning a naughty child is inevitable, if regrettable. Anxieties over how parents bring up children



appropriately and the effectiveness of physical discipline are being debated amongst some parents, as Ms. Shin says:

*There are magazines or books to tell us how to praise our children to enhance their ability. It does not work well, however, because mothers are human beings and we have emotions, too. Many of my friends are also worried about how to bring up their children. Although I want to be a good mother, I hate myself when I cane my children as I know deep down that it is not good for them (Ms. Shin)*

It is clear that it becomes a vicious circle of unhelpful patterns. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, although they report more nurturance and less control than their own parents' generation, their actual actions towards their children are harsher than they say they want to be. Parents in the present generation seem to consider physical punishment acceptable partly because the child needs to be punished for something he/she has done wrong. They still view corporal punishment as a permissible or even necessary form of discipline, while attitudes towards it are generally negative.

*Ah, I try not to hit my children. But as you know, there are times when caning is necessary, but I don't cane them as hard as I used to be caned. I was black and blue (Ms. Yang)*

*I don't agree with teaching the child a lesson with a cane. But if I use it, I want to make sure beforehand that we give them a full explanation on what they did wrong and confirm their understanding of the consequences of their actions. If they do something good, I praise them and reward them (Mr. Song)*

When they are asked about where they obtain their information on discipline and education, most of them say that their source of information is mostly from their close

friends or other mothers in the neighbourhood rather than from their own parents. However, they agree that as a role model they rely on their own parents. They realise that there are some similarities between them and their own parents' parenting attitudes and practices, the following comments illustrate this:

*I feel like I am becoming like my parents were in the sense that I tell my kids to do something that I want, but if they don't wish it, I don't force them. I have never told them to strive for a particular profession, but just work hard to become a respectable being (Ms. Seo)*

*I am not too sure. I was scarred for life by my mother about studying, so I try to resist the urge to tell my children to study although I often fail. I was forced to study till 11p.m.-12a.m. when I was in primary school, and eventually I got sick of working and became quite defiant. I want to let my children manage their own work and study by themselves, but it's not always easy. Now that I am raising children of my own, I find myself pestering them about doing homework and studying (Ms. Yang)*

The typical response of parents interviewed towards the parenting style of their own parents is the following:

*My father always checked if I had finished a task, and scolded me if it had not been done. There were no encouraging words such as 'you will be okay, don't worry about it'. I suppose all the fathers from that generation were just the same, but my father was so strict and conservative. So, when I was young, I used to hate my parents telling me what to do all the time. I don't want to be like my father (Mr. Moon)*

Mr. Moon does not want to take after his father, but in reality, Mr. Moon does the same things as his father did to him and his siblings. Mr. Moon's children live a well organised schedule managed by their parents. Although Mr. Moon and Ms. Noh are aware that it is not always possible to complete a task within a planned time frame,



when their children fail to meet a deadline, they get stressed out with them just as their own parents did.

This is because parenting attitudes and their determinations are transmitted from one generation to another directly or indirectly through an internal working model (Belsky, 1984, 1990). However, it does not fully explain the fact that there are many parents who do change their parenting style from that of their parents. The majority of parents whom I interviewed say that they use more reasoned guidance than their parents, who used harsh discipline in raising children. All of the parents say that they attempt to demonstrate their affection through physical contact with their children and employ positive rather than negative parenting methods.

*About the way my parents showed their affection towards me... Well... I think all the parents from that generation were similar, they would appear strict but love us all the same. But now I'm better with physical interaction with my child (Mr. Hong)*

*The difference would be the methods by which we teach them. These days we plan things together with the children and pay them lots of attention, and try to spend more time with them (Mr. Ban)*

*I am concerned that she'll grow up to be too shy. Her shyness may be a ploy to get the parents' attention, and the parents should try to compliment and praise her for good behaviour to boost her confidence, rather than scolding her all the time (Mr. Bang)*

*What I do differently is I give my kids kisses and compliments a lot (Ms. Park)*

Furthermore, parents in the current generation report significantly more nurturance and acceptance compared with their own parents. According to them, their parenting style can be characterized as more affectionate and more flexible than their own parents.

*I think I'm raising my child better than the way I was raised. I always try to do those things that I wished my parents had done for me. My parents were strict in a lot of ways. They didn't explain things to the kids. They would just use a cane on them (Mr. Um)*

*The old generation just thought sending us to school and feeding us would make us grow up. They would just pinch our faces as a display of affection, but would never hug or kiss us like we do with our children these days. They must have been too embarrassed or maybe they simply expressed it differently. Their thoughts are the same, but it isn't always easy to express them (Mr. Ban)*

*My parents and I share a common belief that everyone should have goals in life. Implementing such an idea is similar, but the method differs between my father and me. People from the old generation physically punished their children, if I didn't do something he wanted me to do, I always got beaten, really badly too, till my legs were all bruised. However, I try to consult my kids by asking them for their opinions and figuring ways to put their wishes into action (Mr. Chang)*

It seems that they are, at least, trying to give parental support, such as reasoning, listening to children's opinions and providing emotional warmth to their children. This finding could be indicative of an observed trend that parents are becoming less controlling and are gradually moving away from a traditional child rearing orientation. This result is similar to other previous Korean studies that compared child rearing attitudes between generations and report that the current generation shows more democratic and permissive child rearing attitudes and maintains closer ties with their children than their parents' generation did (Cho and Shin, 1996; Jung and Honig, 2000).



Theoretically, there are differences between the behaviour of parents with a predominantly secure childhood who felt free to diverge from their parents' behaviour to them and those with oppressive or problematic childhoods who were 'doomed' to repeat the abusive behaviours. There is a good example of it. Mr. Chun, whose father used to severely punish him physically, tries not to follow his parents' practices on child rearing and wishes to respond calmly. However, he usually loses his temper and uses physical punishment in order to control his children's behaviour.

*I try to talk to them, but when I cannot control my anger, I hit them with my hand on the back and arms. My wife really detests that. She tells me that hitting is one thing, but I should really be using a cane and beat them on the legs or their palms. I think that in my head, but when the situation occurs, my hand moves first. It's something I really should correct (Mr. Chun)*

He reluctantly accepts that he utilises disciplinary acts similar to his own parents when he finds himself doing the same with his children.

*My father couldn't control his temper very well and used to throw things at us and hit us, and I think I take after my father' in that I am impatient and have a quick temper. I should do something about it, but it's not that easy. Now that I think about it, my father was like that. Oh gee...(Mr. Chun)*

This suggests that there may be a need for a different kind of intervention. For instance, stable parents can be helped to modify their behaviour through social education whereas depressed parents may need much more intensive and psychological help to change their ways (Butler and Roberts, 1997; Braun, 2001)

Another discrepancy can be found in relation to the fathers' taking part in child rearing. The majority of fathers believe that they are making efforts to become and stay involved in the daily responsibilities of child rearing. They believe that they are more involved in all aspects of child rearing compared to their own parents. They say that they spend more time looking after and chatting with the children, and have a more encouraging approach to their children.

*My father could not spare much time for me as he was too busy playing the role of breadwinner, but I'm giving my children the attention they need (Mr. Bang)*

*I think to myself that 'if I had received this kind of treatment from my parents in the past, it would have been helpful, and may have made a difference to making my work easier.' (Mr. Wu)*

*My father was quite strict, which I don't want to be. I try not to be like him by playing with my son like a friend and conversing with him to get along with him. When I was growing up, I never really talked to my father, but I want to communicate with my son much more and go to places with him (Mr. Hong)*

It seems that fathers want to compensate for perceived deficiencies in their childhood by trying to create a more positive experience for their children. However, when we look at their attitudes and approach to child discipline, as clearly illuminated in the previous section, the reality is quite different at the present time for many fathers. For example, Mr. Han's role is limited to praising his wife's effort to train their sons to build good study habits and to expressing his desire to ensure their children's academic successes. Other interviewees also confirm it:

*My husband does not seem to be all that interested in our children's education, although I know that it may appear like that because he's so busy with his work. He*



*also trusts me to handle their education and assumes that I will manage it on my own (Ms. Yang).*

*I don't get to spend much time with them so I try to be nice to them (Mr. Moon)*

*I have many plans, I just need to put them into action (Mr. Song)*

Although it may be true that fathers in the current generation spend slightly more time with their children than their own parents, we have seen that nearly all the fathers in this study play a minimal role in the upbringing of their children because they are too busy to be involved in their daily life.

In brief, although the Korean family has undergone many changes, the traditional cultural value that it is the parents' right to discipline their children is still supported. Furthermore, most discipline is exercised through physical chastisement. This was also the way in which they, the parents, were brought up and educated. However, there is a sense of ambivalence about doing this in terms of appropriateness. In this respect, although they do not agree with their own handling of their way, the parents interviewed still tend to use harsh discipline methods, deeply rooted in Confucian principles, in their own parental practices.

## **Chapter 8. Parental Attitudes towards Child Abuse**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the basic understanding, as well as the attitudes, of parents towards child abuse. The discussion will include how they understand the term child abuse and what might constitute acceptable or unacceptable parenting behaviours. It is hoped that some of the major themes running through the parents' perceptions of child abuse will be revealed along with the presentation of these findings.

### **8.1. Definitional Issues**

Despite the fact that the term child abuse is widely used internationally, it has different meanings for Koreans, as revealed by the pilot study. The word in Korean for 'abuse' is and carries a meaning of extreme brutality. It is a serious, unfavourable and derogatory term and it carries a connotation of wilful or intentional harm. It is therefore not surprising that parents were reluctant to use the term, except for extreme physical or sexual abuse, such as burning a child or having sex with a child. They did not wish to use the term to describe behaviour which they considered to be 'unacceptable' or even harmful to children.



*Of course, I think certain actions are unacceptable behaviour that parents mustn't do toward children, but that is not to say that I really regard it as abuse. Abuse is too horrible a word (Ms. Kim)*

*There may not be child abuse cases. Rather it should be called 'silly behaviour'. The word child abuse scares me (Ms. Huh)*

*Well ... for me, the term abuse is too strong so I prefer to use behaviour which may not be good for children rather than abuse (Ms. Byun)*

*In my opinion, there's no such things as child abuse. I haven't noticed it and I haven't thought about it until you asked me. Even if there are some cases which I think are abuse, I don't call it abuse. It may be called ... bad behaviour? Not good for children? Or ... behaviour that shouldn't be done to children (Mr. Hahn)*

*Child abuse is shown as a serious problem in the media, but the truth is, we don't see it exposed around us in real life. So I'm not too sure about it. We don't quite understand what it's really like. We see it on the TV and wonder if such parents really do exist, but we don't completely feel it 100 % (Mr. Nam)*

It seems therefore that at present Korean parents use the term 'abuse' in a very restricted sense, whereas in the West, it is used more widely, from gross abuse to behaviours which may be described as 'abusive' even if they do not have grossly serious consequences. For example, those in the UK who argued that all smacking should be made illegal were insisting that the very act of hitting a child was inherently abusive, because it damaged the self-esteem of the child and was therefore against her/his human rights. Their argument did not rest on the severity of the punishment. This is in contrast to the Korean parents in my sample who would not describe physical punishment as 'abuse' unless it was, in their view, excessively severe; done out of anger, or too frequently. Many parents in the UK would also share the reluctance of Korean

parents to describe physical punishment as abuse but it seems likely that they would not tolerate the level of physical punishment which is acceptable to Korean parents.

## 8.2. The Perceptions of Abusive Behaviour

Twenty-five behaviours that could be perceived as child abuse were used for the interviewees to judge (see Appendix F). Their rationale for deciding whether the behaviour was abusive rested on three elements: whether the actions were taken without the adult controlling her/his anger; behaviour which they perceived harmed the child physically in any way; punishment which is being exercised without having given a reason or having been carried out too severely.

*It is abuse if the child doesn't know why he/she is getting caned, and if the parents don't know the reason for the caning either. But I don't think it is abuse if the child understands why he/she is being punished, even if the caning is a little severe (Mr. Song)*

*I pool all activities that may harm the child in anyway into the abuse category. The most obvious one would be severe beating of the children, caning in anger. Children behave in their kiddie ways, and beating them just because the parents get angry is definitely abuse (Ms. Choi)*

*Violence caused by lack of control of feelings is abuse (Ms. Lee)*

*Any behaviour that cannot be understood when thought from the child's point of view (Ms. Byun)*



## Physical Abuse

The interviewees in this study seem to generally tolerate corporal punishment. Caning and making a child kneel down are deemed to be widely acceptable as methods of physical discipline. However, burning a child deliberately is considered by an overwhelming majority of parents to be extremely serious. Thus, not all forms of physical discipline are acceptable to the parents.

Over half of the interviewees doubt whether shaking a child is abuse. For them, this behaviour is acceptable if the parents have good intentions, if it is not hard, if they can control their own bad temper, or if a child is disobedient.

*Lifting a child up and down because he/she is so adorable is fine, but shaking her/him badly with the intention of hurting her/him would be child abuse (Ms. Seo)*

*Shaking a child so hard that he/she may pass out is abuse, but shaking her/him lightly wouldn't be (Mr. Chun)*

*Shaking a child out of anger is abuse (Ms. Choi)*

*Shaking a child hard should not be done, but it's not abuse. It's usual for the parents to shake the child if he/she is being disobedient (Ms. Yang)*

In contemporary Western societies, an understanding of the effects of shaking babies is being developed. Several studies point out that head injuries from shaking are invisible and that babies can suffer permanent brain damage (Carty and Ratcliffe, 1995; Shepherd and Sampson, 2000; Wheeler, 2003). Interestingly, nobody whom I interviewed notes

that shaking a child could bring a different result depending on the age of child. The possible harm caused by shaking a baby receives no attention at all. This suggests that the parents are not informed about shaken baby syndrome although they and the main carer of a child must need to know of its dangers.

Slapping is considered to be harmful behaviour compared to shaking a child because marks are left more easily and it makes a child feel ashamed. Being slapped on the face is a tremendous 'loss of face' to the person slapped. It may not be considered to be a disciplinary measure but a method of shaming someone. Therefore, it is viewed as having more potential to cause emotional damage than others.

*It's quite bad, especially for a girl. She would feel so embarrassed (Ms. Yang)*

*Hitting a child on the face, especially slapping should not be done. It would hurt the children's feelings badly, and also could leave a mark on the face (Ms. Noh)*

However, despite this, it seems that the mitigating circumstances for slapping are when the parents have good intentions, when it happens infrequently, or when the child is disobedient

*Depends on whether it was done with the purpose of teaching the child something, or just because of personal feelings (Mr. Doe)*

*Slapping on the face may happen, but a frequent occurrence is not acceptable. It may not fall into the category of abuse, but should not happen often (Ms. Yoo)*



*Some mothers slap their children when they get mad. Slapping them on the cheeks is quite bad, but sometimes it is acceptable. For example, the child must have done something really bad to make her/his mother do that to her/him (Ms. Ahn)*

Common methods of discipline include punitive measures such as kneeling on the floor and being caned on the buttocks, legs, or palms with a cane. The vast majority of parents interviewed accept making a child kneel down as a basic disciplinary action. It is the most favoured punitive method to encourage children to reflect upon their behaviours.

*This would make the children feel sorry for what they have done, sort of like a pre stage before caning (Mr. Moon)*

*This type of punishment is given by the school quite often. It's the most usual method of punishment (Ms. Noh)*

*I make my children do this all the time (Mr. Wu)*

However, although it is culturally acceptable, under certain circumstances it seems to be abusive if it is carried out for a long time, with no good reason or no good intention.

*If this continues for a long time, it could be considered to be abuse (Mr. Chang)*

*It's not abuse if the child fully understands the situation, but if not, it is (Mr. Hong)*

*It can be used as a means of teaching children a lesson when they have done something wrong. But if the parents make them do that simply because they are making some noise or whatever, that is abuse (Ms. Choi)*

Using a cane for corporal punishment of children by parents is very common in Korean families and it is administered for educational purposes. Corporal punishment in the Asian tradition is not viewed as child abuse. In Korea, it is a traditional part of raising children and has existed for many years. Thus, it may not always be associated with hostility to the child, but may be considered as an effective way to achieve desirable behaviour. The parents indicate that they use it to discipline their children as a sign of parental concern.

*I think when children do something wrong, they should be punished for it. Caning them is meant to be for their own good. It hurts the parents even more. I cane my child, but it hurts me more (Mr. Chun)*

*I think the term child abuse has only come up in recent years. The older generation, like our parents, might have the view that children had to be physically punished if they were not obedient. It's a sign of parental concern. To me, the term is a new and unfamiliar one (Ms. Kim)*

In Korean society, physical punishment is supposed to be administered as a symbol of disapproval of the child's behaviour. It should be detached from and devoid of anger or emotion. Korean parents believe that using an object, such as a cane, helps to formalise and control their behaviour.

*Our parents used to hit us. I think it's okay to cane children to teach them a lesson because talking doesn't work. The parents' personal feeling shouldn't be involved, I doubt there are any parents who'd do that. They all mean the best for the children (Ms. Noh)*

This is in contrast to the view generally held in the West that if corporal punishment is administered it is best done by the hand and immediately. There is a real difference of



opinion about this. In recent years in the West, if corporal punishment is used at all, there is a feeling that it should be part of a spontaneous reaction to the child's bad behaviour and therefore understood by the child. Yet for Korean parents the danger of such interaction is obvious - they fear it may lead to loss of control.

Moreover, there is also a belief that children must be trained to obey. Thus, Korean children are trained to accept their parents' caning and other forms of punishment as necessary and beneficial to them. They are taught that parents show love and affection to their children by using corporal punishment. Understanding of this is important because it means that parents are not blamed for caning. However, very recently, there has been some public debate or questioning of this attitude. There is growing concern about what level of punishment is seen as acceptable or unacceptable. These parents regard caning as a legitimate form of physical discipline; it is more acceptable if the child is disobedient, if it happens infrequently, if it is not too hard, if the child knows the reason why he/she is punished, the adult is not under stress, and the adult has good intentions.

*If the child does something against the rules that deserves caning, it's not abuse to physically punish him (Ms. Byun)*

*I don't really think this is abuse. But caning the child because of the parents' mood, as a habit and caning them too hard may be abuse (Ms. Yang)*

*There are mothers that hit their children till they bruise, once they get angry. I know of a mother that makes a 12 year old go on all fours, and hits her/him on the backside. I think as long as the children do not get bruised badly and the mother does not use it as a method of relieving her own stress, it's not abuse (Ms. Ahn)*

*Explaining to children why they are being punished, and asking them if they think they deserve to be caned a few times for the things they have done would make it a non-abusive action. But if the parents cane the child because they cannot control their emotions, that is abuse (Ms. Seo)*

*I'd have to analyse the situation. If the child deserved caning, he/she should be. But caning without a reason is not acceptable. Caning is only alright when it can bring a positive change in the child's behaviour (Ms. Kwon)*

Although there is widespread acceptance of caning as a disciplinary measure, Korean parents are faced with a dilemma regarding disciplinary punishment of their children. The majority of parents in this study do use the cane but are beginning to doubt its effectiveness.

*I don't think anything can be more effective than this when the child does something wrong although sometimes it doesn't work. I used to get beaten badly but I turned out okay (Mr. Moon)*

*I don't think it's a good method. But if my children don't listen to me even after I make them do what is mentioned in number 4, I cane them. I don't think this is abuse, just a punishment (Mr. Wu)*

Only one father in this study sees caning as abuse. He says:

*It is not the solution. It could hurt the children either physically or emotionally (Mr. Chang)*

Ironically, however, he does cane his children, but, according to him, it happens only if it is really inevitable, and it is defined as 'the cane of love'. This may suggest that changes in attitudes are not necessarily accompanied by changes in behaviour.



It is clear that there are grey areas between acceptable physical punishment and physical abuse. It remains a debatable issue and there are arguments for and against its use.

## Neglect

Behaviours in the neglect group are mostly to be seen in the low consensus category. It is generally acknowledged that children should be protected as far as possible from exposure to any kind of danger. However, throughout the interviews it was found that, in general, the exercise of parental judgement in the behaviours described as neglect depends on the extent and nature of multiple deprivations. Therefore, the explanations of neglect as an outcome of economic deprivation and associated stress are common in this study. Under these circumstances, neglect is understandable.

Actions suggesting neglect are mitigated by various circumstances. Whether ignoring signs of illness in a child is judged to be abusive depends on the seriousness of the illness or the financial situation of the family.

*Korean people tend just to bear the pain. Frequent visits to the hospital may make them weaker too. It would be abuse not to take the child to the hospital when he/she is suffering badly, but there would be no parents that wouldn't take their child to hospital when they can afford it. But if they cannot afford it, even if the child is terminally ill, there is nothing they can do about it. That would not be abuse. What kind of parents would leave their children to be seriously ill when they can afford to take them to the hospital? (Ms. Noh)*

*I don't think there are any parents that wouldn't take their child to hospital when he/she is sick. There may be cases where the parents cannot afford to take her/him,*

*such as if they have financial difficulties. If the family is poor, the parents cannot take their sick child to hospital. It's so sad. This is not abuse. Think about how the parents must feel about it! (Ms. Yang)*

A strong insurance-based welfare infrastructure has been put in place in Korea. In healthcare, we have a large private sector, covering most primary care and most traditional medicine, which remains significant in our society. The core funding mechanism is social insurance rather than a tax-funded system. Therefore, in Korea, medical accessibility depends on insurance records, and there are predictable problems in ensuring equality of access. The very residual role assumed by the state in Korea has meant a shortage of provision for those on low incomes. There is considerable evidence for the existence of significant poverty. In addition, we do not have a system of children's allowances.

Most participants felt that whether it is understandable for parents to ignore educational needs and make no effort to keep a child clean depends on the income status of the parents, the age of the children, the frequency of the occurrence, the adult's intention, and to some extent, how busy the working parents are.

*The parents cannot handle their children's educational needs because they are too busy or it is financially too tough. It is the parents' role to fulfil the educational desire of the children, but it wouldn't be abuse not to be able to play that role all that well (Mr. Chun)*

*Depends if it was inevitable. Being unable to pay for food because of lack of money and unable to help with the homework because of lack of time is okay, but other than that, it is abuse (Mr. Hahm)*



*Life's tough on them, what can be done? Well ... I could say these people are shouldn't be parents, but it is not abuse (Ms. Kwon)*

*This [making no effort to keep a child clean] depends on the situation. The parents may not have been able to take care of such things because they are so busy or because they are so poor (Ms. Shin)*

*I stay home so I bathe the children and dress them neatly, but some mothers are too busy to do that. It would be a problem not to clean little babies as they may catch diseases, but children above primary school really should be able to wash themselves. The fault is not entirely with the mother alone (Ms. Noh)*

*I think ignorance and abuse are different things. It's not good, but it's not abuse (Mr. Bang)*

In other words, the respondents in this study tended to view the failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs as being very likely caused by financial hardship and social and material deprivation despite the fact that only a minority of deprived and disadvantaged people abuse their children.

With regard to allowing a child access to inappropriate material, my interviewees express great uncertainty whether it could be classified as abuse. On the one hand, the parents who regard it as abusive behaviour state that it may cause the children to be violent or be a potential cause of psychological damage. On the other hand, other parents are just not sure about it and they believe it is understandable under certain circumstances.

*This shouldn't be allowed, but we can't call this abuse, can we? I'm trying to prevent my child from accessing inappropriate material, but if my child sees it, do I abuse my child? ... No, I don't think so (Mr. Doe)*

*Well, the kids should not be watching these, if it is inappropriate for their age, but they do get to watch a lot of soap operas or they play video games which are marked for over 15 years old. They are not exactly for children. I watch or play them with them. So if you call that abuse, there would be no parents that are innocent. Seriously indecent materials such as real porno should not be watched though (Ms. Noh)*

There is ongoing debate whether expecting a child to take care of younger children should be considered abuse or not.

*I think this is quite common in our country. In some ways the government is responsible, but it is not bearing its responsibility. So this can't be considered child abuse. It is abuse if the parents leave their children with grandparents so that they can go out and have fun (Mr. Hong)*

*I'm not sure about this. If there really is no one to take care of them, the eldest child should do it (Ms. Ahn)*

Many parents do not regard it as child abuse even though they usually agree with the fact that this situation could be a burden for children.

*This could become a huge burden to the children, but I don't see it as abuse (Mr. Chang)*

*I think it's something that cannot be helped. It's a big burden to the child if the government doesn't do anything about it, but there is no definite solution to the problem either, hence considering it as abuse may not be right (Ms. Seo)*



*This kind of situation should not happen, but it can't be helped. The children should take care of their parents if they are ill, it's a good thing that the children get to stay in their home instead of getting sent off to orphanages. I think this situation is unavoidable, considering the circumstances (Ms. Noh)*

Also, leaving a child alone in the house is considered to be acceptable in many circumstances. In particular, leaving older children alone is also acceptable regardless of circumstances.

*I think a primary school student should be able to stay home alone. Our children eat on their own and are just fine by themselves. It's a way of teaching them to be independent, which I think is good (Mr. Chun)*

*This is really not abuse as long as the rules for safety are explained to the children. Sometimes the children actually prefer to stay at home alone (Ms. Kang)*

*This is possible if both of the parents work and if the family is really poor. In this case, they couldn't make proper arrangements for child care (Mr. Wu)*

In this study, the age of a child affects the parents' response. When the parents are asked about which age is proper to leave a child at home alone, they state 6 to 9 years old.

*I heard that leaving a child under the age of 12 alone at home is an offence and the parents can get prosecuted in some countries like Canada and the United States, if reported. Our country is not like that. I think telling the child around the age of 6 to stay at home while the mother goes somewhere would be okay, but leaving the child alone without informing her/him of anything, can be abuse (Ms. Choi)*

*Depends on the age. Once a child enters school, he/she may need to learn to be at home alone. But before that age, that could be a problem. Entering the school shows*

*that the child can analyse the situation and behave accordingly up to a certain point (Ms. Yang)*

*I think a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader in primary school should be able to stay home alone. But I don't think the child should be left alone for a long period of time. One day may be the maximum (Mr. Wu)*

*It depends on how old the child is. I think from about 4<sup>th</sup> year in primary school is okay (Mr. Doe)*

## **Emotional Abuse**

Most of the interviewees in this study did not rate these actions as clearly abusive. When confronted with the behaviours described as emotional abuse, the interviewees had a dilemma because they recognised them as behaviour they themselves practised and were reluctant to acknowledge it. They attempted to minimise the actions by laughing at them and making light of them when they ticked them.

*Parents, from time to time, do things that they know are not good for their children when raising them. I don't think that would be abuse (Ms. Yoon)*

After rating the behaviour, they then explain very carefully what they have done and they try to justify their actions. There is a good deal of variation in how the various actions are judged. There are also varying levels of tolerance towards each action. They seem to be pretty sure of what constitutes emotionally harmful behaviour towards children, but they do not feel that such acts constitute abuse. It could be argued that there is a gap between attitudes and actions, reflecting a cultural shift, which can start



with consciousness of what should be ideal behaviour, but, on this matter, the actual behaviours have not yet changed.

Three behaviours in the emotional abuse category are considered to be unacceptable by the majority of parents. These are locking a child in a room, criticizing a child, and using vulgar language to scold a child.

*Locking a child in a room may vary depending on the age, the condition of the room and the length of the time. A kindergarten child may be very scared in a dark room, so leaving her/him in such a room for a long period of time would be abuse (Ms. Yang)*

*Harsh criticism is definitely abuse. It would hurt the child's pride so badly, and it is really bad for the development of her/his character (Mr. Nam)*

*Screaming or swearing at a child is not acceptable in any situations (Mr. Moon)*

Other actions in the emotional abuse categories are relatively acceptable provided there are various circumstances that might mitigate or justify actions, such as whether the parents can control their bad temper and it happens infrequently. Moreover, whether the parents have good intentions or not is an important consideration. It seemed that it is acceptable to employ such child rearing practices if it is done with good intention, such as to teach the child the difference between right and wrong, to encourage academic excellence, or to motivate the child.

Koreans are not in the habit of hugging their children. They do not believe in praising their children too much and may feel that criticism and unfavourable comparisons to other children would motivate their children to do better.

*Well... it would not be good not to have hugged them their entire life, but for us Koreans, this kind of display of affection depends on the personality. I give our children hugs and kisses all the time, but I have a friend that says she feels too awkward to do it. That doesn't mean she doesn't love her children though. It's just a difference in style (Ms. Noh)*

*Giving too many hugs is not right, emotionally. It could become too tough for the parents. It makes the child too sensitive. They grow too attached to people, and become anxious when they are alone. They should be left alone to play on their own, and the parents can play with them from time to time. Korean people are not used to hugging. They could pat the child's head maybe instead of hugging. Not showing any affection at all is abuse (Ms. Lee)*

Similarly, they believe in the value of education and sometimes make their children study for long periods. Making the child study for long periods is morally acceptable regardless of circumstances, except for the age of the child.

*I think studying is something that the child should do even if he/she doesn't want to. It's the responsibility and duty of a student. If he/she doesn't do it then, when will he/she (Mr. Chun)*

*A person cannot always only do the things that he/she likes to do. It's hard, but in our country and in reality, a child should study as long as possible (Ms. Yang)*

*Studying for a long period of time doesn't necessarily mean the children can work more efficiently, but everyone else does it and the parents can't just leave their children to play all the time. If our children are to be better than other children, they can't just do as much as the others do, but must do double the amount. That's the only way to achieve good grades. I sometimes feel sorry for children these days, but it can't be helped (Ms. Noh)*



*They have to study whether they like it or not. They can't get out of it as long they live in this country (Mr. Moon)*

This is perhaps not surprising, given the emphasis on education, and the generally high expectations that parents place on their children's academic performance. This has been a key factor in the economic development since the early 1960s. Interviewees did not generally agree that such actions fell into the category of emotional abuse. They tend to underestimate or not appreciate the fact that the withdrawal of affection as an alternative to corporal punishment may cause even more damage to a child and that punishment designed to make children feel stupid or undignified may be just as ineffective and emotionally dangerous as physical punishment.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Unlike Western nations, where all the actions in the sexual abuse category are implicated in child sexual abuse, in general, in Korea, there are different levels of acceptability for the different actions, apart from 'having sex with a child'.

In terms of the issue of watching child pornography, there are several considerations. The term 'paedophile' has not yet been introduced to Korea. Parents do not fully understand the dangers and implications of internet child pornography for adults with a sexual interest in children. Therefore, even though a large number of parents interviewed judge this very seriously, they are still not sure whether watching it is child abuse or not because they believe there has been no direct contact with a child.

*I'm not too sure about this. Just watching doesn't seem like a form of abuse, but I don't know (Mr. Moon)*

*Just seeing the child without touching, I'm not sure about this one (Ms. Ahn)*

*Well ... I don't know. The adults are just looking. Could that be a form of abuse? I do feel sorry for the child in this situation, but he/she has never been touched in the real world. Just watching is also a problem. Why would those adults watch such things with children only? (Ms. Noh)*

*It's disgusting. I don't even know what an Internet image looks like, but may be ... all such images are used to stimulate sexual arousal and drive. I don't understand people with a sexual interest in children. However, it isn't actual and direct sexual activity with children in the 'real world'. So I would say its extremely bad behaviour rather than abuse (Ms. Kim)*

This suggests that the majority of parents tend to acknowledge that an act involving child sexual abuse might be associated with a direct act, such as sexual intercourse.

However, some parents are worried about the possibility that there could be a child at risk of abuse. This is because they assume that looking at pictures on the Internet might start child abuse.

*There are people who want to collect or watch pornographic images and who provide them. This means there is a market and it is commercial. I suppose that behind every image of child porn is a child who has been sexually abused. Children suffer not only the sexual abuse, but suffer knowing that their abuse has been recorded and that those images are now available around the world via the Internet (Mr. Bang)*



There is considerable consensus about fondling a grandson's genital area. The majority of parents in this study consider it to be a traditional custom. This suggests that it may be a generally accepted behaviour in Korean society.

*My father did this, and he meant no harm. He was just so happy to see a long awaited grandson. It's understandable (Mr. Hong)*

*This is not abuse. It's just a traditional behaviour for showing off (Mr. Sung)*

*This is our culture. They are so happy and just proud about their grandson (Mr. Chang)*

In contrast a small number of parents interviewed say they think it as abuse, such as Ms. Choi.

*I detest this and see it as abuse. I tell H [28 months old] that his genitals are only for his parents to wash for him whenever he goes to the toilet and something only for his parents to see. His grandparents tend to see it as a sort of a toy. They love it. It is just a cultural difference, but in our generation, it should be considered abuse (Ms. Choi)*

Some mitigating circumstances are also considered. The parents' beliefs concerning acceptability may change depending on how old the child is and what intention the adult may have.

*People can do this out of total adoration, but if it is done with a different purpose in mind, it is abuse. It depends on the child's age too. If the child keeps on getting asked to show them his genitals even when he's reached an age when he can analyse the situation himself, he may feel sexually embarrassed, which I think would be abuse (Mr. Song)*

*This only happens when boys are really young. The elders have been like this for a long time, it's a traditional way of expressing happiness about seeing their grandson. I don't see this as abuse as long as they stop doing it when the child is a little older (Ms. Huh)*

Appearing naked is not an indication of sexual interest and parents seemed to see it as an acceptable behaviour because parents may be bathing or dressing, and, in any case, the nakedness may not be a deliberate exposure. Although many parents believe that innocent exposure is not a matter of concern, a small number of parents considers it to be abuse depending on the age or gender of the children, and the intention of the adults.

*If this was done with the purpose of being sexual, it is abuse. That's a problem, but if not, it can be done at public bathhouses, and natural exposure to it is fine (Ms. Lee)*

*Showing a child full adult nudity is fine as he/she would experience it in public bathhouses and so on. But exposing oneself deliberately is wrong (Ms. Yang)*

There is particular uncertainty regarding the age of children. The age ranges from 3 to 7 years old.

*I take my son to the bathhouse with me, and I think it is okay to do so till he's about 36 months old, when he starts to get interested in the opposite sex (Ms. Choi)*

*It's okay when the child is young. Maybe till he's about 4 (Ms. Kwon)*

*The children get to see naked adults at public bathhouses. It's okay for the same sex, and if the child is very young, it is okay for different sexes too. Maybe up to 7 years of age? I think a mother can take her son with her to a public bathhouse until he reaches that age (Ms. Noh)*



*Taking baths together naturally is not abuse. But if the child's in primary school, it should be restricted (Mr. Ban)*

The majority of parents whom I interviewed believe that an adult exposing her/his sex organs and touching them in front of children is abusive behaviour. The reason is as follows:

*Well, when I was in middle school and high school, there was always someone like this in front of our school gate. They would suddenly appear out of nowhere and flash at us. I remember hearing that at a boys' school, some woman would appear and do the same. I've seen a flasher on my way home before, I was in the last year of middle school when I first got to see a man's genitals. It was a shock to me, and felt scared for a few days afterwards. It really is a bad thing. So I think it is abuse (Ms. Noh)*

However, this behaviour also has mitigating circumstances. In here, the intention of the adult is quite important for the parents interviewed.

*The purpose behind it is important. Our son sometimes sees it when I am urinating, and so does our daughter by chance. That is not abuse (Mr. Chun)*

*Done with an evil purpose, it is definitely abuse. But if it happened because it could not be helped, for example sometimes our child catches me in the bathroom. That's fine. Especially with parents (Mr. Hahm)*

An action such as having sex with a child is never seen to be acceptable and all parents rated it as abuse.

*There is no one like this except for psychos. This is unthinkable. Definitely abuse (Ms. Park)*

### 8.3. Discussion

Although there is broad international consensus with regard to major types of child abuse, there may be cultural differences in terms of specific behaviours which are considered to be child abuse. The findings of this study reflect this very well. It provides information about what is considered to be child abuse among Korean parents.

On the whole, there is broad agreement at the extremes over what is harmful to children. For example, it is obvious that some actions, such as 'burning a child' and 'having sex with a child', are generally perceived as abusive, violent, and even criminal acts. In those cases, any mitigating circumstances are not accepted. These are 'bottom lines'. However, in many other cases, it could be said that there is a sizeable grey area about the boundaries of what actually constitutes child abuse and there is also confusion. Throughout the interviews, it was found that there was considerable variability in the consensus when ratings of actions denoting potential abuse were considered. The parents in this study find it difficult to give a general judgement to actions that might comprise child abuse. Responses like 'I am not sure' or 'I do not know, but~' are typically observed during the interviews. It seems that they become even more confused over how to discipline their offspring.

A large number of parents say nearly all, but not all, forms of behaviours in the questionnaire could be done by any parent in their everyday life, but there is anxiety in



their voices and, in each case, they add various exceptions which may distance them from the label of child abuse.

*It happens all the time (Ms. Seo)*

*If all the parents that do these are accused of being abusers, I don't think there would be a parent left that could be called a good parent and be innocent (Ms. Park)*

This ambiguity about the meaning of child abuse and disagreement about what behaviour constitutes abuse may be associated with a lack of social consensus about what constitutes dangerous or unacceptable forms of parenting.

In sum, the concept of harm, particularly the concept of neglect and emotional abuse, and its implications on child development is not understood in Western terms. This clearly shows that there is a deep uncertainty and ambivalence towards the concept of child abuse.

## **Chapter 9. The Professionals: What They Say about the Issues**

In this chapter, I shall discuss and analyse the themes that emerged during interviews with the professionals. As noted earlier, four groups have been identified for this part of my study; hospital-based doctors, social workers, primary school teachers, and child care workers. The individual interviews with them have helped me to understand more about their views, feelings, and dilemmas in working with children and their families.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of the concerns which have emerged regarding the development and psychological well being of children, an understanding of which may help to identify the underlying value systems reflected in parental discipline of children in Korea. Then it will consider current trends in the Child Abuse Prevention Act, especially in relation to professionals' attitudes towards mandatory reporting of child abuse. Their attitudes and perceptions about child abuse and related issues will follow in the next chapter.

### **9.1. Parenting**



## Over Emphasis on Academic Performance

As we have seen, the efforts and sacrifices which Korean parents make for the education of their children are almost unparalleled elsewhere in the world. The findings from interviews with professionals also confirm this phenomenon. When discussing the proper development of children, all of the participants stress the parental concern which focuses on their children's education.

*Most parents say physical and psychological development are important ... but cognitive development which helps good academic performance is at the heart of their concern (Doctor 4)*

*At the forefront of most parents concern is the need to study hard. Mothers say they punish their children if they don't study well and they think having difficulty making friends is because their children aren't clever. Nearly all parents believe that if their children achieve a good academic performance, they will have lots friends and there will be no reason for them to be punished (Social worker 2)*

*In particular, parents stress the importance of studying well. They also expect their children to be good, obey them, and conform to the rules. Well ... at the moment, their top priority is to encourage their children to be the best in their school (Teacher 2)*

*Parents only emphasize the need for developing study habits although their children are still young (Child care worker 3)*

Education is a normal part of everyday life for most contemporary human beings. Therefore this parental attitude on education is understandable. Nevertheless the problem which is raised by the respondents is that parents concentrate only on the academic achievement of their children. According to the teachers and child care

workers, parents have a high, sometimes even unrealistic, expectation of their children's performance. These parents tend not to accept the differing abilities between their children.

*The parents see their children as being the best at everything they do. They think their children are good at everything, especially anything related to the subject of study, and there isn't anything that they cannot do, and nothing is wrong with their personality, but in group life, we [the teachers] can observe what skills the children are lacking in. Although we try to correct their children, the parents cannot see the value of what we are trying to do, and even complain to us and about us for doing it. So we don't do it anymore (Teacher 2)*

*Basically, the parents emphasize enhancing their children's ability to study. From my point of view, the children under my supervision are already ahead compared to their peers. However, the children's parents are not satisfied with that. They hope their children will fulfil their full potential. So our children are doing a lot of lessons after kindergarten. One of the children [aged 5] told me, 'I hate Thursdays because I have to go swimming, and do Chinese and English lessons'. One set of parents whose child attends our agency expects their child [aged 4] to speak English like an adult native speaker. This is the atmosphere around in this rich community (Child care worker 3)*

It is well recognised in the West that children's development occurs across a number of dimensions, such as physical, emotional and cognitive. The professionals in my study understood this. These individual areas of development and behaviour can vary because each child has a unique personality (Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Horwath, 2001; Rogers, 2001b; Beckett, 2002; Crawford and Walker, 2003). In order to ensure the balanced development of children, parents should try to understand their children's unique developmental needs. However, many parents, according to my interviewees, do not focus on the development of character and ignore the emotional aspects of development.



*The parents whom I met usually focus on studies and entrance exams without paying much attention to the importance of building character and basic daily habits (Teacher 3)*

*The emphasis on children these days is on social competition. They have to study well and achieve, but development of their characters is less focused on than is desirable (Child care worker 1)*

Furthermore, the professionals worry about the lack of a code of conduct that regulates and refines parents' thinking and behaviour.

*The parents concentrate on making their children successful, and well off. They are not paying much attention to them [their children] having friends, guiding their behaviour, learning right from wrong and so on. They don't care about the developmental process. They only rely on the end result, which is their children getting into good universities (Doctor 1)*

Parents are ready to do anything for their children's academic success. The following example, cited by a social worker, vividly illustrates how parents become obsessed with the university entrance exam to the extent that they are prepared to push the boundary of what is considered morally acceptable.

*You know ... studying for the university entrance exam is quite important, but time is so short for many high school students. So some parents don't hesitate to hire other people to do volunteer work or they do it themselves in place of their children because some universities have made it a condition for prospective students to perform a certain number of hours of volunteer work for disabled or elderly people. When I worked in a community social welfare centre, sometimes mothers who did some voluntary work asked me for a kind of certificate which proved their children had done voluntary work rather than themselves. Of course I didn't give it to them because it was morally wrong (Social worker 3)*

In short, professionals believe that parents are so preoccupied with the problems of preparing children for entrance exams that they simply do not have the time or inclination to worry about moral education.

### **Over Protection of Children**

This group of doctors, teachers and child care workers expressed concern about excessive parental protection of children which could lead to spoiling them. Their comments reflect what seemed to be a stereotypical view of parenting behaviour on the part of the professionals. This view is widely shared and the following comments illustrate this:

*The number of children coddled by their parents into thinking they are the best, despite ostensible signs of inferior ability, is creating a problem in schools because they refuse to accept the idea that they have lost to someone else during games or lessons, or, worse, that they are vulnerable to losing at all (Doctor 3)*

*I think the most outstanding aspect of our indolence is the failure to teach and enforce good manners. In most public places and on the street, we are likely to come across many unruly brats who could not care less about public morals. Their parents appear to enjoy and even admire the freedom of their young. Also, the students are so impertinent and always try to be cheeky to their teachers. They hardly ever listen to what we say. They are not disciplined at all (Teacher 3)*

*Unlike when we were young, nowadays, children are self-centred and do not listen to others. They don't play with others who have some kind of advantage over them. They don't know how to cooperate with others. I think parents make their children like that (Child care worker 3)*



*I think children are becoming individualist. That's the problem and I am worried. The children neither play nor share their things with peers. They are self-centred. I think this attitude is a result of their parents. Parents believe that their child is the best and more important than others. They aren't concerned about others (Child care worker 4)*

The doctors and social workers focus on poor parenting skills. They consider many parents simply do not know how to discipline their children or what else to do, and, therefore, there is a need to provide knowledge, understanding, information and skills in relation to adequate parenting.

*A recent trend in modernizing Korea is that many young parents have no exposure to child rearing due to both their parents having had to work and child care being done on an ad hoc basis as well as the rise in the nuclear family, which is replacing the extended family. They have never received a parenting education programme or guidance from their own parents (Doctor 3)*

*Children these days are simply too undisciplined and uneducated, lacking respect for their teachers and elders, often cockily talking back to them. I don't think parents know how to discipline their children because they have not received any kind of education for parenting (Doctor 4)*

*Our children have little time to read books other than textbooks. Nor do they have time to learn civic duties or take up moral studies in order to become responsible, respected and exemplary members of society. Children need boundary setting. Parents should provide guidance and teach proper social behaviour, but they don't. Well... perhaps, parents lack good information on raising children (Social worker 4)*

Moreover, for some social workers, difficulty in exercising parental responsibility is becoming an issue. According to them, they often meet parents who are unable to exercise their parental responsibility because of poverty and outcomes associated with it,

such as poor nutrition and unsafe living conditions. They worry about harm to children occasioned by social and economic conditions.

*There's much more to the story ... parental negligence, improper upbringing and shirking of responsibility (Social worker 2)*

*Children's lives are dreadfully difficult. Instead of the warmth and security of normal family life, these children's lives are filled with hunger, fear of abandonment, and danger through lack of supervision (Social worker 3)*

*The divorce rate is getting higher and the number of children getting abandoned is increasing too. In addition, people are becoming less interested in raising children because they are not responsible (Social worker 4)*

Interestingly, this is a very different response by social workers to that of the parents and other professionals. Unlike the others, who emphasize the importance of education, one of the social workers suggests that over protection or over emphasis on education does not happen in the most deprived areas where opportunities and facilities are well below the norms acceptable to mainstream society. According to her, the parents whom she met worry about their quality of life rather than their children's education. She expresses her concern over gross poverty and its consequences.

*Too much emphasis on education is hardly ever seen in this area, where poverty is overriding and survival needs predominate. Sometimes the lack of standards of care which are brought about by poverty can be understandable, but when we talk about children, it shouldn't be acceptable. For many children poverty is a dominant feature of their lives. Children's opportunities are restricted by poverty ... therefore, we are always concerned about neglected children. What problems the children do have are lack of school attendance, motivation, hunger, or inappropriate supervision by parents (Social worker 3)*



As many scholars have pointed out many economically poor parents do not neglect their children (Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Doyle, 1997; Stevenson, 1998b; Corby, 2000). The social worker knows that poverty does not relate simply to finances, but major stresses arise through low income, long working hours, unemployment and anxiety over finance. According to Maslow's theory of motivation (1954), there is a hierarchy of human needs and until the more basic needs of human beings are satisfied, higher needs will remain unfulfilled. As social worker 3 said, for those people in poverty, basic needs for survival must be met, at least to some extent, before a person can move on to meeting the need for love, belongingness and self-esteem. The highest need, for personal growth and self-actualization, can only be fulfilled when other needs are not overwhelming. In this regard, how to promote children's good quality of life is the main concern for her.

### **The Imbalance of Power**

Two groups of professionals, namely doctors and social workers, pay attention to the way in which the lives of Korean children are directed and controlled by their parents. They think that the assumption behind the trend of over protection is not only that parents are better placed than children to exercise responsibility for decision making, but also that in so doing they will act in the children's best interests.

*Children don't have to decide anything. All they have to do is what their parents ask them to do. They just do it. The parents see their children as an extension of themselves, which leads to excessive control and manipulation of their children (Doctor 4)*

*Most Korean parents drive their children, often mercilessly, so that they can beat their peers and enter one of the prestigious universities and eventually become either a lawyer or a medical doctor (Social worker 2)*

According to the respondents, the parents are the sole decision makers in child rearing because they tend to see children as incompetent and irrational. From the point of view of professionals, this is a denial of the recognition of the child's human rights and disempowers children. This behaviour of parents may lead to lack of autonomy for children, and because of it, they may be unable to become independent and responsible individuals.

*During our training sessions with medical students, their lack of ability to integrate and lack of creativity was noticeable. They are behind in acknowledging necessary tasks and finding the essential activities and executing them. I believe it is the result of our force fed education and everything done by parents (Doctor 1)*

*Korean children are left unchecked while being provided with almost everything they want, thus becoming more dependent on their parents. Also their lives are so structured by their parents. This make them unable to do anything themselves (Social worker 2)*

Most of the professionals agree that over enthusiasm for education is a social problem. This is partly because it may lead to other related problems, such as lack of autonomy, poor socialisation, and the inability to become independent. Despite this, when they were asked about their opinions regarding Korean children now growing physically and mentally unhealthy because they are overburdened with the pressure of studying, some professionals felt some ambivalence about this. There is some resistance to, and hostility towards, this criticism and they seem to be very uncomfortable. They respond typically:



*I don't take it as seriously as other people do. In the past, a family comprised parents and a huge number of children. As a result, a little society was formed within, 5 to 6 children interacted and learned social skills. Peer relationships used to be formed, but now a family only has one or two children. There is no opportunity for them to experience such a society. The children now tend to go to crammers to study which leads to the natural formation of peer groups and relationships. The experts and the population of other countries may look at this phenomenon and worry, but it's merely one of the ways, it is not necessarily wrong. The problem is that it's not happening in venues of public education, instead it is happening under the control of the parents, in private education environments (Doctor 1)*

*Thinking that it is wrong is a completely typical western way. Our society is built upon geographical limitation as our country is a peninsula, and without such over enthusiasm, we cannot improve. Taking America as an example – it is a huge country so there is no need to worry about securing land needed. But our country is small and the population high, so we always have problems with the real estate situation. Without such an understanding of our individual characteristics as a nation, it is not right to judge how things are run here. Our peninsula has to reunite in order to keep growing without its people having to go abroad to earn money, but that doesn't seem very feasible right now, so the only option left for people is to keep working harder and harder. If we were as laid back as the people in America, and parents went to school to pick their kids up at 3:30p.m., our country would go bankrupt. We have to live differently in order to survive (Doctor 3)*

*I hear that children get stressed out about being forced to study so much, but this is the only time that they can actually study. The aim of this is the children's success. Why do they criticize us? They don't know us (social worker 1)*

*I don't agree with people criticizing our society for meddling with the education system. It's necessary. Because of it, our country can develop. Why does the UN say that? I don't understand (Teacher 3)*

There is, however, a difference between the groups responding to this criticism. On the one hand, some of the teachers and child care workers say the phenomenon of educational ambition should be understood and accepted. They try to justify this trend by an explanation of the development process of our country.

*I think after school activities, such as taking lots of private lessons, aren't that bad unless they are exhausted from them. Having a variety of experience is good, the more the better. It will be a good resource for developing the country (Teacher 1)*

*Although other countries evaluate us that way, that's their way of thinking. It's inevitable in Korea. As for me, I'm also a little greedy and make my children take all kinds of lessons when I can afford it. But they themselves want them as well. It is because they have their goals and they know that they need the lessons to achieve them. It's our way of surviving in a highly competitive society (Teacher 4)*

*I was quite surprised when I heard one of the children in my class [aged 5] was taking Chinese lessons. Usually, everybody takes a Korean and Maths lesson after kindergarten. These are basic. It's hard to find a child who doesn't take any lessons. Particularly, parents whose child will attend primary school the following year feel tension so they focus on education. These parents send their children to a number of crammers to learn this and that. To be honest, I, as an educator, don't want the children who are in my care to be behind either. I think it's inevitable as our society has expanded based upon growth-oriented policies that the focus is only on visible achievement. In a small country such as ours, the competition is getting stronger day by day. Even in the very old days the level of competition was quite high, and to survive in such an environment, hard work automatically follows (Child care worker 3)*

On the other hand, some of the doctors and social workers reveal mixed emotions about it. They agree with the idea that over emphasis on education could be a social problem but they do not necessarily regard it as a major concern.



*The crammers are actually quite closely related to the children's social life. They cannot make any friends if they don't go to them. Because of that, many parents send them to at least a couple of crammers (Doctor 1)*

*I do agree that highly competitive university entrance exams and the related stress is not good for children's proper development. It can be seen as a kind of abuse because the children are forced to do it. However, before we consider it, we must deal with what is universally acknowledged to be child abuse first (doctor 2)*

*Children have very little time to chill out because their time is occupied studying. It's a problem. I don't think it is right. Well... in the long term, it's not good for them. The education system itself should be changed. Unless that happens, what parents believe will not change (Social worker 2)*

*The parents are the problem. Blaming the education system and atmosphere of society is just an excuse. The daily life of children is scheduled by their parents. They are forced to study hard without consideration of their ability and emotional welfare. It's not good for children (Social worker 4)*

## **Values and Beliefs Underlying Child Rearing**

Most importantly, in order to raise healthy and well-socialised children the majority of professionals believe that the underlying values in raising children should focus on the 'proper' development of children. However, the meaning of 'proper' differs somewhat between the groups of professionals. For example, doctors, teachers and child care workers believe that parents should teach their children proper values, such as being respectful and polite and showing loyalty and obedience to their parents as well as elders. They state:

*It should be the main role of the parents to teach children the moral values which enable them to distinguish right from wrong in life (Doctor 1)*

*Parents should think the most basic and important thing in the upbringing of children is basic daily habits and manners, socialisation and developing a good character in children rather than concentrating solely on academic achievement (Teacher 2)*

*As for me, I believe that building character is the biggest issue in the pre school period. The habits developed in one who is three years old continue till eighty years old. So the building bricks for their future life are laid during this time. It is important for me to set standards for her then, on what is okay and what shouldn't be done (Child care worker 3)*

The social workers emphasize somewhat different qualities. All, except the social welfare public bureaucrat, stress that the fundamental rights of children and a respect for human dignity should be underlined in the upbringing of children. They are convinced that the assertion of children's rights is a key mechanism for increasing awareness of, and reducing, child abuse generally.

*I think, in relation to the human rights of children, it's a fact that children are not the property of parents and they have their own rights from birth. The problem is that many adults, including us, have never heard that or thought about it seriously. This is because that they are not educated in that way. They have never received any education on it. So if parents and children were educated, their values and belief would change (Social worker 2)*

*Children should be respected as individuals who have human rights and they should be protected from any harm. Parents should try to understand children and give them support (Social worker 3)*



A few teachers and child care workers emphasize the universal concept that parents should love their children and should support their children to develop their full potential.

*Nowadays, there is lack of effort to understand children. I believe that more effort should be made in child rearing. In my experience, when children behave badly, we should try hard to find the reason for them doing so in order to help to change the behaviour. It could happen at home. If parents tried to understand their children, their way of raising them could be different. Parents should stimulate their children's potential and instil a sense of ethics. They should try to build the right character and try to know what a child wants to do and help her/him to develop (Teacher 4)*

*I don't think that parents these days know much about their children. Parents should make their children feel loved. I understand how busy they are, but I think they should try to spend more time with their children and they should try to listen and find out what their children really want to do (Child care worker 4)*

It was evident that there was much ambivalence and conflict in their feelings about essential values underlying child rearing. These are reflected in a number of areas. There is an obvious gap between their personal beliefs and the way they act as professionals when they work with children and their families. This is because even though they believe something to be important, when they encounter ordinary people, they are not in a position to enforce their beliefs. There is not a basic agreement between professionals and parents as to the goals and methods of raising children. To press their views too hard would be to alienate the parents.

*I face many parents coming in to express their worries about their children being scolded in school for their behaviour and that they often cause trouble by fighting. These parents want their children to grow up fully utilising their abilities, I mean intellectually, without any obstacle. So we try to keep a balance between the*

*expectations of parents and what we believe to be important for children's proper development (Doctor 4)*

*Helping children to find out what they like and supporting them to do it is what I want for my students, but it's difficult because our [parents and teachers] priority is different. Parents do not want to do these things. When I try to do it, even my students say 'teacher! Get real! We don't have time for this [anything which is regarded as not helpful for their study, such as a social activity]. You are an idealist!' (Teacher 1)*

*What differences there are between the beliefs of parents and us is that we believe teaching children human relationships and basic manners is important, while for parents, the top priority is being given to numeracy and literacy. The parents want their children to learn how to read books or how to calculate number. Otherwise, they believe that their children will fall behind compared to the other children (Teacher 3)*

*Even though I want children to play and focus on building a proper character, I cannot afford it, because parents don't like it. If I had my way, no one would attend our nursery (Child care worker 1)*

*I'm in charge of children aged 3 years. I emphasize proper care and building good character. However the children's parents are only interested in education, especially preparing for school. Their interest is what they learn rather than how they play with others (Child care worker 4)*

These professionals believe that children should have opportunities that realise their potential, in the broadest sense. However, the parents are not aware of the importance of these broader opportunities for their children. This creates dilemmas for professionals in conducting their work



## **9.2. Reporting Child Abuse**

Korea passed child abuse legislation in July 2000 in order to help professionals identify children who are suspected victims of abuse and to protect such children from experiencing further abuse. Under the law, as noted in the previous chapter, everyone has the right and responsibility to report any incidents of suspected child abuse at any time. Some professionals who work with children or families are required to report known or any suspected incidents of abuse of any child under the age of 18 as mandated reporters. However, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse (2004), among the 3,536 calls regarding child abuse, the proportion of calls from mandated reporters was only 29.1 per cent whereas 70.9 per cent of the reports were from non mandated reporters. In fact, this situation is echoed by interviews with the professionals in this study. In this section, the reasons for the reluctance to report, and various strategies for increasing awareness of child abuse are explored from the professionals' point of view.

### **Reasons for Reluctance to Report**

Nearly all respondents reveal that during their careers, they have failed or been reluctant to report suspected abuse to the appropriate agencies. Among the most frequently identified reasons for not reporting are lack of familiarity about mandatory reporting laws and lack of knowledge about child abuse. Other reasons the professionals do not report include:

- the belief that child abuse is a family responsibility
- the belief that reporting is too time and energy consuming
- fear or unwillingness to get involved
- concerns that making a report will negatively impact on an existing relationship with the child and her/his families
- lack of confidence that reporting would actually help the situation or the child
- lack of strict enforcement of regulations for reporting

All the doctors and social workers are aware of the Child Abuse Prevention Act, the main legislation for abused children, while the majority of the teachers and child care worker do not know about it.

*As I understand, various occupations are listed as mandatory reporters. Not just doctors, but nurses and other medical staff, teachers, nursery staff, staff at child welfare centres, and related civil servants. But they are not aware that they are mandatory reporters because they fall under a set of laws that they do not know they are related to. The people that control such laws should notify them of them and train them, but they aren't doing that. They only discuss the lack of reports they receive, which is wrong. I think the Ministry of Health and Welfare should act as the main body but no effort has been made in that area (Doctor 1)*

*I have may be heard about mandatory reporters, but I'm not sure. What will happen to someone if he/she fails to report? (Teacher 1)*

*I have never heard about it (Child care worker 1)*

*Mandatory reporting? Does it exist? From when? I have never heard about it. Do people really report it? So, if we report the abuser, is the person whom I report punished by the law? (Child care worker 4)*



In those two groups (i.e., teachers and child care workers), only a head teacher had actually been informed about it. According to him, the new manuals on preventing child abuse for mandated reporters are distributed to schools nationwide. Although he was aware that in Western countries, teachers and other staff have regular contact with children and young people and are involved in the prevention of child abuse, he did not support the idea of their reporting child abuse at all, believing that it should not be the teachers' duty to do so. For that reason, he has not distributed the manuals among the other teachers and the member of staff.

*I was given the manual which explains the definition of child abuse and the role of the teacher in child protection work ... I don't think it's our job. So I didn't pass it on to the other teachers in our school. I kept it in my desk. I think our job is educating children. I don't understand why the government wants us to get involved in this problem (Teacher 3)*

From this it can be seen that teachers and other staff working with him may not have an opportunity to be informed about it. This suggests that head teachers who are authority figures in a school setting need to be well aware of the issues of child protection first, so that they cannot misuse their power without careful consideration of the result of their action.

All doctors, teachers, and child care workers believe that lack of training and knowledge about child abuse and procedures for reporting are the main reasons for under-reporting.

*Doctors are not aware that they are mandated reporters because they are not informed and trained about it. They would acknowledge mandatory reporting if laws related to child abuse were included in the national exam for medical license which covers various types of medical law ... Even though the Child Welfare Act states that doctors*

*are obliged to report child abuse, they don't think they have much to do with the Child Welfare Act because no one tells the doctors about such a law. No one knows about it (Doctor 1)*

*If I were more passionate about or aware of child protection procedures I would look into the social welfare agencies, but I don't know the steps to take and I have not given it much thought (Teacher 4)*

*I don't know by what standard we should make a decision or how to implement child protection procedures. I think it's a problem. If we were given the opportunity to take part in the training session our response to it would be different (Child care worker 3)*

In addition, the group of doctors believe that their professional relationship with the child and her/his parents will be lost if they report their suspicions of abuse.

*Although many doctors can make a report with suspicions, if there is not enough evidence they hesitate to do it because they are afraid of making a mistake which could destroy their careers (Doctor 1)*

*The parents who bring their children to hospital expect to get some help they need. If we report them, there is a risk of damaging the relationship with these families. They would stop visiting us. After that, we cannot help them. Therefore, to some extent, without reporting, advice for the parents is much more helpful in reducing abusive behaviour towards children (Doctor 3)*

They may feel that, once they have reported the case, they lose the possibility of monitoring ongoing care. Furthermore, those doctors who view reporting as detrimental to the child and her/his family may choose not to inquire at all. The doctors are concerned about the potential damage to their relationships with patients of their involvement in child protection processes and the related issues of confidentiality.



*When the parents bring their child to hospital, they expect confidentiality. It may encourage the parents to seek a medical doctor. If we report the case as child abuse, it breaches this confidentiality and may undermine trust and deter parents from confiding in their doctors (Doctor 4)*

Furthermore, there are as yet no penalties if doctors do not report cases of child abuse, although doctors are obliged to make such a report if it is apparent upon medical examination that abuse has occurred. In fact, for some doctors, not being charged for a misdemeanour is one of the reasons for failure to report.

*Although they don't make a report, they are not punished. I think that is the problem (Doctor 2)*

Therefore, to increase the reporting rate, sterner penalties may be required to be imposed on doctors for not reporting child abuse.

Not surprisingly, the group of social workers is well aware of the child protection procedures. They are highly specialised in their work and currently working with abused children and their families. They are, with one exception, not designated as mandated reporters<sup>23</sup> but are encouraged voluntarily to report suspected child abuse to the branch of the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse when they encounter it. For them, the main reason for failure to report is that they often lack confidence in the statutory service and are mistrustful of their capacity to handle cases of child abuse.

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<sup>23</sup> Amongst the many social worker professionals, only staff working in welfare facilities for disabled people, child care facilities, welfare facilities, women's welfare counselling centres, health centres and welfare facilities for single mothers with children, shelters and counselling centres for victims of domestic violence and child welfare facilities and social welfare public service personnel are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse (Article 26 of the Child Welfare Act 2000). In my sample, although three of the social workers are directly involved in cases of abused children and their families they are not designated as mandatory reporters because they are not included in the above list.

*Well ... I don't trust the statutory agency because of their bureaucratic muddle. They just provide shelter for children, I mean only care... but you know, it's not enough for abused children. They need proper treatment and lots of support. The government should subsidise budgets for infrastructures, which are very limited at present in the communities, to provide abused children with special treatment in a shelter or group home, parental education for the strengthening of family function, remedial programmes for the abuser, who may have alcoholic or mental problems, and support for living expenses (Social worker 2)*

*The safety net for abused children and their families should be widened to include small cities in order to identify and intervene more effectively (Social worker 3)*

*I'm not quite supportive of the idea of reporting child abuse. I think, in cases of broken or dysfunctional families though, abuse occurs and the beatings increase in severity and become excessive as circumstances deteriorate and problems accelerate. Therefore, even if a case is reported, it cannot be solved unless the problem, such as financial difficulties of the family, or the abnormal personality of the parent, is solved (Social worker 4)*

However, one of the social workers, who works for the local authority, the social welfare public bureaucrat, is legally required to report suspected child abuse. This man states that he does not want to report child abuse although he is aware of it as one of his duties. This is, in part, because of the fact that he believes child abuse is a family affair and there are many other more important duties relating to social security waiting for him.

*More frankly, I don't have time to spend on child abuse cases. Providing some money for public day care facilities, supervising lone parents or child-headed families, and preparing various events ... well ... under the National Basic Living Security Act, I provide means-tested livelihood benefits to people in poverty. That's my main duty, I think, and these keep me busy all the time (Social worker 1)*



In a similar vein, most teachers and child care workers believe that child abuse is a family responsibility rather than a social problem, which is regarded as a state responsibility, and that families should not be interfered with.

*Well even if I'm aware that the child is being abused, the fact is that there isn't much I, as a teacher, can do, under the circumstances ... because it's a family affair and their responsibility (Teacher 3)*

For this reason, they are generally reluctant to get involved with authority and to criticize.

*If I reported it [a case of child abuse] the parents would know who the reporter was. It'd be possible if they thought carefully. I'd worry about what the parents thought about me and that would make me anxious (Child care worker 3)*

*I think ... child rearing including child abuse is regarded as a family responsibility in our society so I cannot, sometimes shouldn't, get involved in their private life. In addition, if I reported a suspected case as child abuse, I think the parents would be notified who the person was who reported them, although anyone providing information to the agencies is said to be guaranteed anonymity. I'm afraid it isn't so. If they know, probably they will harm me or complain about me. They will say, 'I punish my children because I want them to be good. Why are you interfering? They are my children, not yours!' If they said that, I couldn't say anything. If I were in their shoes, I would also feel like that (Child care worker 4)*

In general, the professionals seem to be reflecting widespread public attitudes which believe in the right of parents to raise their children in the way they think best. The majority of professionals, regardless of their specialism, focus upon the widespread belief that child abuse is a family responsibility in Korean society. They assume, for

that reason, that the vast majority of Korean people prefer to adopt the attitude of minding their own business, although there are certain limits to the authority of the family and a minimum standard of care is expected.

*You know how when a wife goes to the police after getting beaten up by her husband, and the police just say 'seems like a family affair, so go home and solve it'. When the children get beaten up, they just say 'family affair and responsibility' again. With that kind of attitude being so strong in our society, the fathers with problems are used to saying 'do not interfere in our private family business'. I wish, legally or just naturally, that people would become aware of the fact that they should interfere and offer help (Social worker 2)*

*It is more about 'should I mind other people's business?' ... I heard about a young woman who became a stepmother of an 11 month old baby, as the father had divorced his first wife and married her instead. She must have been quite nervous and uncomfortable about having to raise a baby suddenly, at such a young age. What happened was that she was washing the child with water nearly hot enough to burn. But the neighbours that were at the scene couldn't say anything to her because the child was not theirs, hence it was none of their business. See, incidents like this show that the problem is the reluctance to get involved in other people's affairs. That needs to be changed (Teacher 4)*

They suggest that the taboo attached to issues challenging the privacy and sanctity of the family has to be broken.

*Our attitude is, 'we'll deal with our own private family problems, who are you to interfere?'. Even if we look at it as a social problem, it's hard to get involved if others see it as a family problem. That is because people tend to think that family problems should be solved within the family. Unless this attitude is altered, other changes will be hard to come by, and even if some form of legal action is taken, there will always be a limit to how much can be done (Social worker 3)*



Some child care workers say that they may be afraid of being attacked by abusive parents as a result of reporting, because there is limited protection of anonymity and confidentiality.

*I would not report a case of child abuse because I think it's a family affair. Reporting it might create more trouble for me (Child care worker 4)*

*First of all, I don't know what constitutes child abuse ... Secondly, when we discuss it with the parents, especially fathers, they actually threaten us these days. To be honest, I'm afraid of them (Child care worker 2)*

Thus, because of this fear, guaranteeing reporters' safety is the main concern of some of the child care workers.

It seems that what professionals perceive as public beliefs may influence how they behave. Some professionals believe that child abuse is a family responsibility, so they do not report it. Others believe that it is not a family responsibility, but they also do not report because this action is unlikely to get support.

### **Strategies for Increasing Awareness of Child Abuse**

Throughout the interviews, the need to raise awareness regarding child abuse in Korean society is stressed. It is a central focus for concern. The interviewees were asked to provide suggestions for raising awareness of child abuse which may lead to increased reporting. The responses given are varied in nature and useful in the Korean context. The most important point that they emphasize is the need for a clear definition of child

abuse and the raising of awareness of child abuse and child protection procedures through training.

### **1) Compulsory Education and Training Programme for Mandated Reporters**

Respondents believe that education and training in the understanding and handling of cases of child abuse is necessary. They suggest that education and training programmes should be compulsory for the mandated reporters.

*Including child abuse in the training material for new doctors while they are still interns and teaching them about it for about an hour at least would improve the situation. Also it must be compulsory. There is a huge difference in having been taught at least once and not having been taught at all ... I think education of the entire population is a waste of money. This is like 'pour water into a broken jar'. Instead the government should give priority to training professionals who can deal with the problem. Imagine! If every doctor found one abused child and cared for her/him, how many children would benefit from it? If every teacher tried to help one child in their class, how many children would have a chance of a better life? How about their families? The effect of training professionals is enormous! (Doctor 1)*

*I think ... most social welfare civil servants do not have experience of working in the field of child abuse. To prepare this interview, I talked with my colleagues about this topic [child abuse]. They are not interested in it. I don't think they feel the seriousness of it because we cannot see it around us. Well ... the most important thing is education and training for us, if necessary. If government employees were trained more, then our attitudes towards child abuse would be somewhat different (Social worker 1)*

*We can suspect it if we have knowledge of it, we can find it if we have a suspicion, and we can be involved if we find a case of child abuse. Without effective training this cannot be happen (Social worker 4)*



*If we find the ones that are going through a rough time under abuse, I think we can at least be of assistance in guiding them to the appropriate organisations for help. Those organisations can inform us of the systems they have, and educate us about handling child abuse situations, and in return we can link them to the students with problems. We can play an intermediary role bridging the gap between the organisations and the abused children (Teacher 2)*

*Well ... we should be informed we are mandated to report under the law. Then, the reason why we have to do it and the meaning of mandatory reporting should be taught. This approach may help to change the mindset of mandatory reporters (Child care worker 3)*

Doctors and social workers suggest that the policy should be implemented and developed. These include imposing a penalty, improving the service delivery system, and providing better financial support.

*Those child protection teams do not have a source of support. The hospitals felt that they should have an effective system to fight child abuse, and created one without any further financial aid or extra budget. That just shows that our government is not concerned about the issue and they are not prioritising it (Doctor 3)*

*If one or two doctors who fail to report suspected child abuse lost their licence, or were fined, as an example, the word would spread faster in Medical society through the grapevine. This method is considered an important tool to spread the message. Then, nobody would fail to report (Doctor 2)*

One of the doctors suggests a training programme at organisational level rather than individual.

*I think training the executives in the organisations which the mandatory reporters belong to should become a rule, rather than putting the responsibility on the individual reporters. I wish there was a law enforcing a few hours of training for them a year,*

*and they should be penalised if they don't participate. The truth is that for a chairman of a hospital receiving education on child abuse for a couple of hours is really not that hard. These education sessions don't even need financial support from the government, as each hospital can manage them without any problem. It's the same with schools, and business corporations. Through these training sessions, everyone will at least become aware of the types of actions that may result in them being prosecuted. I think this is quite an effective method. I don't think the government can manage the whole thing alone (Doctor 1)*

According to him, this is how everyone became more aware of sexual violence and harassment of employees.<sup>24</sup> The government made it mandatory for a number of organisations to receive training on the topic, and the message is getting through more than before. He feels that this kind of strategic method is essential.

Teachers want specialists such as counsellors or school social workers with a special knowledge of child protection matters in a school setting to deal with cases of child abuse.

*I cannot manage the situation [the case of child abuse] professionally because it's impossible for us to take care of all the incidents successfully. There are 45 students to look after ... Recognising the problem to begin with is hard enough already. When it comes to legal issues there is a limit to how much I know. So it would help a great deal if there was a counsellor or somebody who had a special knowledge of child protection matters in school (Teacher 1)*

*I think schools need a school social worker. The government should place social workers in school to deal with cases of child abuse rather than forcing us to report suspected child abuse cases (Teacher 3)*

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<sup>24</sup> Under the revised Gender Equal Employment Act in 1999, all companies are required to educate their employees on the issue of sexual harassment at least once a year. Firms, which are found not to be training for the prevention of sexual harassment, will be subject to a 3-5 million won fines. In addition, it describes disciplinary actions against offenders (parties).



## 2) A Publicity Campaign for the General Public

At a broader societal level, the professionals believe that, in the present situation, the most effective way of spreading awareness is through a nationwide publicity campaign in the press and on television. Many professionals assume that lay people have heard about child abuse from television. Therefore, the media is considered a powerful means of raising awareness and TV programmes are widely viewed.

*It's a fact that once there was news about child abuse prevention legislation on TV the rate of reporting child abuse cases increased. So there should be more advertising or more publicity I guess (Doctor 2)*

*I feel that the awareness of child abuse has altered a little. One of the reasons being that TV has shown a number of documentaries on child abuse. They were not aired during prime time, but rather on late night TV, but they were aired quite frequently and people have made it an issue. Some of the ordinary people at least now know that they can be prosecuted if they treat children in certain ways, and that they should not do such and such, and also that society needs to come up with ways to solve the issues. So it should clearly show what constitutes child abuse (Doctor 1)*

Media reports of child abuse typically focus only on severe cases, and Korean parents tend to doubt that they are overly severe with their children. But the mistreatment of children is a widespread problem that has yet to be adequately addressed. The professionals interviewed agree that the media is one of the best ways of reaching people, but they feel that the approach to it has to be changed. There are different opinions given on how the topic of child abuse should be introduced in Korean society. The groups of doctors, social workers, and child care workers suggest that its emphasis has to be more on education and spreading awareness about the issues rather than

showing extremely severe child abuse cases. In order to address the issue of child abuse, emphasis has to be placed on advice and support for parents who require a wide variety of parenting skills. In this sensitive area of family life, that involves effective methods of disciplining their children rather than physical force or other humiliating behaviours, they believe that the focus should not be on 'child abuse' as such.

*The campaign should explain clearly the legal changes and their background, advice on non violent ways to set limits on children's behaviours and a guide to expectations of behaviour of children at different ages and the conflicts that parents may encounter (Doctor 3)*

*Let parents know that there are lots of good and effective ways of discipline rather than just saying stop hitting children. Listen to what children say, try to find out what children really want, and treat children with respect. These are things that I always tell parents. That's the best way to prevent child abuse. We should advise and educate parents in effective parenting methods (Doctor 4)*

*There is a need for a change in attitudes. Although people say that abused children should be protected at a social level they don't think identify these children with their own. I think how to become a good parent is the centre of the issue [child abuse]. We should try to think about how we help parents to practise their roles as good parents (Social worker 2)*

*I want to emphasize the need for information about proper parenting skills. Most parents become parents before they are ready. They don't receive any training or education. They don't know, or may be... they have never considered, what being a parent means. If what comprises good parenting or child care is made public, it's much easier to accept (Social worker 4)*

*When people watch a TV programme which touches on the subject of child abuse, they are surprised about the severity of it, but that's all. They don't think any further. Well... I don't think people take it seriously. If this programme talked about what kind*



*of parenting attitudes and behaviours could help the 'healthy' development of children, people would listen to it more carefully ... but then again I'm not sure (Child care worker 4)*

On the other hand, the group of teachers focus on providing knowledge about child abuse itself, such as a clear definition of child abuse. They want to have a clear picture of child abuse.

*A case which I saw on TV was a shocking example from a list of a children terribly abused and mistreated. But it still wasn't representative of real life, and the people were not fully aware that they were committing child abuse as they did not see cases that were less severe as child abuse. If TV programmes tackling child abuse were aired more frequently and showed more common cases of child abuse rather than the extreme end of the spectrum, the public would become more familiar with it (Teacher 3)*

The social workers feel that there is a need to address the prevailing attitudes in Korean society, especially those that relegate children to a low status. They believe that the low status of children in a typically patriarchal structure has an effect on how child abuse is seen.

*Children are reared in a manner to oblige and please the elders. They are discouraged from disobeying their parents. Also, the child abuse problem is not regarded as serious, owing mainly to traditional cultural factors in Korea, where physically disciplining children is routinely accepted (Social worker 4)*

This, according to the social workers, makes children more vulnerable to being victims of abuse by adults, whose authority they cannot challenge. They believe that any discussion of prevention or spreading awareness would be incomplete without addressing the issue of the rights of children in Korean society. It is felt that since most

Korean parents think children are their property, they cannot accept the concept and the existence of child abuse. Therefore, the need is to provide both parents and children with adequate knowledge, along with making an effort to raise children's status generally.

*It's not simple. Fundamentally, the parents don't see their children as individuals. For these parents, their children are their property. So they can physically punish their children for their own good. Even the children don't think they have rights. When I educated children about their rights in a primary school, the school teacher and the children themselves were against it. It seems to me they find it hard to accept the concept of the rights of children. That's the main problem (Social worker 2)*

*The campaign should not only concentrate on explaining the concept of child abuse but also include more practical information such as how to raise children so that people can have a clear understanding of what might be harmful towards children (Social worker 3)*

In addition, providing adequate knowledge of child development is considered necessary. In this respect, sex education in school is emphasised by one of the teachers. Due to the taboo attached to the issue of sex, it is kept low key in Korean society and the children more often than not are not aware of the nature and consequences of sexual activity. Their ignorance makes them more vulnerable.

*I think the sex education programme should be strengthened in schools to effectively cope with the rapidly changing sexual trends. It should include explaining the changes that occur in the human body when it matures as well as deal with practical issues surrounding sex. I think we should educate students on sexual harassment and sexual violence, but it should be suitable for each age group. In the case of primary school students, related ethics and basic body development should be taught (Teacher 2)*



In order to alter attitudes toward child abuse, a new foundation course dealing with child abuse and child rearing is needed in universities. A few child care workers suggest:

*University students should be taught the subject of the meaning of child abuse, how to raise children properly, and the way to be a good parent on a foundation course. They will all become parents in the future. This may contribute to increasing awareness or changing people's attitudes towards child abuse. I think it is a matter of education (Child care worker 3)*

These strategies operate at a number of levels, are interconnected and each has an effect on the other.

To sum up, throughout the interviews, all of the professionals talk about the worries of parents with regard to their children's academic achievement. Over control and over protection of children by their parents is an area of concern for the professionals. This is because the former may cause harm to children and, as a result of the latter, children may find it difficult to become independent and responsible people. In terms of the child protection legislation, acceptance of a reporting system is somewhat different among the professional groups. The doctors and social workers appear to be more aware of the mandatory reporting system and its procedure than teachers and child care workers. There are various reasons for not reporting, which include the belief that child abuse is a family affair, the lack of mandatory reporting laws, and an unwillingness to get involved, as identified earlier. These reasons can be understandable, but they are not acceptable. Lack of action could lead to dire consequences for the child and child's family. It could even result in serious harm or death of the child that might otherwise have been prevented.

On the whole, the general view of the professionals is that there is a need for greater awareness of child abuse in Korea. To this effect, public education through a large-scale nation wide campaign as well as compulsory professional training programmes is recommended.



## Chapter 10. The Professionals' Attitudes towards Child Abuse

This chapter will examine the attitudes and perceptions of professionals. In particular, it highlights the similarities and differences, if any, that exist among the various professionals themselves on this issue. It is hoped that such an understanding will help to inform the prevention and intervention strategies that are required to address the problem of child abuse.

Before developing these themes, it is necessary to comment on the attitudes of one of the social workers who works as a social welfare public bureaucrat,<sup>25</sup> as his responses are unique in several ways. Although this man is a statutory reporter of child abuse and aware of the meaning of the term, he chooses to reject the use of the term to a greater extent than other professionals and is completely 'out of line' with the other social workers. He preferred to discuss parental error or failures or behaviour as 'unacceptable'. Of the 25 behaviours tested in the questionnaire, only 3 were considered by him to be 'child abuse' in contrast to the other professionals' responses. For example, the other social workers took a much more moderate line or were less sure about whether certain behaviour may/may not be abusive. Essentially, his position is one of extreme reluctance to intervene in family life.

*I know 'shaking a child' can be child abuse, but I don't rate it as abuse. Parents may know this kind of action is not good for a child's brain development but there may be a*

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<sup>25</sup> He has passed the National Examination for Social Welfare Public Personnel which is a competitive exam. This position can be applied for only by someone who is a qualified social worker.

*situation when occasionally, inevitably they shake their child. It happens. So, even though I found it, I wouldn't make a report because it's an area of parenting which I shouldn't be involved in. I won't interfere in family matters (Social worker 1)*

His attitudes towards child abuse differ markedly from those of other social workers although they have a similar educational background. In fact, he is a civil servant serving in the local authority while the other social workers interviewed are employed in non-governmental organizations or Hospitals. Perhaps the occupational differences contribute to their different attitudes and approaches regarding child abuse. These factors within, and surrounding, the organization in which social workers are employed appear to have a much greater impact on their professional services to abused children. As will be identified, as a result of these organizational differences, these social workers lack a coherent set of responses within their own profession to abused children and their families.

### **10.1. Different Explanations of Child Abuse**

The findings from interviews show that different respondents tend to understand the factors associated with child abuse differently. These fall into different categories. There are four sets of issues: social structural; individual or interactional; socio-cultural; and consideration of children's powerless position.



## Social Structural Explanations

People in different social positions differ from each other in terms of their access to social opportunities, such as education, housing and employment opportunities. These differences might be associated with child abuse. Although numerous studies have attempted to demonstrate a relationship between child abuse and poverty the debate over it still continues (Saraga, 1993; Corby, 2000; McSherry, 2004). In particular, poverty may mean that children live in crowded or unsuitable accommodation, have poor diets, health problems or disability, be vulnerable to accidents, and lack ready access to good educational and leisure opportunities.

The majority of professionals taking part in the present study, apart from the group of doctors, typically see that child abuse relates to stress in families and neighbourhoods, which is caused by poverty and social deprivation. They regard socio-environmental factors, which may be beyond the parents' control, as being the most important explanations of abuse.

*Their living conditions are extremely poor. There is only a kitchen and a small bedroom for two adults and three children. They use a portaloo. Their parents don't have enough money to provide appropriate food for them [children]. In such an environment children are easily neglected by busy working parents. We can't ask these children to have a shower because we know that there is no place to shower or bathe and no adults who wash them properly (Social worker 3)*

*On TV, there are many cases of child abuse where children are being beaten by their parents. I think that is because of hardship as a result of the economic crisis (Teacher 2)*

*I think most child abuse cases happen in poor families. Lots of card debts or unemployment is the main cause rather than parents suffering from mental illness (Child care worker 3)*

Among these professionals, one of the social workers seems to consider that poverty alone is not a sufficient explanation of the cause of child abuse but believes that it adds a different dimension to the way the problem is understood and dealt with. The following case throws some light on the implications of poverty for abuse and neglect.

*A boy of 9 is left alone at night time. He usually hangs around the park at night, waiting for his father. His mother has run away and his father works as a musician at a nightclub. Due to his job, he goes out at night without proper sleeping arrangements for his son and when he comes home he sleeps during the daytime. The boy starts failing to attend school regularly. He wears dirty and smelly clothes and as a result nobody in school likes him. However, his father doesn't care about it. When I met the father, he said 'I'm really struggling to manage work so I can't pay attention to my son'. Even he said, 'honestly, I want to hand over my son to an institution. It's really a burden for me to raise the child'. I know not all children who grow up in poor circumstances are abused. However, many parents in poverty are exposed to many stressful experiences and this may trigger abusive behaviour. I think social deprivation makes them tired and impatient, so they are aggressive towards their children or they simply don't know how to avoid or deal with their aggressive impulses (Social worker 2)*

This suggests that poverty itself, although not causing child abuse, may create the circumstances in which it is more likely to occur. Therefore in order to understand why abuse takes place, the deprived circumstances in which they are living should be considered, along with other factors. It is important to acknowledge that despite the adverse outcomes associated with poverty, such as malnutrition, inadequate parental health care, and unsafe living conditions, not all children from poor families are physically and emotionally harmed (Stevenson, 1998b). Also, some children, even in



families which are abusive, show resilience in the face of adverse circumstances (Daniel et al., 1999; Colton et al., 2001; Iwaniec, 1995; Corby, 2000).

## **Individualised Explanations**

All of the doctors and very few teachers and child care workers interviewed pay more attention to the individual than the social structure or environment. They tend to focus on the nature of the relationship between parents and children, as well as on the personal characteristics of those involved in the process of abuse. Social workers obviously do consider individuals, but, in this, they differ from others in their emphasis.

### **1) Parental Incompetence**

Inappropriate parenting is often cited as a factor in child abuse in the interviews with the doctors and one of the social workers. For them, the core of their argument is that if parents were informed of a variety of alternatives to deal with difficult situations regarding child rearing they would use positive and non-violent forms of discipline.

*Personally, I think parents who have no standards in child rearing and no value code are the problem. In addition, bringing up children strictly is known as a good way of disciplining children among Koreans (Doctor 2)*

*Parenting education is needed. There are lots of immature parents. They don't know whether they are doing well or not. They believe using physical force to discipline their children is the only way. One mother asked me how to discipline her son (aged 18 months). Everybody she knew, according to her, recommended smacking as the best way. So she did, but he still didn't listen to her and it was even getting worse.*

*This is a good example of how parents discipline their child. Actually, they have no idea how to raise children at all (Doctor 4)*

These professionals who are concerned about parenting skills tend to be less oriented towards seeing the child abuse problem in terms of socio-structural explanations. In addition, their accounts seem to be more judgemental than explanatory. This may suggest that the doctors assume a position of moral superiority.

## **2) Personal Defects**

A few child care workers frame certain child abuse cases in terms of individual troubles or personal failures. They tend to think that 'normal' parents do not abuse their own children and those who abuse their children have deviated from what a normal person would do. Below are some examples that illustrate the ways they would frame the cases of child abuse using the personal defects paradigm. One of the child care workers suggests that children living in divorced or broken families are at greater risk of abuse.

*Children who live in divorced or broken families would be at risk of abuse. I think problems within the family can contribute towards the child's risk of abuse (Child care worker 1)*

This reflects the fact that in Korean society at present the rate of divorce is much lower than that of the West and hence, divorced families are deviations from the cultural norms of Korean society. Another worker clearly believes that parents who abuse their children must have personality problems, or are mentally ill.



*I believe that the majority of parents do not abuse their own children. I think there is something wrong with the abuser. He may be abnormal, crazy, or criminal (Child care worker 4)*

However, she may overlook the fact that only in very few forms of mental illness are parents' emotions and feelings blunted, causing them to behave towards their children in bizarre or violent ways (Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Corby, 2000).

### **3) The Children's Contribution to the Situation of Abuse**

A minority of practitioners do not think parental punishment is abusive if parents believe that it is right to punish their children for the purpose of education and discipline.

*Children may provoke some of the responses that subsequently lead to what can be abuse (Child care worker 2)*

*Parents love their children, so why do they abuse their own children? It does not happen. May be ... children don't obey their parents or they don't listen to them [parents]. I think parents may hit them, if it is necessary, in a situation where they are irritated by their children. To me, it's not a case of child abuse. I think it's a kind of disciplinary action (Teacher 3)*

### **Socio-Cultural Perspective**

A minority of professionals believe in physical punishment or other humiliating treatment of children as a socially legitimated option.

*In the west, independence and individualism are strongly encouraged, and as a result, children grow up insisting on their personal rights and independence from an early*

*age. But in our country, we are more focused on organisations, groups and families that we belong to rather than individuals. Ours is a collectivistic society. I think this induces more cases of child abuse... Our country did not see all that much violence in the past. But it has become more violent after going through difficult periods such as colonisation by Japan and the Korean War. Violence, using force and physical punishment has become more and more acceptable and it has become the way to solve certain problems (Doctor 2)*

*The reason for caning our children is to help them have a successful life and better education. If parents are not interested in their children, then they don't even cane them. Like the proverb says 'children who were caned when they were growing become dutiful' (Social worker 1)*

*This is my personal opinion but I think most people think parents hitting their children when they do something wrong is a way of child discipline and education (Teacher 4)*

*Sometimes, parents do not respond to our advice because they think the advice is inappropriate. They have their own beliefs and ways of caring for children. I think it's a cultural matter (Child care worker 1)*

They appear to support the idea that children can be handled arbitrarily, taking it for granted that it is the parents' right to hit their own children when they try to teach them. As noted earlier, there is a tendency of parents to treat children as their private property in Korean society. If children fail to live up to parental expectations, parents do not hesitate to use physical punishment to control undesirable child behaviour (Lee, 1999c; Doe, 2000; Hahm and Guterman, 2001). Therefore, the professionals may justify harmful behaviour towards children in terms of legitimate punishment.



This suggests that cultural practices, social values and norms attached to child rearing in Korean society could be at least in part responsible for the acceptance of use of physical force towards children.

### **Children's Powerless Position**

Some social workers hold the view that all violence is a reflection of unequal power relationships. According to them, child abuse basically reflects the unequal power relationship between adults (parents) and children both within the family and in society. Therefore, child abuse is neither an individual nor a family problem. According to them, it results from the imbalance and misuse of power between adults and children.

*Parents should think first about what the outcome of their behaviour to children will be. Children are human beings like us. So, if anything that they cannot accept is done to them, it falls into the category of child abuse. I think we have to be taught to reflect upon it ourselves and see things from the children's point of view and think about how we'd feel if the same was done to us (Social worker 2)*

*The rights of children are more easily ignored and they receive less respect as individuals, and people tend to overpower them with violence when conflicts occur (Social worker 3)*

Culturally sanctioned and patterned use of power in child rearing practices seems to explain most of the violence against children in Korean society. Therefore, even if the problem may exist, its social construction may be such that people are not aware of its existence or willing to recognise and respond to it.

## 10.2. The Perceptions of Child Abuse

The professionals taking part in this study were required to state whether twenty-five different behaviours involving four main categories of child abuse were abuse or not (see Appendix F). In addition, each action was examined with regard to the influence of mitigating circumstances. In the following section, a range of abuse and differences in the definition descriptors is considered.

### Physical Abuse

There is one action that seems definitely to be considered unacceptable: burning a child. This action is considered to be abuse regardless of any circumstances.

In terms of slapping a child on the face, the doctors and teachers believe it to be abusive behaviour regardless of any circumstances, while for some social workers and child care workers there are several mitigating circumstances ranging from when it happens infrequently to when it is not severe.

*It's never acceptable. It hurts children's feelings badly, makes them ashamed, or it may even cause physical harm. It could be done with uncontrolled parental anger or temper so I think it would be abuse (Teacher 4)*

*There are a lot of parents doing it to their children. We know it's really bad because it ignores children's human dignities and makes them lose their self-confidence. But if it happens infrequently it cannot be abuse (Social worker 2)*



*It lowers a child's self-esteem. This is not good for the child and I never let a child slap another person's cheek. But, it happens between parents and children in everyday life. Sometimes parents slap their children's face, as they are only human. It happens accidentally, in error or as a result of parents losing control. I think if the child has no mark on her/his face, it's forgivable (Child care worker 2)*

With regard to shaking a child hard, one of the social workers states that even though he is aware that it is one of the indicators of child physical abuse he does not believe it to be child abuse.

*I know 'shaking a child hard' is child abuse because I'm informed about that. I cannot agree with that. Parents who have a child know it's not good for the brain development of children but occasionally they shake their child (Social worker 1)*

Attitudes towards this action are affected by the severity, frequency, parental or adults' intentions, the age of child, or the level of controlled parental emotion.

*Whether it is abuse is judged on the age of the child or frequency of its occurrence, but if possible, shaking a baby shouldn't be allowed (Social worker 3)*

*Shaking a baby is bad and would be child abuse because a baby is weak, but it's usual for teachers to shake a student if he/she is being disobedient. So if teachers can do it without the involvement of their temper, I don't think it is abuse (Teacher 4)*

*Well ... I don't know to what extent we can say a child is abused. Last month, an educational videotape for mandatory reporters was distributed by the government. There was a lot of information that I didn't know about child abuse. This tape tell us that shaking children, criticising a child, swearing at children, comparing a child to others is child abuse. But I doubt that many people know about it and most parents do it. I think it differs from situation to situation, such as the intention of the parents or the frequency (Child care worker 2)*

Almost all the teachers and child care workers believe making a child kneel down is not abuse. They accept it as a kind of basic disciplinary action and they acknowledge that it is a widely used method by both parents and teachers.

*It's the basic one. I used to use it as a punishment. After 5 minutes I send the children back to their seat. There is no harm done to children (Teacher 2)*

*It can't be abuse because this punishment is given by us [teachers] quite often. If we caned students parents would complain a lot regardless of the reasons, but this type of punishment doesn't matter to parents. They wouldn't mind (Teacher 4)*

*Depends on whether it is done with the purpose of teaching a child something. For example it makes children feel sorry for what they have done. But if it is done because of parental anger provoked by other reasons without any misdemeanour on the part of the children, or it is done for a long time period it would be child abuse (Child care worker 3)*

*We can see it very often around us especially in primary school. It's one of the commonly used methods for disciplining children. So I don't think it is abuse (Child care worker 4)*

However, all of the doctors and some social workers feel that there are circumstances where it may become abusive.

*If there is an agreement between parents and children about when they should be punished. I mean it is not abuse if the children know and understand the reason why they have to kneel down, but if not, it is (Doctor 4)*

*Depends on the length of time. I think it is better to avoid using it if we can. If it continues for a long time it would be considered child abuse. Also we should think about the effectiveness of its use (Social worker 2)*



In considering caning, there are three types of response. The first is against caning, the second is unsure as to whether to use caning, and the third supports its use.

In the first group, only one of the professionals considers that it is unacceptable to hit children with a cane.

*I consider caning to be abuse because there are other ways to lead children to the right way without using it (Social Worker 3)*

The second group, which was the majority, states that it can be understandable depending on the circumstances and other factors, such as frequency, severity, intention, or the degree of control of parental stress. As one of the doctors says:

*I think physical punishment such as caning is acceptable in borderline cases and we decide whether it is abusive depending on the purpose of it. For example, if parents cane a child less than 5 times, it would not be abusive while if they cane their child over 5 times it would be abusive. Can we say that? I don't think so. It's not simple to say one case is abuse and another case is not abuse. Sometimes I think physical punishment is necessary since children don't listen to parents. I don't deny the effectiveness of physical punishment. I mean ... when parents cane their child their temper should be controlled and it should be done with an educational purpose. My colleagues' opinions vary as well so that I don't think we can make a certain standard for all situations, it can only be judged case by case (Doctor 2)*

Similar responses are:

*In terms of the issue of physical punishment, I am treated as a heretic amongst my colleagues because I don't agree with the concept of 'caning=violence=child abuse'. Traditionally we use it as a disciplinary method on a limited area, like legs, with*

*controlled emotions and a clear purpose [for teaching something]. If we tried to include it in the category of child abuse, the public really wouldn't understand what we were doing. Even they would be confused by what is meant by discipline. This is the reason for the gap between the public and professionals. So I think caning should be permitted under some conditions (Doctor 1)*

*Using caning should be permitted. If mothers physically punish their child when he/she does something wrong, it is considered to be discipline and a lesson. It's wrong that every physical punishment is considered to be child abuse. Of course there are cases when it is used inappropriately but if parents use it properly it shouldn't be regarded as abuse. Rather it is a disciplinary action (Doctor 4)*

*I don't agree that it's a good method, but I think sometimes it can be necessary in order to change children's bad behaviour. Whether it is abuse or not depends on the severity of the punishment and which body parts are caned (Social worker 2)*

*Using a cane is better than using other implements. We know that when caning happens it is used only as a means of education for children and the parents' personal feelings and emotions are not involved. Of course it depends on the severity of the caning. Sometimes smacking a child is the best way to get her/him to listen to their parents (Teacher 1)*

*This kind of punishment is necessary for the child's improvement. But it would be an abuse to carry it out too often (Child care worker 1)*

Of the third and final group, a minority of professionals (3) believes that caning is not abuse. They say that caning can be seen as one of the ways to express parental love and as a part of discipline. Interestingly, the teachers and child care workers often use the term 'cane of love'.

*If a child doesn't listen then the child can be caned. A little pain can be given ... I think when we were young we were caned often. There is an underlying value that*



*caning is the best way of bringing up children to be well-educated. I also have a girl [aged 6]. I often feel that there are situations when I should treat our child more strictly. Sometimes our child doesn't listen to me, then there is no way other than caning her/him. I don't think we can see it as abuse. As long as parents love their children, it is an expression of love and a part of disciplinary action in my opinion. (Social worker 1)*

*Caning is used as the 'cane of love' for their children's own good (Teacher 2)*

*Honestly speaking, I believe that physical punishment is necessary. It is bad, but still necessary. It depends on how the punishment is carried out. It would be helpful to correct the child's bad behaviour if the teachers and parents both agree on the necessity for it, and stay consistent (Teacher 4)*

*When I cane, I cane calves and palms. Sometimes children get bruised. I first try to persuade children and if that fails, then I cane them. Children also know about this fact. They even know where the 'cane of love' is kept (Child care worker 2)*

*We usually call it the 'cane of love'. I was little but I was also caned a lot. Nowadays, children are caned sometimes. I think it's ok (Child care worker 3)*

Overall, the professionals generally accept caning and making a child kneel down as a means of disciplining children while rejecting other physical disciplinary forms such as slapping. The findings suggest that the right of parents to use physical force as a means of disciplining their children commands significant popular support in Korea.

## **Neglect**

The majority of participants feel that some actions which might in Western society be seen as neglect are excusable depending on levels of poverty, the frequency of the

occurrence, the age of the children, the sufficiency of state support, and to some extent, how busy working parents are.

Whether ignoring signs of illness in a child is judged to be abusive depends on the seriousness of the illness or the financial situation of the family.

*It depends on the situation. If a child is very sick but her/his parents don't take her/him to the hospital then it's child abuse. However, if the parents don't have enough money for the medical treatment then that situation cannot be seen as child abuse (Social worker 1)*

*It would be abuse not to take a child to the hospital when he/she is suffering badly. But you know sometimes bearing the pain makes children stronger (Teacher 4)*

*There are times when the parents cannot afford it. Nothing can be done about it in that situation. This situation depends on the severity of the sickness, and the financial conditions of the family (Child care worker 4)*

As discussed in chapter 8, there are difficulties in using health services because health services are not free of charge in Korea.

With regards to leaving a child alone in the house, there is a slight difference between the group of social workers and the doctors and the group of teachers and child care workers. The social workers and doctors consider this action to be more serious than the other three groups.

*Regardless of how bad the circumstances of parents are, children need proper supervision until they reach a certain age. It's neglect (Social worker 2)*



This action can be justified if it happens infrequently, if a child is older, and if the parents are both employed full-time. However, there is no agreement about what age a child can be left unsupervised.

*Although parents leave their children at home alone to work to make a living they shouldn't be treated as neglectful parents, except for when a child is very young. If the children are of school age and the rules for safety are explained to them they would be safe in their home. Well ... in the west, parents get reported if they leave their children under a certain age alone at home. But that's their law, and in our country, there are times when we have to leave our children alone at home as we are too busy making a living. Many mothers work these days too. I think children can be left alone at home once they reach primary school – 6 years old (Doctor 3)*

*If children are informed about the rules for safety, and if they are left for half an hour they are fine at home even though they are alone. In the past, I used to leave my children alone at home because I couldn't find people I could trust and I thought they were old enough. If the situation is inevitable, what can we do? (Teacher 4)*

However, the above examples would raise the question of how this act ought to be defined, because neglect is an act of commission as well as omission. Can we agree that harm is more likely to occur the longer the child is left? There are no agreed answers to that question.

The social workers differ noticeably from other groups in considering other cases as well. For instance, they are indeed less tolerant of ignoring a child's educational needs, such as school trip fees and basic equipment for school work, and making no effort to keep a child clean than the doctors, teachers, and child care workers. This is perhaps because they are more closely involved in cases of neglected children and their families.

*Every child has the right to be provided with an education and cleanliness which is linked to health. Children's proper development shouldn't be ignored. I think it is definitely child abuse (Social worker 2)*

*It's neglect. Children's educational needs should be fulfilled. Also failure to meet standards of cleanliness can cause disease. Therefore I consider it to be neglect (Social worker 3)*

According to the doctors, teachers, and child care workers, these actions can be mitigated depending on the level of poverty, parental character and parents' working schedule. They state that if parents are unable to provide basic necessities, as they are poor they would not be considered neglectful.

*I feel sorry for them, but basically, it's not child abuse. If a financial situation is not good and parents are busy earning money to live on then it would be impossible to support their child's educational needs. In this case, the state should support them (Doctor 2)*

*It can be seen as ignorance or neglect. However, it could be that parents are too busy or in financial difficulty (Teacher 2)*

*This is possible if both of the parents work and if the family is really poor. In this case, keeping children clean and tidy would probably not be a priority (Child care worker 2)*

*Is it related to the character of the parents rather than the issue of abuse? There are parents who sometimes ignore the educational needs of their children because they forget them but in all other aspects they are doing well for their children. So I don't think it's abuse (Child care worker 4)*

Also, they say that, if children are old enough, they should take care of themselves rather than expecting to be cared for by their busy and hard working parents.



*It would be a problem never to wash their young child, but children above primary school age can wash themselves. Parents may want their children to build their independence. School age children should manage their things themselves. Our parents raised us in a similar way. Also, even though children are told to wash their face they often don't listen because they are lazy. The fault is not entirely with the parents alone. It's not abuse (Teacher 4)*

*I understand parents who both work to earn money full time. When they come back from work, they must be tired. And especially mothers, they have to cook after they come back from their business and they have to do the daily household chores as well. This housework may finish around 10pm or 11pm. This situation is difficult for mothers taking care of their children. Under such circumstances, I don't think it should be considered to be child abuse (Child care worker 2)*

Most of the professionals in the present study consider allowing a child access to inappropriate material such as porno magazines or Internet sites, or violent games to be neglectful and they feel that whether this action is abusive depends on the frequency of incidents. Among those professionals, all of the doctors rate it as abusive behaviour.

*It's important to pay attention to and supervise what children watch or read. Children shouldn't be allowed to watch these materials (Doctor 3)*

*I agree that parents can't be there to watch children 24 hours a day. The effort to reduce it happening is more important (Teacher 3)*

*I feel the providers should be more careful when they decide the proper age for children who might possibly use their goods. Sometimes I find video games for 5 year old children which include scenes of gun fighting or brutal death. That's wrong, isn't it? However, this is not to say that it is abuse. I don't think it is. Well ... if children are frequently exposed to it, it would not be good for their psychological health (Child care worker 4)*

One of the child care workers clearly says it is abusive, offering her own experience:

*I think it is child abuse. When I was in grade 4 in primary school, one of my neighbours invited me to watch movies at her house. But the movie showed sexual relationships. It was a shock for me although it was not porn. After watching it, I couldn't eat. It made me vomit. I felt sick for three days. It's definitely abuse (Child care worker 2)*

There is considerable variation between the groups as to whether a child should take care of a member of the family. A large number of professionals rate it as 'not abuse' or 'can be abuse'.

*If the family is broken or there is no one to look after the children, the state should provide social care for them. Broadly speaking, it can be considered to be neglect. However, our society has not yet established a proper system for doing it. Under this circumstance, who is responsible? In the past it went to the extended family but nowadays no one else is available to replace the parents. I think we are in the middle of a process of development. So I can't say it is abuse (Doctor 1)*

*I think our society is quite family oriented so many people tend not to pay attention to other people's business. These kinds of things make people ignore child-headed family problems although they feel sorry for these children. It cannot be viewed as abuse (Doctor 2)*

*I don't regard it as abuse at all. We should try to reduce the number of children who look after their sick or disabled parents. But, you know ... If parents are ill or sick, then children should take care of them. Otherwise who will? May be the government will give some subsidies to reduce the burden on children. Anyway, basically the responsibility lies with the family member at present (Social worker 1)*



*Under such circumstances, even a child should help out. Otherwise who will care for them? I think living with grandparents and growing up taking care of them could actually be good for the children rather than sending them to an orphanage (Teacher 3)*

*I'm not sure about it. This could be a big burden to children but I think they can play a role as caretakers for their families if there is no one else ... In some ways the government may be responsible for children's basic needs including education and basic living expenditures. I'm really not sure (Child care worker 3)*

Only social workers consider expecting a child to take care of a member of the family to be neglectful, even though it may be a failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs.

*This is neglect. It's not the children's responsibility and they should be looked after by adults. Of course we can make an excuse but in considering children themselves, how about their needs? It's unfair (Social worker 2)*

Neglect is about the standards of care, but the question of 'standard', is socially contentious. On the whole, social workers are the profession least tolerant of neglect, while child care workers are the most tolerant group.

## **Emotional Abuse**

Over half of the professionals regard four actions such as 'locking a child in a room', 'threatening', 'criticizing', and 'using vulgar language' as abuse. Typical reactions from the participants as follows:

*Threatening, criticizing and locking them in a room are something that Korean parents usually do to their children, but it really cannot be too good for them mentally and emotionally, so I consider it to be abuse. These are quite bad. I have experienced it when I was young, and I still feel nervous when I face a similar environment (Doctor 3)*

*Locking a child in a room is abuse. I think making a child feel badly hurt or scared is also considered to be abuse (Teacher 4)*

*Threatening to abandon, criticizing, and swearing at children is not acceptable under any circumstance. It's verbal abuse (Child care worker 3)*

However, some professionals hold differing views that whether such behaviours are abusive on the basis of the parental intentions, and the age of children.

*Parents could swear at their children for a good reason from time to time, and it wouldn't be a form of abuse. Sometimes it's done for their [children] own good and they [children] are their [parents] own children (Teacher 3)*

*Locking a child in a room may vary depending on the age, the condition of the room and the length of the time. A young child may be very scared in a dark and locked room, so leaving her/him in such a room for a long period of time would cause psychological damage (Child care worker 4)*

Apart from the above four actions, however, most of the participants do not rate other actions as clearly abusive. There is a great deal of variation in how the various actions are judged.

With regards to locking a child outside the house and calling a child useless, some mitigating circumstances are suggested by most of the professionals. These actions are



acceptable if they happen infrequently or if parents have good intentions for education and discipline.

*If children are sent outside naked on a very cold day or it happens often it would be abuse. Also calling a child useless everyday is definitely considered to be abuse (Doctor 3)*

*Basically this is a very effective way for educating children. Of course I agree that there can be some exceptions. For example, if it happens too often, or if it is done with a bad intention it would be considered to be child abuse (Social worker 1)*

*It depends on the length of time and the intention of the adults. I think it would be fine if it were done for 5 to 10 minutes for educational purposes (Teacher 4)*

*I once sent my son [aged 4] out for about 10 minutes because he hit his sister, but I don't think that was abuse. It was a method of teaching him a lesson. To make him understand the importance of home and how scary it can get when he is out of it. To make him aware that he doesn't have any other place to go, and how warm it is to be within the boundary of home and family (Child care worker 2)*

Although many professionals agree with the assumption that Koreans are not in the habit of hugging their children, never hugging them can be seen as a problem among these participants. This is believed to be unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

*Emotional security is important for children's proper development. In particular young children who can't attach to the main caretaker may have difficulties in relationships with others (Social worker 2)*

*If parents don't hug their children because they don't love them, then it can be seen as child abuse. But there are people who don't like physical contact, but we know they love them. So, I think it depends on the character of the people (Teacher 1)*

*Well... it would not be good not to have hugged them their entire life, but for Koreans like my parents, and me this kind of display of affection depends on the character of the individual (Child care worker 3)*

Most of the professionals in this study believe that making a child study for a long time is acceptable if the parents have good intentions or if the child is older.

*It can be seen as abuse from a westerner's point of view but it's not a matter of saying stop pushing children in our country. In reality, in many cases, there are a large number of children who think they have to study hard although they are under stress. Everybody does it around them so not doing it like many others means that they feel excluded from their peers. Of course studying too much with lots of pressure is not good for the well-being of vulnerable children. Maybe when they grow up it could remain a problem. We can advise parents only to base their expectations of their children on their children's ability but we can't persuade parents not to do it (Doctor 4)*

*I never think it is abuse. It's necessary. Let me tell you something. I have a brother who is poor and the reason why he is poor is that he only graduated from high school, and did not get into university. That fact is an obstacle to life in our society, especially when somebody wants to have a job. I think I'm educated well and that is why I can have a good standard of living. This is the reason why I want my children to study hard and this kind of thinking is the basic expectation of most parents in Korea. Many parents do it for their children's better future (Social worker 1)*

*Parents want their children to study hard. Although studying a long time doesn't guarantee excellent results many parents would feel anxiety if their children didn't study long enough from their point of view. It's something that children should do (Teacher 4)*



*Children may feel they are abused but from their parents' point of view, making their children study hard is done for their success and better future. So it's not abuse. I never consider it like that (Child care worker 2)*

*It depends on the length of time. In reality, you know ... in our country nobody can survive without doing it. Everyone else does it and everyone knows that they can't get out of it as long they live in our country (Child care worker 3)*

Such results are perhaps not surprising, given the fact that, as discussed in the previous chapter, parental concern is mainly on their children's academic performance. Professionals seem to accept the legitimacy of parental concern about their children's academic performance and are therefore unlikely to regard demanding study schedules as abusive.

Similarly, respondents may feel that comparisons would motivate children to do better. It seems that telling a child others are better and calling a child useless are understandable if it is employed infrequently and if it is done out of good intentions.

*Many parents do it often. Generally it is used to encourage and motivate their children and sometimes it works (Teacher 1)*

*If it were done for educational purpose it would not be abuse (Teacher 3)*

*I was educated never to compare children to each other when I was in University because every child has a unique personality and different potential. What we should do is encourage children to develop their strengths. But it's true that many parents use it as a way of encouraging their children as well. So I can't say it is abuse. Rather it is behaviour that shouldn't be done (Child care worker 3)*

The above cases show that professionals also accept the tendency to apply questionable child rearing methods to encourage children to do their best academically. This could be because they know that these parents lack knowledge of the physical or psychological needs of children as well as guidance that might help them as parents to achieve a more positive experience of child rearing.

Among those professionals, some social workers seem to be aware that children should be respected as independent individuals who have a unique personality, but still find it very hard to pinpoint their concerns due to uncertainty and sensitivity.

*Frankly I threatened to abandon our daughter in the street to make her feel anxious in order to make her say sorry to me. I regret what I have done very much. I know it's abuse and I shouldn't have done it. Also, I think children who grow up being verbally abused have low self-esteem and don't feel loved. However, it's a really difficult area to judge whether child abuse has occurred or not, particularly involving emotional abuse and neglect cases (Social worker 2)*

Overall, even within professional groups, there is no consistency in their response to the actions explored and they hold a variety of opinions on behaviour suggesting emotional abuse. To some extent, these actions described as emotional abuse are regarded as reasonable means by which undesirable behaviour may be controlled. It supports the notion that emotional abuse is not easy to define.

## **Sexual Abuse**

As discussed in chapter 8, for the majority of parents interviewed, the concept of harm done by sexual abuse is often limited to a simplistic notion of physical damage to the



child, acknowledged only if intercourse is involved. For parents, penile insertion is an essential ingredient to whether the case is considered to be sexual abuse. In contrast, the professionals well acknowledge that there are many other ways in which children can be sexually abused, which have not been considered by the parents. The professionals believe all the behaviours described above to be clearly sexual abuse and whether an abuser has sexual intercourse with a child or not has no effect on their judgement at all.

*I think watching an image of child pornography is clearly sexual abuse. These adults not only watch it but also collect it from providers. Behind every scene, I suppose, these children have been sexually abused. Furthermore, those images are available around the world. This is a painful memory for children (Social worker 2)*

There has not yet been much awareness of child pornography on the Internet. However, when considering the growing number of children who use the Internet, there is a need to raise awareness about the use of the Internet by children.

Doctors, social workers, and teachers consider fondling a grandson's genital area as potentially or actually abusive. In contrast, none of the child care workers considered the action to be 'abuse'. The professionals' beliefs of acceptability change depending on what intention the adult may have and how old the child is.

*It should be stopped once the child passes the age of 4-5 because perhaps the child wouldn't like it and they may feel ashamed (Doctor 2)*

*It's difficult to judge because many grannies act like this and they mean no harm. But I think if children don't like it because they feel ashamed, it shouldn't be done. It would be abuse (Social worker 2)*

*Basically I don't think this is abuse. It's just a traditional behaviour for showing off their grandsons. It's understandable. However, I think looking at is fine, but not touching it (Teacher 4)*

Child care workers consider it to be a traditional custom. Most of them do not rate the action as clearly abusive. For them, it may be generally accepted as normal as many parents interviewed do.

*For us, traditionally it's not considered child abuse. The grandparents tend to be proud of or show off their grandson and touch his genitals. We can't say that kind of behaviour of our elderly is abuse. Every society has basic values and standards of judgement. We can't decide on every situation and say that it is wrong (Child care worker 1)*

*I know there is somebody, at least in our generation, who sees it as a problem but I think it should be considered to be an aspect of cultural difference. For example, grandparents fondle their grandson's genitals because they like their grandson. And if there is a cute child, then people hug them and give them a kiss. I think it's affectionate but other foreign people will think of it as child abuse (Child care worker 3)*

Whether an adult appearing naked in front of a child is acceptable depends on the intention of the adult and the age of the child. All of the teachers rate it as abusive, while all other groups have a variety of opinions about it. The group of child care workers believe it not to be abuse because they only think of it in terms of having bathed together. It seems that they do not think of other situations in which it could happen.



*It is absolutely fine for me because there is no other way. If mothers ask their husbands to take their son to a man's public bathing house he would not bathe him properly. So, in my opinion, mothers can take sons to the woman's public bathing house until the age of 5 (Child care worker 2)*

*Bathing together with parents is fine. What's the problem with it? (Child care worker 3)*

In this respect, those who rate this behaviour as 'can be' potentially abusive state that there can be mitigating circumstances based on the age of children or the intention of parents or adults.

*Children usually go to public bathhouses with their parents. I think this kind of natural interaction and learning about sexuality is a good idea. Many parents think this situation may be necessary for educational purposes. I also agree with it ... Um... up to about 4 years of age? I think it's ok. However, if parents or adults do it deliberately for bad intentions it would be sexual abuse. It may differ depending on the circumstances, I think (Doctor 4)*

*Some say mothers bringing their child to the public bathing house is not a good idea because a child who is about 4 or 5 years old can be aware of sexual differences. Whereas, others say this could help the children to see how the bodies of a males and a females change when they become mature. Well ... I think it depends on how old the child is (Social worker 1)*

Actions such as watching an image of child pornography, an adult exposing her/his sex organs and touching it in front of children, and having sex with a child are never seen to be acceptable and all of the professionals taking part in this study rate it as child abuse.

### 10.3. Some Issues

The present chapter reveals certain issues of concern regarding professionals' attitudes towards child abuse. Overall, while the participants generally saw children's suffering as a result of mistreatment by their parents as child abuse, this does not seem to be consistent with their overall understanding of the child abuse problem. What is seen here is a reluctance to put certain behaviour into a formal category called 'child abuse', that is, the respondents do see quite a lot of behaviour as unacceptable and harmful but are not willing to make this kind of official judgement, even if they accept that the behaviour is 'regrettable'.

On the basis of these findings, there are different levels of acceptability for the different actions in the opinions of those interviewed. The findings suggest that there is little consensus, either between or within groups, about the kinds of behaviour which constitute abuse, or which is acceptable or otherwise. Most participants argue that whether certain behaviours is acceptable or not depends on the age of the children, the severity of the behaviour, the frequency of its occurrence, the financial status of the family, or the intention behind the behaviour. Cultural factors are also considered and it is arguable whether the definitions can be agreed across cultures. However, this argument raises the question of how these ought to be defined. For example, can a 10-year-old be safely left alone for an hour? According to one of the teachers, it is acceptable under certain circumstances.

*Well ... if a child is primary school age, if it does not happen too frequently, and if the time is short, the child could stay at home alone. If a child is young, there must be a*



*proper arrangement for her/him. However, although there isn't somebody looking after young children, it shouldn't be considered abuse (Teacher 3)*

As another example, the following cases cited by child care workers show that the frequency of abusive behaviour is a dominant consideration amongst them.

*I think, for [the difference between] child abuse and disciplinary action, child abuse takes place over a long period of time. I think if the act is a repetitive behaviour, it would be classified as child abuse (Child care worker 3)*

*When we use the term abuse, I usually mean that it has lasted for quite some time. To me, child abuse should last for a certain period continuously. So I'll not consider a particular episode as child abuse. For example ... It might be that the parents aren't able to control themselves when in a bad mood (Child care worker 4)*

However, they are not clear in their minds as to how frequent a certain abusive behaviour should be to constitute 'child abuse'. They consider that the act may not in itself be abusive but its repetition makes it so. This argument cannot be sustained, if a child is seriously injured in a particular episode. In fact, frequency and duration lie on a continuum and it is not easy to answer the questions about at what age it is appropriate? How often is too often? How long is too long? There is also a continuum regarding the harm to children's welfare from the slightly neglectful to death.

Intention has also been considered to be a key variable in deciding whether an action is abusive or not. According to some teachers and child care workers, any kind of disciplinary action, even if it is a little bit hard, can be acceptable as they regard it as an effective way of promoting children's good behaviour and health and positive development.

*Why do parents hit their own children? All punishments are done to educate and discipline their children in the right way (Teacher 3)*

*Although parental behaviour towards children is a little bit hard, if it is done with a good intention such as teaching children obedience, respect, or responsibility it is believed to be a disciplinary action. In this case, children may know their parents love them very much (Child care worker 1)*

However, if a child suffers a serious injury as a result of punishment even though the injury is not intended, is it acceptable? Parents at the time should be responsible for the outcome and can be judged to be abusive. In this respect, the motivation or intent should be considered carefully. But the effects of mistreatment should also be taken into account.

Due to these ambiguities and uncertainties, some professionals report a great deal of difficulty in identifying child abuse.

*Child abuse is one of the most complex areas for us so unless the symptoms of the child are clear, we can't say that the child has been abused. From our point of view, if there is clear evidence of abuse, such as if a child has a rupture of the internal organs, brain haemorrhage, exhibits deliberate burning or scalding done over a long period, or a broken bone we would take further action (Doctor 2)*

*When we talk about child abuse, this includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect. Among these, what we can judge as abuse without any doubt is physical or sexual abuse because of the clear medical evidence. However, based on my experience, even though there is clear evidence, in cases of sexual abuse, many parents don't want to make it public. In addition, cases of neglect or emotional abuse are most difficult to identify and prove because there is a lack of indicators (Social worker 3)*



Some doctors and social workers rely on their own personal or organisational definition when they need to decide whether an action should be considered to be abusive or not.

*The majority of the children that visit our child psychiatry department come because of emotional problems or abnormal behaviour. These could have resulted from the way they were raised, depending on how we look at the problem, or any other form of maltreatment ... The situation may appear very different, depending on how the doctor analyses it (Doctor 1- psychiatrist)*

*Well... the indication of child abuse is very vague. For example, in the case of physical abuse it is much clearer but the problem is with children who are emotionally abused or neglected. According to our organisation's definition, as a result of parental attitudes toward parenting or the environment they face, children who show anxiety, emotional insecurity or anger and have a problem with attachment and relationships, and depressed children are regarded as emotionally abused. In the case of neglect, when the basic needs of the children are not adequately met, we consider it to be neglect. Poor nurturing, or inappropriate clothing or supervision are good examples. Some children are reluctant to go back home after 'after school study group' because they want to have a free dinner. If they go back home, they won't have anything to eat. However, we are not 100 % sure about our decision (Social worker 2)*

In this chapter, various ways in which different professionals perceive and understand the nature of child abuse have been discussed. Comparisons between the various professional groups as to how certain actions should be categorised show that doctors and social workers tend to hold similar opinions. With regard to perceptions of mitigating circumstances, the views of doctors were noted to be similar to that of social workers. These two groups tend to take the issue of child abuse more seriously than the other groups. Yet, among doctors and social workers, social workers are more sophisticated in their understanding of child abuse compared with doctors. In fact, the doctors and social workers are more aware of the legal definition and child protection

procedures than the teachers and child care workers. This might be because not all have experience of child abuse cases. In general, there is ambiguity and uncertainty in identifying child abuse and there is still disagreement about what behaviour constitutes abuse. Therefore, there is a need to build a greater consensus of opinion across different professionals so as to facilitate more effective intervention efforts and preventive measures against child abuse.



# **Chapter 11. The Professionals: Experience and Perception of Child Protection**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the ways in which the professionals perceive and manage child abuse.

The chapter will analyse the way in which professionals perceive child abuse through their working experience with abused children or children at risk and their families. To this end, it is proposed first to examine the broad legal framework within which the protection of actual or potentially abused children may be sought. Then, attention will be focused upon intervention and dilemmas in dealing with child abuse cases. It is hoped that these attempts may contribute to improving professional responses and the delivery of a coherent set of services to abused children and their families. This is because, in professional practice, their overall understanding of the problem is believed to be a significant factor that subtly influences their professional practice with children suffering different forms of abuse.

## **11.1. The Legal and Policy Framework in Korea**

Unlike Britain, where child protection work, including concern about children's rights, has grown considerably during the last three decades, in Korea, human rights was not a dominant discourse until fairly recently. However, the key child welfare legislation was

amended in 2000 and its key principles can be summarised as recognising that children should be respected as human beings with rights, that they should grow up within their birth family, and that the government and local authority should support families in rearing their children and promote the healthy development and welfare of children (Article 3 and 4 of the Child Welfare Act 2000).

As mentioned in chapter 2, the revised Act focuses on the establishment of a child protection system designed to address the needs of abused children and it provides a clearer definition of child abuse than before. As for the definition and types of child abuse, it mostly mentioned physical abuse when 'the battered child syndrome' by Kempe & his colleagues was found and announced in the 1960's. But the definition has been widened to include situations in which a child is not properly cared for according to her/his developmental needs. Child abuse is seen as a criminal act and is dealt with within criminal law, if an abuser is prosecuted, or dealt with within civil law, if abused children or their families claim financial compensation, whether a capital sum or maintenance. It prohibits abusive behaviour against children (Article 29). Several other Acts are referred to that have relevant provisions for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children. For instance, a number of different Acts can be used when considering what charges to bring against an adult who has perpetrated abuse against a child. These are the Juvenile Sex Protection Act 2000, the Special Act for the Punishment of Family Violence 1998, the Act on the Punishment of Sexual crimes and the Protection of Victims Thereof 1994 and Criminal Laws.

The legislation recognises that the centre for the prevention of child abuse cannot undertake this duty on its own and other agencies such as health, education, child



welfare institutions, social service organisations and other service organisations, including the police, have a duty to assist child protection agencies in carrying out its functions. However, although there is a listing of the key professions, the explanation of their roles is not detailed and is not negotiated among them. As a result, the division of responsibility between them in actual practice has frequently been a matter of dispute.

It specifies the responsibility of central and local government to establish centres for the prevention of child abuse as well as set up 24-hour hot lines to receive child abuse reports. Their duties are the following:

- Identification, protection and referral for treatment of abused children;
- Informing the public concerning the prevention of child abuse;
- Counselling and education of child abuse offenders;
- Investigation of those reported as child abuse offenders and their families;
- Other matters needed for the protection of abused children.

The Act states that central and local governments can subsidize all or part of the cost needed to establish and operate a child protective service agency. Most of the work is delegated to voluntary organisations such as Good Neighbours, the Korea Welfare Foundation, Save the Children, or World Vision. Ideally, the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA)<sup>26</sup> should have the statutory power to supervise and manage other protection agencies, but it does not. It is simply a voluntary organisation

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<sup>26</sup> The legal duties of the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse are to operate the 24 hour hotline and referral service to the appropriate local centres, the management of national child abuse cases and report writing of the reported cases, development and distribution of programmes for identification, remedy and prevention of child abuse, education of mandatory reporters and others concerned, and implementation of various surveys, public relations and nation wide campaigning (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003).

which has more power than other voluntary bodies and does not cooperate very well with other agencies (Park, 2002a; Yoon, 2003). This is also confirmed by the interviewees.

*You know ... the government handed protection agencies to a number of different voluntary organisations. I think this is the problem. There is ambiguity with regard to accountability and conflict. Thus, I think a supervisory agency with statutory powers is necessary. I don't care whether it is the Ministry of Health and Welfare or the national centre [for the prevention of child abuse]. Anyway one statutory child protection authority with the power to control and coordinate all relevant professionals and agencies should be established (Social worker 4)*

When there are concerns about a child's welfare, government guidance for the centres for the prevention of child abuse and the framework for assessment, which is to be used for abused children, has been provided for social workers to identify and calculate the degree of risk of abuse in assessments of children and families (Ministry of Health and Welfare and Korean Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2003; Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003). Under the guidelines, the stages of work with individual cases are described as referral; investigation and assessment using screening scales; decision-making with core assessment; provision of services; and review/evaluation (see Appendix I). The centres for the prevention of child abuse and police have a responsibility to respond to reports of child abuse and take emergency measures (Article 27 of the Child Welfare Act 2000), but there is no clear definition given what 'emergency measures' really mean and when they take them. The members of staff in the protection agencies usually make the decision as to whether a case is considered to be child abuse. However, when difficulties arise over its assessment of an individual case, or when parents complain strongly about a decision made by a member of staff, a case judgement committee,



which has up to 10 professionals from specific disciplines, such as education, health, governmental administration or academics in the field of child and social welfare, can be convened. This procedure is rarely followed.

The current legislation is seen by many as a limitation to parental rights and freedom despite the interest in the rights of children. The respect for rights turns out to be not so much one of assertion and compliance as one of negotiation and compromise.

Although the Act attempts to balance the rights of children, their parents and the responsibilities of the state, there are a number of inconsistencies to be resolved in practice. This issue will be further discussed in the next chapter.

## **11.2. Child Protection Interventions**

The group of doctors and social workers have a great deal of experience of family responses to the disclosure of child abuse and its way of dealing with it is based on their professional experience. The doctors and social workers feel that denial and resistance from abusive parents are the strongest reactions that they face during intervention. This is partly because abusive parents may not recognise that their behaviour may harm their children, and partly because, even if they are aware of child abuse, they try to keep it a secret, as the fear attached to disclosure is immense and the concept of child abuse is quite alien to them.

*We inform parents how their inappropriate behaviour may impact on their children's physical and psychological development rather than talking about child abuse directly. If we mentioned child abuse these parents would stop bringing their children to me. The term child abuse has associations which shock and horrify parents (Doctor 4)*

*When we find neglected children who have poor hygiene, and are unkempt and dirty, we first try to contact these children's parents, but we are usually rejected by them. They say 'they are my children so I take care of them. Your role is helping my children's study and providing free lunch and supper. That's all. You don't need to worry about our private life. Never mind! Just do your job'. Or some parents admit they are to blame and say 'sorry', but make an excuse such as 'I have to work night shift so my children stay at home and sleep without me. Also I can't provide them with their supper because I'm not there and I don't have enough money. It's inevitable. You should understand me. I don't have any choice'. From our point of view, this is neglect whether they do it deliberately or not (Social worker 2)*

*Most parents strongly deny what they have done. They always defend themselves saying 'this is not abuse. It's just discipline. I punished my child my own way because he/she did something wrong'. What is worse, even though the children seem anxious and scared they tend to hesitate about separation and seem to still want to stay with their abusive parents (Social worker 3)*

Furthermore, this denial and resistance is more profound in cases of intra-familial sexual abuse. This is because there is a fear of losing family honour and of losing a girl's reputation.

*One of my cases was a girl who was sexually abused by her grandfather. Her mother wanted to accuse her father-in-law but her husband didn't agree with it. Every member of her family-in-law started to criticize her [the girl's mother] because they thought she would cause the family to lose its honour and reputation. Also the girl's father was afraid of losing his daughter's reputation. Eventually, the family moved out to the provinces to avoid gossip without any charge against the grandfather. We can't do anything in such a case (Social worker 2)*



When respondents were asked what actions they might take based on the type of abuse, the doctors and social workers were more certain of what to do in cases of child abuse than the teachers and child care workers. In this respect, three distinctive types of intervention activities are identified, each of which appears to be based on a rather different rationale and related to their roles. These are individual work, referral to another agency and providing appropriate places of safety for children.

### **Individual Work**

Individual work is by far the most frequently prescribed form of intervention for child abuse cases. The focus of individual work suggested by the professionals could be with the children or their families, but social workers direct slightly more intervention towards the family as a whole, rather than focusing solely on the abused children.

In dealing with any allegation of child abuse or suspected child abuse cases, doctors have a significant role. They gather and assess evidence which may be of importance in confirming allegations that have been made and can give advice to other professionals (Fung and Chow, 1998; Polnay, 2001; D'Cruz, 2004). In particular, when crucial decisions are taken in relation to prosecution, their view and professional status becomes more important. However, in practice, the doctors largely focus on medical care of the injury rather than conducting an examination to provide the answer as to whether abuse has occurred.

*Suspect! Identify! Treat! These are the functions of the hospital in relation to child protection. But it's difficult at the moment due to lack of knowledge, time, and funding (Doctor 2)*

*Parents who bring their children to hospital want their children to get some medical care. Our role is treatment of the injury (Doctor 3)*

One major intervention activity undertaken by the doctors and social workers when they deal with child abuse cases is individual counselling, but their approach is somewhat different. Almost all the doctors, on the one hand, show a clear tendency for didactic approaches. They try to give good advice to parents involved in child abuse cases. On the other hand, the social workers try to understand the difficult situation of the parents. Their focus is on empowering of those abusive parents by helping them to find alternative ways of disciplining the child that will not result in harm.

*We advise parents about how to bring up their children and give them useful information (Doctor 4)*

*I try to explore the way in which is best for raising children with the parents focusing on their strengths. It is quite helpful because parents find good ways by themselves and they tend to grow in confidence (Social worker 2)*

There are various kinds of individual intervention prescribed by most social workers to abused children and their families. They could be roughly grouped into two major categories.

The first focuses on helping abused children. The abused children are seen to be in need of help to improve certain areas of their functioning so that they are no longer



abused by their parents. This includes helping them to build self-esteem, to achieve better social skills and school achievement so that they can make friends.

*We provide after school study groups to help their poor school performance. They are usually at the bottom of their class. Also, we provide free lunch and dinner [at the after study groups], various leisure programme and health support and bathing services. Also, we provide various programmes for each child based on their individual needs or problems and group work for those who have similar difficulties. These programmes are for building their self-esteem and enhancing their communication skills and social skills (Social worker 2)*

In addition, these social workers recognise the issues of social structure and oppression underpinning the child abuse problem. Therefore they try multi-level intervention to handle this problem. They attempt to fund raise through events for charity, and sponsorship, and projects. This funding is usually spent on meeting children's basic needs such as lunch or school equipment.

*One of my duties is to apply for funding from organisations such as private enterprise or the Community Chest of Korea because we are always under-funded. Sometimes we organise charity events to make extra money to provide necessities for children and look for sponsorship for these children (Social worker 3)*

Or sometimes they visit abused children's schools to ask teachers to cooperate for those children's well-being and welfare. They also provide educational sessions on children's human rights in school.

*Once a year, educational sessions relating to children's human rights for primary school students are provided if the head teacher has some acknowledgement of it. I know once a year is not enough but it's better than nothing (Social worker 2)*

*I visit the primary school, which children who live in our group home [for abused children] attend and give the teachers some information about our agency and group home, and ask them to pay more attention to those children. Although the awareness of child abuse has increased, it still takes a lot of hard work and energy to persuade doctors or teachers to take part. Teachers' participation is particularly important for helping these children because they spend a great deal of time in school (Social worker 3)*

As the findings showed clearly, although the teachers should have a critical role to play in ongoing monitoring and intervention as much as in referral (Stevenson, 1998b; Department of Health et al., 1999), most of them are not aware of the seriousness of child abuse and try to minimise their role in protecting children from harm. In this respect, this kind of effort described above can help teachers to be more familiar with procedures.

The second type of individual intervention by the social workers focuses on helping the parents to change whatever is considered necessary to eliminate their abusive behaviour. This might entail changing maladaptive behaviours believed to have led to the abuse, developing anger control techniques essential for them to manage their emotions and altering their way of thinking to make them understand that abusive behaviour is wrong. To this end, the social workers provide information and education about good parenting.

*We should remember that if we were to help only the child without including other family members such as parents or siblings we wouldn't be serving the child fully. So we should offer a full array of family services. Thus, we value parent participation highly so we usually visit their home to meet them. We advise, educate, or provide counselling for them in their place. Most of them are single parents. They live under stress as the breadwinner. Difficulties in parenting, financial difficulties, or housing problems are their main source of stress. We think unless these problems are solved the problem of child abuse cannot be solved. Therefore, these parents are supported*



*and respected in their role as their children's primary caretakers. We provide opportunities for parents to receive one-on-one instruction on helping their children grow and develop. The counselling provides parents with training and resources to enhance their ability to perform as good parents (Social worker 2)*

*Because of strong denial by parents, sometimes we threaten them with the police if they strongly resist and persuade them if they seem to be in a dilemma. Based on our experience, we usually show empathy to their stressful situation rather than focusing on their abusive behaviour. We try to encourage these parents to participate in our work as a helper. We don't call them 'abusers' anymore. Instead we support them to solve their own problems and ask for some help for the proper development of their children. It really works well. Also, we emphasize that our role is to assist them, rather than replace their role as parents, they are given a full explanation of the risk situations that make them use physical force or neglect their children regardless of their intention. Then the parents agree with our offer, if reluctantly (Social worker 3)*

If necessary, social workers play the role of advocate for abused children and their families, particularly in cases of sexual abuse.

*Although a girl who is cared for by us recovers [after removal from home] and is ready to join her mother, there are lots of unsolved problems. For example, her mother has lots of card debts from legal bills and still lacks social or family support. We can't pay back her debts on her behalf but we can provide lots of support such as legal advice, working together preparing the court case and helping with the process of solving her card debts. In the case of intra-familial sexual abuse, the family may have broken down during the legal process. Imprisonment of her husband and divorce has made her life difficult. So we always support her emotionally and try to empower her as well (Social worker 2)*

As can be seen, social workers are relatively more active in intervening and preventing in child abuse cases than doctors. This may be because social workers are more exposed to Western social science research.

## **Referral to Another Agency**

Interestingly, all of the doctors prefer to refer cases of child abuse to the treatment team for abused children at their own hospital, if they have one, rather than to the central body set up by the law, namely, the National/Local Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse. Under the law, it is mandatory for cases of child abuse to be referred to the Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse. However, most of the doctors interviewed think it is appropriate for these cases to be referred to their own treatment team because they believe that the members of this team are well aware of child protection procedures.

*Many doctors don't know how to report and where to report. Also, they are afraid of complicating the procedure of reporting child abuse. That's the reason why the treatment team for abused children at the hospital was established. In the case of our medical centre, the doctors just refer cases to the team for abused children. That's it. They can concentrate on treatment and the team for abused children covers the problems related to the law or placement. A member of the team does it (Doctor 2)*

*Of course doctors treat abused children medically first then they prefer to refer them to the treatment team for abused children at their own medical centre if they have one (Doctor 3)*

The establishment of doctors' own treatment teams for abused children in hospital is one of the government's master plans for the prevention of child abuse. This team usually has its own social worker as a coordinator. This may be because of the difficulties between doctors and other professionals in working together, as one social worker says:



*In the past, doctors had to report cases of child abuse to the police. It was quite bothersome because the reporter then had to answer police questions, since the doctors were not familiar with the procedure, and the police did not understand medical terminology, the questioning was invasive and reporters found it difficult. Now, if they find any suspected cases they refer them to us [the treatment team for abused children]. I think it makes doctors feel more comfortable and lets them off the hook. Then, we start to investigate the case and then organize a meeting with doctors where we discuss the child's medical, social and family history. Then we decide how to deal with this problem (Social worker 4 who is a manager of the treatment team for abused children at S University Hospital)*

This response is understandable as there are a great number of differences in their training, backgrounds, moral and social standards, and they have busy timetables with different priorities. Each profession also uses different jargon and this can lead to misunderstandings (Payne, 2000; Polnay, 2001; Reder and Duncan, 2003). Thus, when considering the fundamental importance of a close working relationship between all the professionals involved, an attempt should be made to understand and minimise the differences rather than ignore them.

### **Alternative Care Arrangements**

The social workers are more likely than others to pay attention to the abused children's safety and their need for protection. To this end, they provide shelter or a group home as well as trying to find a proper placement for abused children.

*In a case of sexual abuse, immediate protection is required for sexually abused children to safeguard them from further harm. We have one shelter for these girls. We protect abused girls regardless of their willingness (Social worker 2)*

*Its purpose is to protect children at risk of harm and neglect from parents. If there are risks of continuous abuse when children remain in their current home with their parents we arrange an alternative place for these children (Social worker 3)*

When considering the degrees of risk or injury, it seems reasonable to expect that social workers would at least take heed of children's safety and need for protection. However, measures to ensure the safety and protection of abused children are not seen as important when intervening. Of the total number of interventions, about 23.6 per cent (short term: 10.2 % and long term: 13.4 %) concerned removing children from abusive families or situations, as compared with 55.7 per cent for leaving children in the home where abuse had occurred (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2004).

Surprisingly, completely different responses compared to the three identified above were found throughout the interviews with teachers and child care workers. The majority of them revealed their unwillingness to be involved with child abuse problems. The reasons which are repeatedly mentioned include such considerations as they cannot help because it is considered to be a family responsibility, the priority of educating and caring rather than dealing with child abuse cases in their work, that handling child abuse cases is not really their duty. If they got involved in family life they would irritate the parents or director of their agency. Experience or fear of this happening may lead to avoidance of involvement. These views are documented as follow:

*I don't know my students' family life very much. There was a child who had a mother who was often beaten by her husband. One day, the child's mum came to school asking for some help for her bullied son. I knew that her son was also very violent to*



*other students. Anyway I tried to talk with him and I heard he was also beaten by his father. But I couldn't do anything since it was a family matter. I didn't think I had a right to intervene. Although I felt sorry for him and his mother, what could I do? (Teacher 2)*

*If we found a drunken father dragging his child wherever he went and not sending his son to school, we could tell the father that the child should attend school. That's it. Even though parents mistreat their own children these children are still theirs, not ours. What else can we do? We are educators and our job is teaching children (Teacher 3)*

*When I see children mistreated by parents, I think the parents are not educated well. I don't think that I can intervene because this is their own way of disciplining their children. It shouldn't be interfered with (Child care worker 1)*

Of those professionals, two of the child care workers state that if they found children who were possibly being abused, they would consult with their senior and one of the teachers said he would contact another agency to ask for some help.

*If children show disturbed behaviour in the classroom I could ask the parents about it, but if I found a suspected child abuse case, I couldn't because it is quite a sensitive issue and private. Well... I would try to, at least, consult with our director. I think ... even if there was some discussion, I suppose there is little we could do. We may just worry and feel sorry for children (Child care worker 3)*

*I haven't come across any one who has been abused, but I remember one or two of my students. One usually wore dirty and smelly clothes, skipped lunch, and stayed outside until midnight. He lives with only his mother who works from early in the morning to late at night. Another case was also a case of a lone parent, a father who usually hit his son sometime severely. I tried to contact his divorced mother but his mother didn't want to take care of him because she had already remarried. Well... actually this is not my responsibility but I would try to contact other relatives or an agency which can help young students properly (Teacher 1)*

Some teachers try to counsel and give advice to their students. Many of them are aware that counselling is normally not part of their duties because they are not professionally trained. They know that it should be a specialist with a special knowledge of child protection matters such as a school social worker or school counsellor.

In sum, throughout the interviews, it was found that the group of doctors and social workers considered their role in relation to child protection to be essential or important while the group of teachers and child care workers felt it was not part of their duties.

### **11.3. Challenges and Dilemmas**

Handling cases of child abuse is fraught with difficulties and dilemmas for professionals, because they have to work in a climate which is legally, socially, and culturally insensitive towards issues regarding child rearing practices in general, and child abuse in particular.

Basically, there is a need to ensure that policy and legislation to promote the safeguarding of children from harmful behaviour is implemented by all of the respondents.

*The law is there, but there is no proper system that enables the implementation of such a law. I think that is what the problem is. For protecting children effectively, first of all, there should be professionals who can treat abused children such as social workers, psychiatrics, and child psychologists. Secondly, professionals who can*



*identify suspected cases of child abuse such as school teachers, child care workers, civil servants and paediatricians working in local health centres, who should be provided with proper training to make a pool of support. Finally, the people who run the legislation and system should provide training. This would be a systematic way of implementing the law and policy (Doctor 1)*

*Service systems for safeguarding children should be better. The system ... It is underfunded, sometimes, inadequately staffed, and there are not enough facilities. For example, there are only two centres for prevention of child abuse and nationally there are only 15 of them. There is a small number of workers working in them and working in that area is quite hard. Staff who work in centres risk their life and sometimes they can't protect the children because of scarce resources including facilities, funding, and manpower. Although the mandatory reporter reports a suspected case of child abuse, I feel there is a lack of systematic support at the moment I don't know whether I am being too idealistic or not but I'm sure that our society needs an effective system (Social Worker 3)*

The findings suggest that there is a significant shortfall in dealing with suspected child abuse cases. These are reflected in a number of areas, such as working together, training, resources, working environment, and intervention in family life.

## **Difficulties Involved in Working Together**

### **1) A Lack of Cooperation**

To work with abused children and their families, there is the need for a coordinated inter-agency response. Interdisciplinary cooperation is particularly important for successful child protection. This is because effective support of children and their families cannot be achieved by a single agency acting alone, it is a multi-disciplinary task. Therefore, agencies and professionals should be honest and explicit with children

and families about professional roles, responsibilities, powers and expectations, and about what is and is not negotiable (Corby, 2000, 2002b; Polnay, 2001; Stevenson, 2005).

According to an English and Welsh government document (Department of Health et al., 1999), 'all agencies and professionals should work together to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect' (p. vii). This lies at the heart of the British system. Yet, full interdisciplinary cooperation is often difficult to achieve, especially where cooperation beyond the core professionals is concerned (Birchall and Hallett, 1995). Of all the professionals in this study, only a few social workers state that improving coordination between professionals is a way of improving their responses to abused children.

*In my experience, abused children and their families need co-ordinated help from the statutory and voluntary sectors, including schools, hospitals, and welfare centres because of their various needs. I think in order to protect children effectively, working together with relevant professionals and agencies is the most important thing (Social worker 3)*

*Every agency which is involved in child protection should meet together to discuss how to help children and families and how to divide their roles. We have to work collaboratively with other professionals (Social worker 4)*

These workers recognise the fundamental importance of inter-agency work in combating child abuse. The existing research studies also confirm that collaboration in child protection is less likely to be effective, despite its importance for abused children and their families (Park, 2002a; Yoon, 2003). This suggests that the issue of



multidisciplinary collaboration in child protection services has received little attention in Korean society.

## **2) A Lack of Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities**

The findings suggest that there are difficulties in achieving effective interdisciplinary cooperation. Cooperation between the groups of professionals, if any, has been far from satisfactory, despite the organisational and professional regulations which emphasize the interagency multidisciplinary team approach to child protection practice. It has been shown that the day-to-day operation of child protection services is often the scene of interagency conflict and misunderstanding. As discussed earlier, the most common problem is a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities. The dividing line between different professionals' various roles has been vague and sometimes confusing.

*There are not many doctors who can identify child abuse cases. When we bring abused children to local health centres, in most cases, doctors have absolutely no idea about it. They usually say 'how can you prove it is as a result of being beaten by a parent?' In the case of the police, many of them consider child abuse to be a kind of family affair so they don't want to intervene in a family problem. Some policemen told me 'you shouldn't get involved in family problems. It's not our job'. I think a working partnership is going too far (Social worker 2)*

*Sometimes I find that the central bodies attempt to justify their work in terms of bureaucratic activity, rather than in outcomes for vulnerable children. There should be clear role identification but they don't care about it. Our roles and responsibilities in child protection have to be negotiated and shared among different professionals who are dealing with cases of child abuse, I think (Social worker 4)*

Furthermore, some professionals in areas which come in contact with social workers work within narrow specialisms.

*Even if somebody reports a neglect case to the centre for prevention of child abuse, staff say 'the indication is too vague' or 'we can't do anything for neglect or emotional abuse cases'. They don't want our cooperation and the social welfare civil servants' attitudes to us are similar to that of the staff of the centre. They say 'you have to send children protected by us to the central centre and then you must stop intervening' or 'you are not specialised to deal with child abuse problems'. But actually we are specialised and we run a shelter for abused children. I think they are becoming like bureaucrats and forgetting what the most important things for helping these vulnerable people is. There is a lack of flexibility. We can't trust them because we think they work inappropriately (Social worker 2)*

### **3) Different Values between Professionals**

In addition, there are further difficulties when communication between professionals from different disciplines takes place. Professionals tend not to share an understanding of processes, principles, knowledge, roles and, most importantly, their values and beliefs where child protection is concerned.

*People working with us, such as school teachers, the police, play therapists, lawyers, and doctors need to be trained in order to change attitudes. We should discuss our perspective on child abuse. The ways of child protection could differ depending on those professionals' attitudes. Some lawyers don't want to make a case because it's not beneficial for them or they can't guarantee a good result. For that reason, many professionals hesitate to get involved or give up. The priority is children. We should focus on the best interests of children (Social worker 2)*

*I feel confused when working with my colleagues because our values are different. When we have a case conference within the team there are lots of different*



*perspectives on one case and on the best interests of children. One says the children should be returned to the parents, while another says further protection is still needed. This is because I think we usually work without a deep consideration of principles or core values. When we were in University we didn't study ethics and values in social work as much as we needed to and even when we work as a practitioner we don't receive any training. For that reason we burn out easily. That's the biggest problem for me (Social worker 3)*

*A few years ago, I examined the attitudes of the police towards child abuse using telephone survey. As I remember, most of them did not pay attention to this topic. They even said that 'if children hit their parents we can make charges of assault, and it can't be morally accepted. But if parents hit their children we can't do anything. Disciplining their children is their [parents] job, isn't it? Why would I interfere in that?' I can't forget their comment even now. What's wrong with them? ((Social worker 4)*

These factors may lead to conflict between professionals, and even amongst their own colleagues. In this respect, Reder and Duncan (2003) argue that:

The issues of communication are far more complex than has ever been envisaged by inquiry panels/case reviewers and that their more practical recommendations (especially focusing on procedural and technical aides to improve message transfers) ... only address a small part of this complexity ... its psychological and interactional dimensions must be addressed before practical measures can work effectively (p. 84)

Thus, to bring about changes in the present situation, effective communication between professionals requires a mindset that can be developed through training.

### **A Lack of Training about Child Abuse**

Although the gaps between different professionals and agencies illustrated above could be bridged through inter-agency training, the current system does not provide that kind

of training. Sometimes, there are conferences or workshops but attendances tend to restrict themselves to one professional group rather than being multidisciplinary. Often busy schedules are given as a reason for non attendance. According to the social workers, even though the conference could be beneficial for them to share experiences with other professionals, they could not attend because of their busy schedule and full workload.

*There is a need for a clear set of values about the role of the service, particularly in addressing the needs of vulnerable people between other professionals, and between us [my colleagues]. I'm sure that we can share it through joint-training or seminars. However, without permission or financial support from the agency, it's difficult to attend the seminars (Social worker 3)*

This suggests that individual employers should ensure their staff are appropriately trained with respect to the importance of inter-agency working

The majority of professionals state that their difficulties in dealing with cases of abused children and their families are due to their lack of experience and knowledge of child abuse.

*Look! There is the centre for the protection of abused children but there are no experienced professionals who can treat children properly, sometimes the social workers' level of skill is poor. Although there are over 3,000 reported cases there is no report about their outcome. Nothing is working well (Doctor 1)*

*Most doctors know how to treat their patients but they don't know what precisely happened to them. In the case of children, particularly, perhaps they know how they got the injuries but the ability of the child to explain exactly how it got the injuries and its reliability are in doubt. For example, there was a child who suffered a fracture of*



*his skull. His parents said that he had fallen from the bed. The doctor knows how to treat the child but he doesn't know whether the given reason is true or not. That's why training is needed. If these doctors were trained properly they would be more comfortable in their decision (Doctor 2)*

*Some parents who have had the experience of reporting their case to the centre for the prevention of child abuse talk about when they called the centre they were told the staff were busy or they would decide whether they would get involved or not later. Sometimes a representative from the centre visited the abusive parent's house then left without any arrangement. After that, the child and mother were beaten more severely and the father stopped sending the child to after study groups because he suspected the teacher of the study group to be the reporter. These people lost trust in the centre as well as our agency. I think staff who deal with child abuse cases need more training and more careful consideration (Social worker 2)*

## **A Lack of Resources**

Two groups of professionals, mainly doctors and social workers, complain about the lack of financial support by the state.

*There isn't yet a systematic procedure set up which instructs those organizations to consult hospitals, and nor is there a financial support system. The truth is that even if the centre for prevention of abused children has problems and would like to consult us [doctors] about them [abused children] they can't due to lack of financial aid as well as formal systematic procedures for requesting advice from us. I hope for it to become more formal and active by solving the financial difficulty related to running it (Doctor 1)*

*There are no funds for the treatment team of abused children. We [doctors, nurses and social workers] work together as volunteers without any external support. When we need a meeting, we meet up during the lunchtime in our medical centre dining room. From this year, the medical centre has give us a small amount of money for lunch and the meeting. It's better than nothing but you know ... it's not enough (Social worker 4)*

Three of the social workers work closely with abused children and their families. According to them the lack of state support and inappropriate delivery system are the obstacles to doing child protection work.

*There is a lack of state and local authority support. Lack of funding, lack of awareness of child abuse, and lack of understanding of the importance of working together with non-governmental organisations ... By the way, neglect problems are associated with poverty. In the case of lone father households, the father has to work full-time to make money. There is no one else to do housework and bring up children. For these lone parents, life is quite tough even though they try hard. The government supports disabled people or the elderly sending a home-helper or providing meals, but not these families. Our support [the voluntary body] could be restricted because our funding is limited. Under such circumstances, I feel helpless. Unless there is proper systematic support from both central and local authority level, we cannot give enough practical support (Social worker 2)*

*To support abused children and their families, sufficient and systematic organised social support is crucial. There may also be a need for proper placement for these children, with support from other professionals and an efficient law framework. Even if there is a need to protect the child, we have not enough secure places where the child can be kept. Therefore sometimes the child is left in the same situation. This increases the moral dilemma for me (Social worker 3)*

*Although there is a report, within our system, abusers are usually returned to their home soon after. Then further abuse will continue. Some people complain to us that although they call 1391<sup>27</sup> to make a report there seems to be no response or no intervention. This is far worse than they expected. In such circumstances why try to report? It's a matter of an inappropriate system. The delivery of services needs to change and improve (Social worker 4)*

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<sup>27</sup> Under the revised Child Welfare Act 2000, the central and local governments set up 24-hour hotlines to receive child abuse reports. 1391 is the number of it.



## Poor Working Environment

The professionals believe that shortage of staff and heavy workload make their work very difficult.

*In these [poor] areas, we always wait until late at night to contact children's parents and meet them because they both work and then we take our paper work home. We always worry about budget. Cases of emotional abuse and neglect need long-term support because these families often face multiple problems. However, in reality, it's not easy because there is no solution to our problems, which include lack of funding, shortage of staff, and lack of time. We can't take responsibility for abused children for as long as they need. Even though there is a very good programme it will have to be closed soon after the funding is finished. This sometimes makes me feel exhausted (Social worker 2)*

*As a front-line worker, I'm in charge of a group-home [for abused children]. My main duties are supervising the staff, managing the budget of the group home, counselling both children and families, and visiting schools or homes. Sometimes I have to cope with staff absence. Twice a month I have to spend the night in a group home because we can't afford to pay the staff [of the group home] 24 hours and 365 days because of the lack of funding. Ideally we hope to hire two staff for the group home so they do alternate 12 hour shifts. But the budget is not reasonable. So we hire one staff member and I replace her if necessary. Ah! I organise big fundraising events and public campaigns, apply for funding, and ... do case recording (Social worker 3)*

*I read an article in a newspaper a few days ago. There was a boy who lived with his dead mum for six months. His teacher tried to find out what the problem with him was but the teacher couldn't manage it. In the newspaper his teacher was criticized for being an irresponsible person. However, we should know that teachers are not allowed to visit students' homes. Also, if we taught only 10 pupils it would be possible to observe all the students more closely. But, as you know, how can we observe 45 students at the same time? It's harder than you think. After school, we also have to do lots of paper work. So we don't have time to deal with it (Teacher 2)*

## **A Low Priority to the Safety and Welfare of Children**

In this study, only a few professionals recognise that Korean society gives a low priority to the child's safety and welfare and that this could be a fundamental problem for cooperation. They raise it as an issue that should be tackled.

*Although laws have been set up, the government still gives a low priority to the task of protecting children. The best interests of children should be the priority although there are various obstacles and child abuse should be considered a serious social problem rather than a private family affair. If we don't reach those agreed principles the discussions of the way to improve child protection work could amount to nothing (Social worker 2)*

*When I meet parents, they attempt to use me to meet their own needs rather than their children's. I think that this is because they [neglectful parents] are often emotionally and materially deprived. In such circumstances I spend a large amount of time interacting with children's parents in order to effect a positive change in their parenting capacity. I think this is necessary but I always remember that working with parents must not be at the expense of losing the focus on why we are actually there. Therefore, I always try to maintain a child focused perspective (Social worker 3)*

## **Dilemmas and Frustration of the Workers**

The professionals expressed frustration and doubts about their right to intervene in family matters. As we have shown earlier, outside intervention in family matters is very limited. Traditionally, all the emotional, familial, financial or other matters are handled within the family itself. Most of the social workers express their helplessness as they feel that they face immense resistance.



*Many people don't think emotional abuse or neglect is child abuse because they believe that a family problem should be solved within the family. This makes our work more difficult. Also, most parents believe they can hit their children for the purpose of education or discipline. In this situation, I don't know how deeply we can intervene in a family problem. Also public sponsors don't want to spend their money on abused children. They believe it to be a family responsibility. We [social workers] are told they [sponsors] don't understand why we should have to help children who are mistreated by their own parents. Thus, without changes in attitudes, these difficulties will not improve (Social worker 2)*

*Doing follow-up work properly is very difficult. Parents don't want to keep in touch with us. They usually say 'that's not a good memory so we don't want to have contact with you anymore'. Sometimes they move out and then deliberately avoid us. A few months later, their children turn up again (Social worker 3)*

Hostility to workers who were involved at first is a common experience in working with abused children and their families. However, it could be reduced when the parents were helped effectively. For example, if the social worker tries to deal with and support the parents' emotional response, it would help the parents to accept the worker's recommendation. If the worker attempts to explore alternative methods for disciplinary action with the parents, it may contribute to building the parents' sense of empowerment. Moreover, if the social worker has good communication or counselling skills it may help to motivate the parents to change their discipline methods. Thus, social workers need to have a knowledge and understanding of parental roles within the child's background. When social workers serve their service users, they have to remember that their first duty in this context is to protect children and where possible to improve the quality of family life. In this, the social worker plays an essential role which differs from most other professions. This means that most other professionals are

viewed as being experts in advising service users as to what they believe service users ought to do, whereas social workers usually seek to establish a relationship between them as equals and increase service users' empowerment.

Doctors comment that some professionals working with children and their families also lack an awareness of child abuse.

*People, including us [doctors], are not interested in child abuse. I don't know why. Maybe culturally people don't want to intervene in other people's lives. The government should educate the public and professionals that if we don't make a report there is going to be a mass of children who die or are injured by their parents or others (Doctor 2)*

This suggests that Korean society has not accepted the right of the state or the welfare sector to intervene in family life to protect the child.

For the group of teachers and child care workers, there is an obvious gap between the way they understand the nature of a case and the way they subsequently handle it.

*Several years back, there was a suspected case that was considered to be a bad thing for a girl [aged 11] in my class, rather than child abuse. After school, there was always a man waiting for her. I wondered a lot and asked her who he was. She said he was her boss and she used to take care of his child after school so he took her to his home. But I still wondered and thought it was weird. I was very concerned about her because I guessed she was given some money as a result of a sexual relationship with him. Then... she graduated and I almost forgot it. One day I heard gossip about her. Somebody saw she was pregnant. Which suggested that she might have had many sexual experiences. Frankly I wanted to observe her more at that time but other teachers did not let me do that. They thought intervening in the girl's affairs could bring me into danger. I was afraid. There was nothing I could do for her because she*



*didn't say anything to me and she might even have enjoyed her relationships with men because she received money. Well... thinking back now, I know I should have done something for her, but to be honest, if I was in that situation again, I wouldn't act differently. Again, with a suspicion, I couldn't do anything for her unless she asked for some help or advice (Teacher 2)*

*As I remember, I was taught about child abuse when I was in University. So I know what it is about but I haven't actually experienced it. Well ... if one of the children in my charge were at risk I should get involved. However, frankly speaking, it's not easy to involve oneself in the area of family matters. I don't know what I would actually do although I know what I should do (Child care worker 3)*

Even though they are aware of the nature and negative effects of child abuse they are not sure whether they should be involved in a suspected child abuse case. They are caught in a dilemma.

In this chapter, some of the major finding on the ways professionals perceive child abuse through their experiences has been presented. Overall, the general view of each professional group is far from being consistent and coordinated.

The influence on their explanations is seen in the type of intervention professionals prescribe for child abuse cases. The social workers tend to take action based on an ecological perspective, while doctors are much more focused on remedying children's medical problems and referral. In this respect, the children's need for safety and protection is the concern of the group of social workers. Most of the teachers and child care workers reveal their fear of difficulties in their involvement in family matters.

In dealing with child abuse cases, professionals face a great many challenges as the services for abused children and their families are both uncoordinated and fragmented. There is an obvious lack of inter-agency cooperation, close coordination among the professionals and among statutory and voluntary bodies, state support, and training. In addition there is clear insensitivity of some professionals and society at large, which may be caused by lack of social consensus on child abuse. Working under such conditions, professionals who work closely with abused children and their families are faced with a large number of dilemmas. Thus, vigorous implementation of legislation is recommended by the majority of professionals to promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter.



## **Chapter 12. Conclusion: Themes and Issues**

The previous chapters delineated and discussed the findings on parental and professionals' attitudes and behaviour in relation to child rearing and their responses to the problem of child abuse. This chapter will reflect upon the predominant themes that emerged and raise various associated issues that need to be further addressed. Specifically, attempts will be made to unravel some of the major discrepancies in participants' parenting attitudes and behaviours, and in the case of the professionals, their understanding of their work in child protection. As will be discussed in this chapter, this dissonance occurs in a range of ways. They include differences which involve parenting attitudes and behaviour, attitudes towards child abuse, and professional disciplines. This chapter will also consider the implications of the findings for social policy and current practice in relation to child rearing and child abuse.

### **12.1. Social Values underlying Child Rearing**

We have already discussed the fact that child abuse is not a fixed phenomenon but the result of negotiated processes which alter with time and culture (Parton, 1991; Stainton Rogers et al., 1992; Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1994; Kitzinger, 1997; Stainton Rogers, 2001a; D'Cruz, 2004).

This study suggests that Korean society may be operating on assumptions about child rearing and family life which differ markedly from those in the West. In particular, many Korean parents and some of the relevant professionals do not define or understand 'child abuse' as their equivalents in the West. Two elements in this seem to be intertwined in creating situations which Western commentators would see as abusive to children. These are power relationships and familial collectivism.

### **Power Relationships**

It is inevitable that there will be an unequal power relationship between adults and children. However, the nature and extent of this inequality differs markedly across the world. Aspects of this are illustrated in relation to the issue of corporal punishment.

There are already twelve European countries where children are protected by law from corporal punishment both at school and in the home.<sup>28</sup> This clearly shows that corporal chastisement is not viewed as essential for child rearing or the disciplining of children. Until recently, parents in the UK were not criticized for smacking, as it was part of their culture. Currently, however, the issue has become hugely controversial and is hotly contested in both public and professional spheres. Under the current Children Bill, British parents can defend striking their children with a hand or cane using the defence of 'reasonable chastisement' a clause which dates back to 1860. But smacking children is banned in school and childminders are forbidden from any form of corporal punishment against any child, even if they have permission from parents.

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<sup>28</sup> EU countries with smacking bans are Norway, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Cyprus, Croatia, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Romania, and Ukraine. Smacking is also prohibited in Israel and the Supreme Court of Italy banned corporal punishment in families in 1996.



The issue of corporal chastisement is unavoidably a question of human rights of the child. In connection with the child's right to physical integrity, as recognised by the Convention, namely in its articles 19, 28, 29 and 37, and in the light of the best interests of the child, physical punishment can be seen as an abuse of adults' power (Fox Harding, 1997; Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Lansdown, 2001; Franklin, 2002). Corporal punishment is included in the Convention as being prejudicial to the health of the child, because it represents a parental role model that conveys to the child that hitting is an appropriate way to express negative feelings (Hodgkin, 1997). According to the Children are Unbeatable Alliance (2000), children are considered to have the same rights as adults with regard to freedom from physical violence.

In recent years, there has been an ongoing debate on a statutory ban on any form of physical punishment of children in the UK. After debate in the House of Lords, peers rejected the complete legal ban on it. Instead, they removed the 'reasonable chastisement' defence if parents harmed a child physically or mentally. Under the compromise amendment to the Children Bill agreed by peers, smacking is outlawed in England and Wales if it causes harm such as reddening of skin, bruising, psychological harm, or involves use of an implement. It is not an easy matter to maintain the balance between the parent's right to discipline and protecting the child. Therefore, it still remains a contentious issue. For Koreans, such debate seems strange and only possible in Western countries.

Koreans believe that the age difference places children in an inferior and powerless position within the family and society at large. Also as a sign of respect, a young person should obey an older person. Therefore, in Korea, there remains a reluctance to

accept the idea of children having rights. In fact, children's rights were not taken seriously by the government until the 1990s; the topic of the rights of the children had barely surfaced within the minds of most Koreans, even those active in human rights groups. However demographic change provides the background in which these ideas were introduced into Korea. The decreasing birth rate, along with changes in family structure may have resulted in children being more valued. The Korean government ratified the Convention in 1991 with only minor reservations with respect to three articles.<sup>29</sup> This was less from serious concern to protect the rights of children in Korea than from the perceived need to improve its international image. It did not immediately lead to any new initiatives by the government nor did it provoke a great deal of interest in children's rights issues. It was not until 2000 that Korea reformed the Child Welfare Act so that cases of child abuse were to be reported and a revision of practice guidance was made. If abuse by parents is proved, the state is able to intervene to separate the child from her/his parents. This was the first time the Korean government had been able to intervene within the family.

However, for the majority of parents, the assumption that 'adults know best' still holds sway. They believe in the right of parents to raise their children in the way they believe is in the best interest of the child. In considering parental relationships with children, parents believe that they have complete control over their children, as shown in this study. The following recent incidents which received our attention in Korea seem to reflect this cultural belief.

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<sup>29</sup> Article 9 which deal with adoption, article 21 on the rights to see parents and article 40 on the treatment of children in courts during times of martial law.



An unemployed father fed his two children (aged 5 and 6) some sleeping pills and threw them into the river before trying to commit suicide himself. Unfortunately, the children died, but he survived. The reason for the joint suicide was his credit card debt which he could not pay back. He was worried about his children. After he died, they would be sent to an orphanage and live in undesirable conditions (Chosun Daily, 2003).

A young mother suffering from chronic financial debt leapt to her death after killing her two children at their apartment building in Ulsan (Segye Daily, 2003)

An impoverished mother in Incheon took her infant son with her as she plunged to the ground after hurling her other two school aged children from a high-rise apartment building (Hankook Daily, 2004)

There are a number of ways of viewing these parents' actions. Interdependence among people, instead of individual autonomy, characterises Korean social relations. Korean parents and their children remain very close, both physically and psychologically, for a long time. Parents and their children are emotionally tied and are not altogether differentiated from the psychological unity of the whole family. Westerners may be shocked or horrified that parents can kill their children in joint suicide. For the Korean, however, it is not the killing of others but a part of their own suicidal act because their children are, after all, extensions of themselves. Also, this could be understood as reflecting parental despair about their capacity to look after their children. When parents cannot trust in and depend upon others for the care of their children, they may kill the children to protect them. In this view, parents do not want their children to be left behind in a world they cannot trust to care for them. Their children are their responsibility and duty and no one else can care for them adequately. Therefore, they decide to take the life of their children when committing suicide. From their standpoint, it is the best solution for their children. Or, these parent-child joint suicides may reflect

the weakening of community solidarity, the decline of trust in and reliance upon unknown others as a result of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, and there is no available state safety net for them.

The findings suggest the parents desire to control their children. As already discussed, whether the parents have good intentions and whether the children are disobedient or not is an important consideration for the definition of harmful practices. They do not accept that children have absolute rights. Many Korean parents still use physical punishment and humiliating disciplinary methods by Western standards as a way of exercising discipline by way of showing their love. The general acceptance of this seems to illustrate the socially sanctioned oppression of children.

Thus it can be seen that there is a wide gap between Western values concerning the concept of children's rights and those of Korean society.

### **Familial Collectivism**

Here there are indications of Western influences finding their way into Korean society. It is still very much 'top down' and does not fully reflect generally held values about education and disciplining. The government has reported criticism of Korean society by outsiders in terms of its over competitive university admission system which may lead to children's lack of healthy development; an act of parliament has banned 'child abuse' using Western concepts; academics in Korea have undertaken many surveys revealing, inter alia, the extent of physical punishment. Yet many Korean parents, including those who are well educated, remain largely untouched by the attack on their values implicit



in these criticisms. More currently held values, as shown in this study, emphasize and support physical chastisement. This will be picked up in the next section. Included in these are strongly held views that physical chastisement, quite extreme by western standards, is a necessary part of parental love. There is still widespread belief in familial sanctity and rights which mean that policy changes are not in fact widely accepted, nor are the values they reflect generally internalised.

Koreans are not prepared to expose their family shame, which should be kept within the confines of the family, to the public. The family is viewed as a private sphere. There is a belief amongst Koreans, even amongst professional groups that child rearing, in particular child abuse, is a family responsibility and that families should not be interfered with. For example, this study suggests that the group of teachers and child care workers are reluctant to get involved with authority related cases of child abuse. On the whole, the general public believes in the right of parents to raise their children in the way they think best, while professionals are concerned about the widespread nature of that belief. The main dilemma is how a professional might intervene in such cases when there is a lack of acceptance that families in difficulty are in need of state intervention.

Thus, the debate is part of a more general question of whether the state should intervene in families. In Korea, the state does not usually intervene in family affairs unless it is believed that not to intervene would be disastrous. For cases not serious enough to warrant legal intervention, it is accepted as child discipline. Many professionals also find themselves in a difficult position with regard to intervening in the family.

This is partly because individual family members are expected to sacrifice their interests to those of the family, and avoid bringing shame on the family name (Hahm, 1993; Choi, 1997; Song, 2001). The family is depicted as the core of the social structure and the honour of the family is crucial. The findings of the present study show that there is a requirement to lose or submerge one's identity in the wider identity of the family. It is called 'Weism' and is used to reinforce the togetherness and closeness of the members of a group. Moreover, filial piety, which forms familial collectivism, is not only the ideological principle by which order is kept in the relationship between parents and children within a family, but also one that operates at a practical level stipulating why and how children should respect adults. These matters are related to the passionate importance which is attached to success in education. Thus, the role of the state in relation to those people, without full understanding on the part of the state of people's values and beliefs and development of more culturally sensitive practices which take account of these, will be ineffective.

Another possible reason for the lack of disclosure and reluctance to have the state intervene may be due to a lack of understanding of children's development. Emphasis on education, even if it may lead to under emphasis on psychological and emotional development, may not, even in Western eyes, be abusive. The key point here is that many Korean parents focus on intellectual, along with physical development. They seem to underestimate the fact that all aspects of children's development should be understood holistically. At this stage as I write, I am still not sure how far the parents are actually ignorant about issues of child development. I wonder if the disclosure of child abuse and parental incompetence were not so burdened with social stigma, whether parents would then come out and seek help for appropriate parenting. What is



clear is that giving less importance to the emotional and psychological well being of the child may have long lasting effects and that, in the best interests of the child, the parents should be made aware of this.

## **12.2. Dissonance and Tensions between Parenting Attitudes and Practice**

The study suggests some significant tensions and dissonance between how parents say they want to behave and the pressures put on them by expectations of the wider society.

### **Gender Differences**

The findings from interviews with parents suggest that they treat their children equally regardless of their gender. However, demographic distortions and the Korean family registration system show that a preference for male children is a feature of Korean society which has led to a gender imbalance.

In addition to the imbalanced sex ratio, as discussed in chapter 5, other evidence also suggests that gender imbalance is the result of abortion of female foetuses. Deep-seated attitudes are also reflected in the long inherited Korean family registration system, called *Haju-je*, which encourages preference for males and discrimination against women and has a negative effect on the children of remarried and divorced couples. In Korea, whenever one fills out forms, one may be asked to fill in one's '*haju*', the

Korean family head's name, who one's father is. One is legally required to write one's father's name; if one's father passes away, the brother's name is written under the 'hoju-je', regardless of his age. As a result, even a three-year-old boy becomes the legal head of the family and his mother is relegated to an inferior social status. In addition, a married woman must list her name on her husband's Korean census registry. This perpetuates the idea that the husband is the master and the wife is a subordinate. Furthermore, a woman's illegitimate child can only be registered in the father's census with the man's legal consent. Even if a divorced mother has custody of her children and creates a separate household with her children, by law, the children are registered under their father's family census. Moreover, if a divorced mother remarries, she is legally required to get permission from the biological father in order to register her children under the new father's family registration. Even if permission is granted, the children's surname and family origin continues to follow their biological father's genealogical roots. Thus, under the *hoju-je* regime, Korean women are considered failures as mothers if they do not bear a male offspring. Ms. Yoo describes it clearly:

*Even though some people say gender doesn't matter anymore, I feel my standing within my family-in-law largely depended on my ability to produce male heirs. I would feel that I had failed my husband and parents-in-law if I had not borne my son (Ms. Yoo)*

This long-standing Confucian preference for male children may be linked to a pattern of gender selective abortions (Jin et al., 1998). In Korea, policy bans doctors from carrying out abortions on most women who are more than 28 weeks into pregnancy. However, as can be seen in chapter 2, according to the survey research studies, in many cases, the parents tend to delay making a decision until ultrasound checks can determine the sex of their child. If it is a boy there is more likelihood that the pregnancy will be



completed. If it is a girl, considered less valuable by many families, there is a greater chance of abortion (Cho, 1997; Yoo et al., 1999; Kim and Lee, 2001). This reflects a dissonance between what the parents say and what 'hard' data suggests actually happens in Korean society. The findings clearly show that parents still find the greatest meaning and the deepest gratification in their lives in particular aspects of parenthood, that is, being dedicated to intellectually achieving and socially successful children, preferably sons.

The research suggests that Korea, in general, retains traditional values and ethics for different gender roles in the family and society although women are attempting to develop new social roles which are progressive and active. Nonetheless, there is a widespread and deep-rooted acceptance of gender inequality. Therefore, unless the male oriented *hoju-je* system changes and, more fundamentally, the strong preference for male children diminishes, abortion based on the sex of the embryo may continue to be carried out and there is little hope of a change in attitudes and perception. It has been shown throughout the thesis that even the laws of the state cannot be effective until the problem is tackled from its very roots.

### **Dissonance and Tensions in Discipline and Raising Children**

There is a clear discrepancy between the fathers' aspirations to take part in raising their children and their practice in daily life. In addition, unbalanced child care responsibilities between men and women are identified. Gender inequality exists in families and is quite heavily influenced by the stereotypical roles expected of husbands and wives. The fathers believe that they are more involved in all aspects of child

rearing compared to their own parents. In reality, however, primary responsibility is still given to mothers; many fathers are clearly not around to be the loving, engaged parent whom they describe. Without a radical change in men's work culture and their way of socialisation, they simply do not have time to spend with their children.

Parents in the current generation believe they are more nurturing and less controlling than their own parents. However, the observations in interviews suggest that their children's lives are as highly structured and controlled as are the parents' in terms of upbringing and education. Also, although the majority of respondents are slightly apologetic about corporal punishment, most of them speak of having used canes. In other words, even though there is a sense of ambivalence about doing this in terms of appropriateness, it is still viewed as a permissible or even necessary form of discipline.

The present study shows that parents are bestowed with the authority to take whatever punitive actions are needed to educate and discipline their children. Many Korean parents, as discussed earlier in the chapter which considered intrusion into family life, regard their own children as private property that can be handled arbitrarily (Kim et al., 2000a), taking it for granted that it is their right to beat their own children when they try to teach them or to govern them. Furthermore, there seems to be an underpinning belief that children must be forced to conform. Conformity is important because it is associated with concerns about obedience, good manners and being a good student. Corporal punishment is one way of forcing conformity and educational 'obsession' is used to justify this kind of enforcement. The findings suggest that there is a lack of a framework which sees children's healthy development as needing to be fostered – rather than imposed by discipline. Parents appear to be unable to see alternative methods



which could reach the same desirable goal. Therefore, parental education, planned both at national and local level is a key to helping them to see the other side. For instance, national campaigns can be planned for such changes to come, at the same time, community work is also essential to bring changes at local level. Community based programmes have more potential for making change in the population because the whole community is targeted to facilitate small but important changes (Hall and Hall, 1996; Arnold and Cloke, 1998; Wright, 2004). Social work is recognised as a profession which seeks social change by addressing the problem of individuals, their environment and the interface between the two (England, 1986). Therefore, social workers can have a major role to play in this. Educational programmes emphasising the image of childhood, the concept of child development, what children have a right to in order to develop satisfactorily and the emotional and psychological needs of the child could be developed to educate parents.

### **12.3. Differentiation between Richer and Poorer Parents in Sample**

The families in this study were recruited from poorer and richer areas in Seoul. This is because a large number of Korean surveys show that parenting practices may be influenced by multiple factors such as the economic status of the family and educational level of the care givers (Kim and Ko, 1987; Lee and Lee, 1987; Chun and Park, 1991; Lee et al., 1997). In addition, the Western studies reveal that parenting style may not only vary along class, and educational level, but also between cultural sub-groups, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Therefore, it was anticipated that parents from

different areas might have differences in terms of their parenting attitudes and behaviours. However, the way in which the sample of parents was chosen, in particular the decision to focus on two parent families, may have made it difficult to distinguish such differences. For example, all of the parents, both in the South (richer) and North (poorer) of Seoul, placed great importance on their children's academic achievement as a means to acquire personal advancement, higher social status, and wealth, as well as respect for elders. These families emphasized conformity, obedience, filial piety, as well as greater use of physical force. Such beliefs have been shown to influence the child rearing methods chosen by parents. Probably another reason may have been the overriding cultural importance placed on academic achievement and filial piety, so that these dominated responses. Parents of both groups do not acknowledge that there are a variety of ways in which they can handle their children's behaviour. Some argued that Korean parenting practices, seen as abusive to Western eyes, would not be viewed so by Koreans. Moreover, there is a denial on their part that families can be in any way damaging/abusive.

However, despite the similarities between the two groups, there were a number of key differences. First, regarding the use of corporal punishment, although both groups use it to a certain degree as a discipline strategy in child rearing, their attitudes towards it are somewhat different. There seems to be more ambivalence and conflict in well educated parents living in richer areas about how to raise their children appropriately and they were in doubt about the effectiveness of physical punishment. However, parents in the North of Seoul seem to have stronger beliefs about the necessity of corporal punishment used as discipline and its effectiveness, as Ms. Ahn states:



*I usually cane our children when they don't listen to me. Sometimes, I hit them all over with the flat of my hand, but I always try to use a cane. Anyway, it always works! (Ms. Ahn living in the North area)*

Second, a few parents in the richer areas of Seoul tended to try to understand their children and respect them.

*Any behaviour that cannot be understood when thought of from the children's point of view. Their opinion and rights should be respected (Mr. Cha)*

*What the children would not like ... pushing children to do what they don't like would be abuse. Parents should think from their children's point of view (Ms. Lee)*

They seemed to believe that minors are also independent agents with rights and had the right to human dignity, while many others in poorer areas did not. There were more parents in richer areas who acknowledged and accepted children's human rights than those in poorer areas. It seems that the higher the parents' educational level, the easier it was for them to recognise their children's individual rights. Western-oriented education of parents may contribute to raising awareness of the rights of children.

Interestingly, it was in the responses of the professionals, based on their working experience, that differences between the 'poorer' and 'richer' were illuminated. They used 'poorer' to refer to families below the poverty line,<sup>30</sup> i.e., below the economic level of the parents whom I interviewed. According to them, parents in different areas may use similar parenting behaviours but the motivation for using these practices may differ (e.g., parental distress or parental concern). For instance, using caning as a method of

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<sup>30</sup> The number of people in poverty was 4,945,335 (10.4 % of the total population) and there were 3845770 people (8.07 % of the total population) under the poverty line in 2003 (Shin et al., 2004).

discipline, for most ordinary parents, may be a result of parental concern. However, parents who are distressed by problems and difficulties in their lives are more likely to practise physical punishment to express their anger and stress towards their children.

*From my point of view, children in deprived families generally have low self-esteem and are quite passive. This is because, I think, their parents are more likely to express anger and be aggressive towards them. They can't support their children properly and pay attention to them compared with parents in the South (Teacher 1)*

One doctor spoke about the difference between two groups of families. He felt that well educated parents tend to bring to him their worries about children who manifest behavioural and emotional problems whereas less educated parents still believe that any difficulties in child rearing should be solved within the family and on their own.

*I face many more parents coming in to express their worries about their children not being focused, being scolded in school for their behaviour and that often causes trouble like fighting. Before, in the worst cases, the parents used to go to a psychiatrist, but that's changing now. Low income families don't pay much attention to problems with their children, but well-educated and middle class parents are more interested in them than before, and people that are a little better off are considering poor behaviour as a 'problem', and come to me feeling that consultation and advice are necessary (Doctor 1)*

Thus, he thought that those from richer areas acknowledge more that their children's emotional and psychological well-being is important for their development than those in poorer areas. This could be partly because their higher disposable income enables parents in richer areas to seek professional help for their children, or it could be partly because their education contributes to their awareness of these aspects.



Some professionals, who worked in deprived areas, when contrasting people in richer areas and poorer areas, felt that well-educated parents tend to be able to articulate child care needs in terms of essential areas of growth and development, but the less educated, and especially those on low incomes, do not assign priorities to any of their various roles. According to the professionals, the main priorities of those parents in poverty are, understandably, material and financial help.

*The parents I met have fewer concerns about their children than middle class parents. The main carer doesn't pay attention to them at all. They don't care whether the child attends class or not. So their school age children don't understand why they should attend school. Some parents in poverty don't provide even basic needs for their children (Social worker 3)*

*A friend of mine who works in a private kindergarten in Kangnam [the South area of Seoul] told me children in her charge get too much attention from their parents, so sometimes she feels the parents over protect their children. However, that doesn't happen in this area. The parents don't seem to pay much attention to their children. Even if the parents have time off, they are not willing to spend energy looking after their children. They send their children to us and they take a rest! I feel some of them don't take their parental responsibility seriously at all (Child care worker 4 working in public nursery)*

Such parents may be less able to be sensitive about the safety and welfare of children. However, it should be remembered that not all parents living under especially difficult circumstances are unable to respond to their children's needs.

## **12.4. Issues in Response to Child Abuse**

### **The Legislative Framework**

It has been shown that many Koreans have little awareness of the issue of child abuse and its implications for child development. However, this has to be put in the context of the poor leadership shown by the state in ensuring that legislation and policy are implemented. It was observed that the state had shown little concern for implementing legislation to empower and protect the rights of children.

Under the current law, discussed in chapter 11, abusers can be convicted of a criminal offence. However, in practice, although there are systems for investigation and management of cases of child abuse, they are limited. It has been pointed out that the number of prosecutions of perpetrators constituted only 1.3 per cent of actions taken against abusers, followed by education and counselling of abusers (63.3 %), no actions due to being unable to contact or meet the abuser (22.9 %), and medical treatment of abusers (2.0 %) (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 2004). Abuse of children in any form should be an offence punishable by law. However, in less serious cases, the law can be used to protect children without relying on the conviction of an offender. The law, thus, also exists to protect children from abuse by an abuser. The system of laws and procedures can provide a safe environment for children who are at risk and who are in need of protection. At present, neither of them work as they should. This suggests that the protective role of the state is limited and the state may be unlikely to involve itself in the protection of children.



The Korean government, till now, has provided few resources to deal with the problem of child abuse. Most of the discussions concerning children's rights have been theoretical and concerned with general considerations. The government has overlooked practical suggestions for change. Despite legislative responsibility for children where there is concern about deliberate harm, it gives low priority to the task of protecting them. Many professionals agree that the issue of resources, which includes infrastructure, services and skilled personnel is central to the development of a child protection system. At present, Korea has insufficient resources. This must be remedied if we are to aim to provide support for vulnerable children and their families.

In England and Wales, there is a framework of family law which enables police, social workers, and medical professionals to take action to remove children for a few days, to make interim and long-term care orders, and to accommodate children without an order by agreement with parents. There is also a framework of procedures accepted by government at a national level. This sets out clear instructions about processes of investigation which lead to a care conference – multi disciplinary – to establish whether abuse has occurred. Such a system seeks to ensure that the child is protected and children's best interests are paramount. This is the key principle of safeguarding and protecting children (Department of Health et al., 1999; Brayne et al., 2001; Lyon, 2003). In contrast, the Act in Korea does not make the issue of children's rights paramount. In order to ensure promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children, as in England and Wales, a feature of the Child Welfare Act in Korea should be that the child's welfare rights are given precedence over parental rights, whenever there may be a conflict.

Without putting the idea of children's welfare at the forefront, an effective system for the protection of children cannot be developed.

### **No Consensus on Child Abuse**

There is a view that maltreatment exists and needs to be policed but this has not been internalised by all strata of society.

Comparison between parental and professionals' attitudes towards child abuse suggest that there is little evidence that professionals as a whole differ much from the general public in their perceptions of a wide range of abusive behaviour. If there is any difference, it is that the professionals took sexual abuse more seriously than the parents. More generally, also taking parental responses into account, it is clear that there is deep uncertainty and ambivalence towards the concept of child abuse and the ways in which it is being defined in the West. Child abuse embraces both acts of commission and omission (Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Stevenson, 1998b; Colton et al., 2001). Amongst Koreans, however, 'child abuse' is an unfamiliar concept. From their point of view, the act of child abuse must be serious, malicious in intent, frequent and continue for a long period of time. In particular, the concept of 'neglect' and 'emotional abuse' is not understood in Western terms. Both parents and professionals tend to see 'neglect' in terms of material/economic deficits only. Also, the participants seem not to understand that the concept of emotional abuse depends on understanding children as having feelings/sensitivities which can be hurt or damaged with adverse effects on their development. Even professionals, although they have some knowledge of child development through their training, do not seem to apply the knowledge meaningfully



in their ordinary day-to-day work. This suggests that many professionals may retain the perception of child abuse typical of their culture rather than share internationally agreed definitions of it. Thus, there is a need to raise awareness of the concept of 'good' child rearing and child abuse and their implications for child development. This is because 'the concept of harm must start from an acceptance of the necessary ingredients for healthy development generally' (Stevenson, 1998a, p. 112).

### **Different Perspectives between Professionals**

Sharp distinctions exist between doctors/social workers, on the one hand, and teachers/child care workers, on the other, in their acknowledgement that it is a problem, and that much more needs to be done to tackle it effectively. For the group of teachers and child care workers, there was a clear gap between what they say is child abuse and the way they subsequently handle it. They appeared to be somewhat insensitive to the problem of child abuse. The present study reveals that these groups are fairly strongly influenced by the familial values in Korean culture. They believe child rearing is a family responsibility. Therefore, teachers and child care workers showed a strong tendency to avoid becoming involved in family life although they suspected that children might be at risk of harm. This is manifested in their reluctance to report suspected child abuse. They have little awareness of the nature of child abuse and of their professional duties and responsibilities. In the Korean context, teachers and child care workers can be the first to spot emerging problems because they have regular contact with children. Therefore they should recognise the increasingly important role they play in the prevention, identification and referral of their concerns. The point here

is not to argue whether or not child abuse is a family responsibility but rather for these professionals to keep in mind the importance of their responsibility to protect children.

In comparison with teachers and child care workers, doctors and social workers took the issue of child abuse more seriously. They were relatively well informed about the nature of child abuse and its effect on the child. They also acknowledged legislation and child protection procedures. Because of their close work with abused children and their families, they face a number of difficulties. Family beliefs that parenting behaviour is a family responsibility are viewed as the biggest challenge in intervening effectively.

Differences between doctors and social workers were also identified. Doctors were likely to attribute child abuse more directly to parental incompetence, while social workers took environmental/social factors more into account. Social workers were comparatively more active in intervening in the case of abused children and their families than doctors. This may be because Western values influence the actions of social workers more, since their training, in particular that derived from social science, is Western oriented.

## **12.5. The Future for Effective Work in Child Protection**



## **Essential Developments**

Throughout the comments from interviewees, as discussed earlier, it was identified that there were a number of barriers to achieving effective work in child protection. How can the underlying problems be addressed? Many scholars have argued the importance of a supportive policy and practice framework in combating child abuse and there is now a substantial body of knowledge about the ways in which to achieve it in practice (Birchall and Hallett, 1995; Department of Health et al., 1999; Department for Education and Skills, 2003, Lord Laming, 2003; Buckley, 2003; Lawrence, 2004). In particular, Stevenson suggests that there are a number of dimensions on which professionals' and agencies' responses to abused children and their families could be improved. She suggests that the following are elements to effective cooperative working in child protection: structures and systems; status and power; role identification; professional and organisational priorities; mutual benefit; the dynamics of case conferences; value systems about child abuse and families; and partnership with parents (Stevenson, 1989, 1998b, 1999, 2005).

### **1) Reforms in Structures and System**

There is an issue of leadership in relation to the structure of accountability. It is not clear who has the most power and responsibility for child protection at the moment. As discussed earlier, most centres for the prevention of child abuse, including the national centre, as well as shelters or group homes for abused children are run by voluntary organisations. The national centre is supposed to coordinate them, but in reality, it is ineffective. There are possibly two ways to solve this problem; first, to create a new

structure under the central government, or secondly, to ensure that sufficient authority is given to the national centre. It should be recognised by the public and all relevant professionals and agencies should enable it to function more efficiently and effectively. This agency would give oversight to other agencies.

In Korea, there is no structure to mediate when there is a clash over principle and policy between agencies and professionals. Strikingly, England has also had the same problem as Korea. Many child abuse inquiries have identified similar difficulties in inter-agency co-operation and there were other problems, such as professionals' failure to recognise abuse, share information and act together (Parton, 1991, 2000; Dale et al., 1992; Corby, 2000; Kelly et al., 2000; NSPCC, 2001). As a result strenuous efforts have been made to improve collaboration between child protection services over many years. For instance, local government was expected not only to coordinate their services but also to plan jointly and take shared ownership of children's needs and problems with other agencies. On this basis, they set up the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) in order to bring together representatives from agencies and professionals responsible for helping to protect children from any kind of harm. In order to improve the ways staff from different agencies communicate with each other at all levels in Korea, there should be a similar formal structure available which would be helpful in sharing overall responsibility for the management of the system.

Moreover, there is a lack of a fundamental infrastructure and well-organised network for social work practice. Systems for the delivery of current policy and practice are not properly in place at present. Child protection should be carried out under the strong



support of the government and should foster collaboration across agencies and disciplines in relation to planning, design, delivery and administration of the training.

## **2) Status and Power**

The current legislation places the primary responsibility for the protection of abused children on the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA). However, the staff, mainly social workers, are not accustomed to exercising authority and it is not easy for other disciplines, such as doctors, teachers and police to accept their advisory role and power. As can be seen in chapter 11, although social workers are at the front line in the welfare of children, they may perceive themselves, or be perceived, as carrying less status and power than other professionals.

This could be seen as a cause of resentment and make the relationship between the professionals and other occupations more complex and ambivalent. Thus, the different kinds of status and power should be reconsidered in this context to enable individual professionals work horizontally across professional boundaries.

## **3) Clear Role Identifications**

The government guidelines for the protection agency in Korea briefly sets out the roles and responsibilities of individual agencies towards children in need of protection (Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse, 2003). However, these roles and responsibilities are not shared between individual professionals and agencies. There has been an absence of a clear direction on how the

problem should be handled. Professional variability, therefore, has led to inconsistent attitudes and intervention in child abuse at different levels and in different areas. Moreover, they do not agree procedures for when and how to contact the centres about an individual child and this may lead to difficulties in child protection work. The position of doctors and police in the child protection system is considered unsatisfactory by the social workers, as discussed earlier. This suggests that although it is widely acknowledged that social workers, teachers, child care workers, doctors, and police have to play an important role in child protection (Stevenson, 1998b; Department of Health et al., 1999; Baginsky, 2000; Polnay, 2001; Nottingham City Council et al., 2001), it is not hard to see that professional responses to child abuse remain very fragmented in Korea. Poor training and education of some professionals, to an extent, works against successful and practical implementation of an effective protection system for children. In the case of the police, their role in relation to child abuse needs to be clarified: as investigators of criminal offences committed against children, they should see children as citizens who have the right to the same protection as adults. In addition, the 'investigations should be carried out sensitively, thoroughly and professionally' (Department of Health et al., 1999, p. 23).

Centres for the prevention of child abuse should be working in partnership with various professionals. Supporting families early before difficulties become more serious is most important to prevent child abuse, and to this effect, key professionals in child protection such as school teachers, child care providers, police officers, and health professionals are particularly significant. Therefore, there should be a joint guidance for agencies offering practical advice to each agency on key inter-agency procedures such as assessment, setting up and closing an investigation, and child and family support. In



order to do this, their roles should be clearly defined and identified through open communication about these matters. Professionals need to consider their own roles in assessing, intervening and treating vulnerable children and their families. This would be helpful to reduce their differences and capitalise upon each agency's strengths.

The professionals involved in child protection must be aware of the indicators pointing to child harm and be able to work with families and other agencies on this issue. In addition, they should know what to do when they have concerns about a child's welfare and their role should be the subject of debate at national and local levels.

#### **4) Mutual Benefits**

One of the duties of centres for the prevention of child abuse is to establish a large number of coordination linkages. It would be possible if cooperation were valued and encouraged. In this respect, how to motivate to cooperate is the main issue. A caring, well-motivated workforce will provide good services. To this end, the strategies for enhanced professional satisfaction such as encouraging and persuading them to exercise good practices should be considered. It may lead to greater effectiveness and efficiency, an outcome that would be beneficial for employers, employees, and service users.

#### **5) Working Partnership with Parents**

Working with parents is also important. In the child protection system in England, parental participation at case conferences is welcomed while there is no such system in Korea at present.

Parenting can be challenging. It often means juggling with competing priorities to balance work and home life as well as trying to understand how best to meet children's needs at all stages of their development. Parents themselves require and deserve support. Asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than a parenting failure.

#### **6) Professional and Organisational Priorities: Focusing on the Best Interests of Children**

Underlying the work of all professionals and agencies concerned with the well-being of vulnerable children should be that the protection of the child is paramount and that priority should be given to it. This is a key element of the UK law and its official document emphasizes that it must 'always maintain a clear focus on the child's safety and what is best for the child' (Department of Health et al., 1999, p. 76).

However, the findings clearly show that focusing on the best interests of children is going too far for some in Korean society. Undoubtedly, behind the idea of child protection and fulfilling each child's potential must lie fundamental values concerning the needs, interests, and welfare of children. This must be put at the heart of our policies and practice.



## **Prerequisites for Improvement**

Most importantly, there should be a meaningful national consensus as to the best ways of translating legislation into reality. To this end, sharing different values and assumptions of the individual and family functioning should be addressed. The majority of participants generally agreed that they should work for the best interest of children. Yet, in reality, there are differences in how 'best interests' are delivered. Those involved in child protection may have different views of what constitutes 'good enough' parenting or a healthy family life, and of what is best for children. This conflict between professionals can be minimised through inter-disciplinary discussions and agreement on basic values. In the process of the discussion about the agenda, the attitudes and feelings of the workers involved, as well as intellectual aspects of such work should be explored. In addition, the belief in keeping family affairs within the family should be tackled. They are fundamental elements. Until there is a degree of consensus as to what constitutes child abuse and some real possibilities of constructive intervention by the state into family life, professionals and agencies will be unable to work effectively. Without an agreement on this point between professionals, organisations, and the public, every effort for better child protection cannot be meaningful.

As discussed throughout this chapter, there are many important matters for successful child protection work and these strategies are essentially best addressed through education and training. Virtually everyone agrees that one of the keys to improving child protection work is that staff should be trained adequately. There is a need to develop a multi level education and training programme in the understanding and

handling of child abuse in order to raise awareness about child abuse and to improve intervention. There should be basic levels of training for teachers and child care workers, such as awareness raising training. Staff should be trained to be alert to potential indicators of abuse in children, and know how to act upon their concerns in line with child protection procedures. Also, the training for these professionals should cover the impact parental problems may have on children, the adequacy of parental care, the nature of harm, and the child's development within the context of their family and wider social and cultural environment. For effective co-operation between different agencies and professionals, multi-agency training has to be arranged to promote interaction and understanding between different groups and this should include discussion of different values and beliefs between them. In addition, programmes of training with agencies and for particular groups of professionals need to be organised. For doctors, for instance, there is a need for further information and training in the recognition and reporting of child abuse. This is because, according to the findings, their role in child protection is not normally in the forefront of their minds during their everyday work although they acknowledge that there is a role for protecting abused children.

These professionals' role in child protection is a broad and potentially significant one that can encompass prevention, identification and involvement in investigation and decision-making, as well as in the provision of ongoing care for child and family members. Given their centrality, the gap between expectations and perceived performance is a matter of concern and one which training could play a part in addressing.



Furthermore, in order to make people aware of the legislation and why it has been introduced, providing public education has to take place. The findings suggest that using physical force as a means of dealing with difficulties regarding parent-child relationships is acceptable in Korean culture and many people do not acknowledge that there are a variety of alternatives. Therefore, public education is necessary to help and support parents in finding an alternative. Programmes and preventive techniques have to be planned in the context of the particular community and its dynamics. For example, the approach when working with poor communities has to be different from that of working with middle class families. The programme could be non-threatening to people and for this it is essential to have a good understanding of the community, the social climate, the target group and an understanding of the subject they want to deal with.

## **12.6. Concluding Comments**

In this concluding chapter, a number of issues which arise throughout the research process have been discussed. There is legislation, policy, and practice to protect children from significant harm or likelihood of it, but not all parents and professionals in this study appear to be aware of this. This suggests that legislative reform may not have generated changes in social attitudes towards the use of harsh discipline methods in child rearing. This may be due to the hierarchical structure of Korean society which places children in an inferior and oppressed position. Thus, laws and regulations against child abuse will be largely ineffective until basic attitudes, norms, and opinions

undergo a fundamental change. A number of prerequisites need to be taken into consideration, if desired changes in attitudes and perceptions are to be achieved.

Fundamentally, there is need for a national debate to address the following key issues. First, the acceptance of a degree of intervention in family life by the state or its agencies; second, programmes of education about child development and what children need to develop healthily: the need to make parents and professionals aware of the child's developmental needs; third, raising awareness of how children are harmed - physically, sexually, emotionally or socially; fourth, a debate about corporal punishment; issues as to how to bring up children appropriately and the effectiveness of physical discipline should be debated amongst Koreans. Change will not be made simply by a 'top down' strategy but by a battle on all fronts. Success in one sphere will improve the chances of success in another.

Most importantly, there is a need to focus on initiatives promoting the rights of children. By putting consideration of the needs and rights of children at the centre of policy, the development of policy and practice should be shaped by it. Then, child abuse can be defined in a more meaningful way and be clearly understood by the public and society at large.



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## **Appendix A.**

### **A List of the Existing Empirical Studies on Child Abuse in Korea**

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Yoon, H. M. (2003) 'Child Abuse Prevention Centres: Practice Overview and Implications for Future Development of Child Protective Services' *Journal of Korean Society of Child welfare*, vol. 15, pp. 7-38. (in Korean)



## **Appendix B.**

### **A List of the Previous Studies on the Definition and Measuring of Child Abuse in Korea**

The definition and measurement of child abuse in Korea has been based on the researcher's own assumptions of what constitutes physical abuse, derived from Western interpretations. Also, the original or modified Conflict Tactics Scale which was developed by Straus in 1979 has been used.

#### **Using the Researcher's Own Assumptions of What Constitutes Physical Abuse derived from Western Interpretations**

Ahn, D. H., Park, H. S. and Lee, H. J. (1998) 'The Attitude toward Child Abuse in Korea', *Journal of Korean Neuropsychiatr Association*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 661-673. (in Korean)

Kim, J. H. and Kim, S. Y. (1997) 'The Reality of Child Maltreatment and Its Impact', *Study of Korean Children and Adolescents*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 5-28. (in Korean)

Park, M. Y. (1996) 'Facts about Child Maltreatment and Preventive Measures', *Journal of Children and Adolescents Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 107-130. (in Korean)

Yoon, H. M. (1997) 'Concepts of Child Abuse and Neglect: A Survey of the General Public and Professionals about Their Perceptions of Social Interventions Concerning Child Maltreatment', *Korean Journal of Social Welfare*, vol. 31, pp. 393-422. (in Korean)

Yoon, H. M. (2000) 'Adults' Attitudes toward Corporal Punishment and Relationship between Children's Corporal Punishment Experience and Their Attitude toward the Use of Violence among Peers', *Journal of Korean Society of Child Welfare*, vol. 10, pp. 82-106. (in Korean)

### **Using the Original Conflict Tactics Scale**

Lee, W., Yoon Y., Lee, S., Kim, Y., Suh, Y., Kim, D. and Shin, D. (1997) 'Child Battering and Related Factors in Family', *Journal of Korean Academy of Family Medicine*, vol. 18, no. 12, pp. 1437-1451. (in Korean)

### **Using the Modified Conflict Tactics Scale**

Chun, K. S. and Park, J. H. (1991) 'A Survey on Child Battering among Elementary School Children and Related Factors in Urban and Rural Areas', *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 232-243. (in Korean)

Huh, N. S. (1993) 'The Reality of Child Maltreatment and the Intervention', *Journal of Korean Society of Child welfare*, vol. 1, pp. 22-44. (in Korean)

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Um, M. Y. (2001) 'Relationships between Child Abuse and Youth Delinquency: A Test of Moderating Effects of Parental Support and Monitoring', *Korean Journal of Family Social Work*, vol. 8, pp. 147-176. (in Korean)



# Appendix C. The Participants

## 1. Families (N=34)

South: areas of Seoul, which have Richer Families

	No	Name	Age	Job (Occupation)	Level of Edu.	No. of children
F	1	Mr. Nam	39	An assistant director of a private enterprise	G P/G	Girl (7yrs.) Boy (6yrs.)
	2	Ms. Yang	35	A housewife	G	
	3	Mr. Han	42	The director of a bank	G	Boys (8yrs. & 5yrs.)
	4	Ms. Shin	38	A housewife	G	
	5	Mr. Cha	42	An insurance company upper-level manager	G	Boy (13yrs.) Girl (10yrs.)
	6	Ms. Yoon	41	A housewife	G	
	7	Mr. Sung	40	The president of a company (CEO)	G	Girls (7yrs. & 4yrs.)
	8	Ms. Kim	34	A housewife	G	
	9	Ms. Yoo	35	A housewife	G	Girl (10yrs.) Boy (4yrs.)
W	10	Mr. Bang	50	High-level government employee	G	Girl (20yrs.) Boy (12yrs.)
	11	Ms. Huh	43	A civil servant	G	
	12	Mr. Moon	46	A journalist	G P/G	Girl (11yrs.) Boy (8yrs.)
	13	Ms. Noh	40	A team manager of an advertising agency	G	
	14	Mr. Chang	39	A car dealer	G	Girl (16yrs.) Boy (7yrs.)
	15	Ms. Seo	35	A teacher	G	
	16	Mr. Hong	33	A company employee	G P/G	Boy (15months)
	17	Ms. Lee	29	A company employee	G	

**North: areas of Seoul, which have Poorer Families**

	No.	Name	Age	Job	Level of Edu.	No. of children
F	18	Mr. Ban	38	The director of a computer academy	G	Girls
	19	Ms. Hwang	33	A housewife	N.G	(6yrs. & 30 months)
	20	Mr. Oh	42	A builder	N.G	Boy (12yrs.)
	21	Ms. Park	42	A housewife	N.G	Girl (10yrs.)
	22	Mr. Wu	37	A small company employee	G	Boys
	23	Ms. Byun	33	A housewife	G	(5yrs. & 31 months)
	24	Mr. Song	36	A small company employee	G	Boy (28 months)
	25	Mrs. Choi	31	A housewife	G	Pregnant (9 months)
	26	Ms. Ahn	37	A housewife	N.G	Boys (9yrs. & 6yrs.)
W	27	Mr. Chun	45	A factory manager	N.G	Girl (14yrs.)
	28	Ms. Kang	40	A self-employed sales person	N.G	Boy (11yrs.)
	29	Mr. Um	43	A designer	N.G	Boy (18yrs.)
	30	Ms. Chung	39	A shop owner	N.G	Girl (7yrs.)
	31	Mr. Doe	43	A government employee	G	Girl (15yrs.)
	32	Ms. Kho	43	A computer programmer (currently working as a freelancer)	G	Boy (11yrs.)
	33	Mr. Hahm	40	A small company employee	G	Girl (5 yrs.)
	34	Ms. Kwon	34	A member of staff of a nursery	G	Boy (3 yrs.)

- Note:
- 1) Level of Education: G (Graduate) / N.G (Non-graduate)
  - 2) W: Working mothers / F: Full-time housewives



**2. Professionals (N=16)**

	No	Prof. No.	Name	M / F	No. of years in profession	Working sector
Medical doctors	1	Doc1	Dr. Ahn	M	20	Child psychiatrist
	2	Doc3	Dr. Lee	M	18	Doctor of forensic medicine
	3	Doc2	Dr. Hong	M	18	Child psychiatrist
	4	Doc4	Dr. Hong	F	4	Paediatrician
Social workers	5	SW1	Mr. Nam	M	10	Social welfare public bureaucrat
	6	SW2	Ms. Choi	F	7	Assistant Manager (Community Child Centre)
	7	SW3	Ms. Kim	F	4	Front line worker of a group-home for abused children
	8	SW4	Ms. Park	F	18	Medical social worker
Teachers	9	T1	Mr. Park	M	6	Teacher
	10	T2	Ms. Shin	F	25	Teacher
	11	T3	Dr. Jou	M	39	Head teacher
	12	T4	Ms. Lee	F	40	Teacher
Staff of child care centres	13	S1	Ms. Lee	F	15	Director
	14	S2	Ms. Choi	F	12	Deputy director
	15	S3	Ms. Chung	F	4	Nursery assistant
	16	S4	Ms. Ryou	F	5	Nursery assistant

**Note:**

**1) M: Male / F: Female**

## **Appendix D. Interview Schedule for Families**

### **1. Interview Shape**

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me to do this interview. What I want to do with you today is a kind of general interview about child rearing practices and ask you some questions about your views.

I am a doctoral student in social work at the University of Nottingham in the UK. I am doing my doctoral thesis on 'Family Patterns, Attitudes and Behaviour in relation to the Upbringing of Children in South Korea'.

The study has three main elements. First to find out how you bring up your children, what is important to you and so on. Second to find how this differs from your experience with your own parents. Third to find out what behaviours parents today may think are abusive to children and what are thought normal and acceptable.

You will be asked about your background, goals of child discipline and parenting patterns in relation to daily child rearing issues. The interview will take approximately one and a half hours to complete. Whatever you might say in the interview will be strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

In sharing your experience with me, you will be helping other people to understand child rearing practices in the Korean context. Through such insights, I will highlight the need for a culturally sensitive understanding of the issues.



## **2. Factual Questions (Interviewees' Background)**

2.1. I would like to ask you for some factual information about family composition and record your responses. Could you tell me about ~

- Your family composition
- Number of children
- Age and gender of children
- Level of education
- Religion
- Monthly household income, etc

2.2. I would like to ask you about what arrangement for looking after your child are made. Please describe these arrangements in detail (Distinguish which children)

- Do you have sole responsibility for your children's care all the time? Do you have any help with this?
- If you look after your child only some of the time, who else looks after your child at other times?

2.3. Would you describe what your children's day is like? / Could you tell me about your children's daily routine during the week? (Prompt if necessary-supplementary questions)

- What time do they get up?
- Who gets your children up?
- How do your children tidy up their clothes? / Who usually dresses your children in the morning?

- What do they have to eat during the day? Who cooks for them and who supervises their meals? Do they have any/all their meals with you?
- Who usually fetches your children from nursery or school?
- Who usually takes them out?
- Who plays with them?
- Who helps with their homework?
- Do your children tidy up the room by themselves after playing or do you help them?
- Who looks after your children while you are out?
- Who usually bathes your children?
- What time do they go to bed?
- Who takes care of your children when they are sick?
- What do your children do after school or nursery?
- Could you tell me about what kind of after school activities your children now attend? Would you mind telling me how much you spend on these activities?
- (If children are young), do they go to the toilet themselves? / When they go to the toilet, do they look after themselves or do you help them? / Do they wipe themselves, or do you do that for them?

2.4. Are your arrangement for their care the same or do they differ from one child to the next?

2.5. What is the main difference in their daily routine?



### **3. Goal of Child Rearing**

- 3.1. What is the most important thing in your parenting? / What are the most important issues to you in bringing up your child? (Prompt - for example, how to praise and scold children, peer relationship, discipline, child's characters, attitudes and manners, table manners, child's eating habits and so on)
- 3.2. Thinking about your children's future, what is your greatest hope/ambition for them? / What expectations do you have of your child? (Prompt)
  - What kind of person would you like your child to be when he/she grows up?
  - What do you try to achieve by disciplining your children?
- 3.3. Do you have differences of expectation of your children depending on their age and gender?
- 3.4. At what age are children considered to be competent, to have sense? / At what age are children expected to behave in certain ways (the demands which parents put on their child)?
- 3.5. In relation to your child's upbringing, what if any do you think the differences are between what the home does and what the school does? (For example, what about discipline, social skills, ... )
- 3.6. Are there any differences in the role of the parents and teachers in disciplining and educating children?
- 3.7. Are there differences in what you expect from a school for younger children and a school for older children?
- 3.8. Would you expect any of the following roles to be carried out by anyone other than you or your husband? If so, which and by whom? (Discipline, social skills, education, toilet training, meals, teaching of values, ... )

- 3.9. (If your child takes lessons), what's your purpose? Could you tell me about the reasons why you think that (after-school) lessons are good for your child? Are there any differences in the types of lessons your child is involved in depending upon the gender and age of child?
- 3.10. Are there any differences between you and what most people in Korea seem to want for their children?

#### **4. Parenting Patterns**

- 4.1. What are your feelings about the demands which you make on your child and your child makes on you?
- 4.2. What behaviour would you like your child to improve? Are there any differences regarding gender and age of child?
- 4.3. What do you think is the best way of achieving that?
- 4.4. What can your children do themselves? What cannot your children do themselves? What do you help with or tell them to do?
- 4.5. Would you describe your relationship with your children (i.e. warm, close, etc)?
- 4.6. I wonder if you could tell me about how you and your child get on together? What sort of things do you specially enjoy doing with him/her?
- 4.7. Do you show affection towards each other quite a lot, or are you fairly reserved with one another?
- 4.8. What about disagreements? What kinds of things make you get on each other's nerves?
- 4.9. Do you ever promise him something (in advance) as a reward for being good?



- 4.10. Would you describe the rules and regulations you have in relation to child rearing? (Prompt, if necessary)
- Are the rules ever negotiated?
  - How are the rules communicated?
- 4.11. Do you use corporal punishment as a disciplinary action? What else do you do?
- 4.12. Are there any differences in disciplining and bringing up children depending on the children's age and gender?
- 4.13. Where do you collect information on how to discipline and educate your child? What kind of information is necessary?
- 4.14. Would you say that you and your husband have different roles in your child rearing? Could you tell me what they are? (Prompt if necessary)
- Which of you have the main responsibility for your children?
  - How often do you talk with your husband in relation to the upbringing of your children?
  - Could you tell me about the kinds of discussion you have?
  - How helpful are these discussions?
  - Why do you think you (or your husband takes) take more responsibility for childcare than your husband (or you)? (Prompt) Is it because of the traditional custom that domestic work including childcare is women's work and working outside is men's work? Or is it because your husband is easy-going?
- 4.15. Compared with other parents, do you think of yourself as being very strict, or rather strict, or easy-going? Do you agree with your husband about discipline, or is he a lot more strict or less strict than you are?

- 4.16. On the whole, would you say that you are happy about the way you deal with discipline in general? When you are doing things with your child, do you think you do all the right things, or do you sometimes find yourself doing things that you shouldn't do?

## 5. Changing Family Patterns

*As you know, family life is changing. These include changes in family structure (families are becoming nuclear), decreasing birth rate, increasing second marriages and step-parenting, changes in employment status and patterns, with more women going out to work.*

- 5.1. Thinking about your experience as a child, what were the most important issues to your parents in bringing you up? (Prompt – e.g., education, speaking politely to elders and teachers, peer relationships, obedience, discipline, etc)
- 5.2. What were your parents' greatest hopes/ambitions for you?
- What kind of person did your parents want you to be? (e.g., a person who does not trouble others, a person who graduates from a top-ranking university and can get any job, a person who contributes to society, a person who has a happy family life, a person who values both work and family, a person who pursues his/her own dream, etc)
  - What expectations for academic performance did your parents have of you and your siblings?
  - What did they try to achieve by disciplining you?
- 5.3. Did they have differences of expectation of you and your siblings depending on age and gender?



- 5.4. Were there any differences in the role of your parents and teachers in disciplining and educating you?
- 5.5. Do you think your parents expected any of the following roles to be carried out by anyone other than them? If so, which and by whom? (e.g., discipline, social skills, education, toilet training, meals, teaching of values, etc)
- 5.6. What behaviour did your parents want you to improve? Were there any differences regarding gender and age of child? What did your parents do to achieve that?
- 5.7. Would you describe your relationship with your parents (e.g., warm, close, etc)?
- 5.8. How well did your parents and you get on together? What sort of things did you specially enjoy doing with them?
- 5.9. Did your parents show their affection towards each other quite a lot, or were they fairly reserved with one another?
- 5.10. What about disagreements? What kinds of things made you and your parents get on each other's nerves?
- 5.11. Did your parents ever promise you something (in advance) as a reward for being good?
- 5.12. Would you describe the rules and regulations your parents had in relation to child rearing? (Prompt, if necessary)
- Were the rules ever negotiated?
  - How were the rules communicated?
- 5.13. Did you experience corporal punishment as a child? What else did your parents do?
- 5.14. Were there any differences in disciplining and bringing up children depending on the children's age and gender?

- 5.15. Where did your parents collect information on how to discipline and educate you and your siblings?
- 5.16. Are there any differences in the role of your father and your husband in disciplining and educating children?
- 5.17. Compared with other parents, do you think your parents were very strict, rather strict, or easy-going?
- 5.18. Would you say that you are bringing up your child the same way you yourself were brought up, or differently? In what way? Is there anything else you do differently?



## **Appendix E. The Vignettes**

### **Hun's Story**

#### **Stage 1**

Hun is a 4-year-old boy. He has been toilet trained but still wets the bed. He is very slow in his speech. He began to talk when he was 18 months, but it did not make progress after his sister was born. Then, he did not talk fluently until he was 36 months. Recently, he has started to bully his little baby sister (aged 13 months). His mother is worried about it and also thinks Hun is developmentally delayed compared with children of the same age. While his father thinks it is a normal, it just takes time.

#### **Stage 2**

Hun is now 7 years old. He is always getting into trouble with his younger sister at home and his friends at school. He does not follow the rules at all, and he is always disorganised and losing his homework or his belongings. For example, he leaves everything out and never tries to clean up. He continues to play computer or video games until midnight without doing homework and he won't listen to his parents. Also, he does not wash his hands voluntarily, brush his teeth or take a bath unless he is forced to do it. He just does not know how to plan his work. In class, he throws pencils, erasers, and other objects across the room and creates numerous noises that make the teacher annoyed. However, sometimes, he is helpful around the house.

### Stage 3

Hun, aged 15 years, attends a high school, likes rap music, and, of course, his social network of friends, which is the most important thing in his life. Although Hun says that they are nice boys, his parents do not like the people he meets and are worried because they know for a fact that his friends all drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and read 'girly' magazines, and sometimes even watch porno movies. Therefore, his parents think they are just not the sort of people they want him to meet and they are a bad influence on him. Also, the parents think his falling grades in class are because of them. His parents keep reminding him about his intelligence and generally think of him as lazy. The fact is that Hun studies only two to three days before his examinations and, as a result, his academic performance is getting worse and now he is at the bottom of his class despite taking several private lessons. He does not like the extra lessons. Actually, he is not motivated at all. He does not want to do too much studying for school and just pretends to stay up late at night studying because his parents want him to but he listens to music until one or two o'clock in the morning or reads comic books. When his parents ask him if he is finding it difficult to catch up with his classes, he doesn't answer.

*At each stage, participants were asked about the following questions:*

- *What do you think about this story?*
- *What are your concerns?*
- *Why do you think Hun behaves in this way?*
- *What would you do, if you were faced with this kind of difficulty?*



## **Sue's Story**

### **Stage 1**

Sue (aged 5), is attending the kindergarten. She is very shy and timid and is afraid of the aggressive boys. She does not like to talk to her brother. She likes to draw pictures or play by herself. She bites her nails and sucks her thumb. Sometimes she talks with it in her mouth. Her parents do not like this. She listens to her parents rather than her older brother.

### **Stage 2**

Sue, aged 12, has just started going through puberty. Her body has changed slightly. Her breasts are getting bigger and she has started to menstruate. Also, she is quite moody. She does not talk with her mother and friends because she is so shy. Therefore, nobody has spoken to her about the changes that are taking place or discussed how she feels with her. Moreover, she is afraid of attending class because the bigger boys constantly tease her and make fun of her and her changing body. She wants to become more relaxed about it and friendly towards others instead of snapping at people and feeling angry, but it is not easy. She gets worked up and takes her feelings out on other people. She is becoming argumentative.

### Stage 3

Sue is a very bright girl of 13. Usually she is at the top of her class but in her last exam, she was in fifth place in her class. Her parents think she is good at maths but hopeless at English, even with the help of a private visiting tutor. However, she really wants to be first in her class because this is the only way to make her parents happy. To this end, she attends school until 3 p.m., goes to extra lessons in Maths and Science at a private institution for 2 hours, and takes a private lesson for English, then she studies by herself until 12 a.m. She is up by 6 a.m. every morning to do more homework and spends much of the weekend studying. She cannot sleep well because of worrying about exams. During exam times she sleeps even less. She has no close friends and she just studies and does not have time for anything else. This morning, she is feeling very dizzy.

*At each stage, participants were asked about following questions:*

- *What do you think about this story?*
- *What are your concerns?*
- *Why do you think Sue behaves in this way?*
- *What would you do, if you were faced with this kind of difficulty?*



**Appendix F. A List of Questions about Behaviours**

Behaviours with potential to be considered child abuse	Not abuse	Can be	Abuse
<b>Physical Abuse</b>			
1. Shaking a child hard			
2. Slapping a child on the face			
3. Caning a child			
4. Making a child kneel down with her/his arms up in the air			
5. Burning a child with cigarettes, hot water, or other hot things			
<b>Neglect</b>			
6. Ignoring signs of illness in a child (e.g., high fever)			
7. Leaving a child alone in the house			
8. Ignoring a child's educational needs			
9. Allowing a child access to inappropriate/pornographic material			
10. Making no effort to keep a child clean			
11. Expecting a child to take semi-permanent/permanent care of younger children			
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>			
12. Locking a child outside the house			
13. Locking a child in a room			
14. Threatening to abandon a child			
15. Never hugging a child			
16. Calling a child "useless"			
17. Always criticizing a child			
18. Making a child study for a long time			
19. Telling a child others are better			
20. Using vulgar language to scold a child			
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>			
21. Watching an image of child pornography			
22. Fondling a grandson's genital area			
23. An adult appearing naked in front of a child			
24. An adult exposing her/his sex organ and touching it in front of children			
25. Having sex with a child			

**Appendix G. An Example of Brief Case Illustrations about  
Child Abuse Used in the Pilot**

<u>Physical abuse</u>
1. Shaking a child hard
2. Slapping a child on the face
3. Caning a child
4. Making a child Kneel down with her/his arms up
5. Burning a child with cigarettes, hot water, or other hot things
<u>Neglect</u>
6. Ignoring signs of illness in a child (e.g., high fever)
7. Leaving a child alone in the house
8. Ignoring a child’s educational needs
9. Allowing a child access to inappropriate/pornographic material
10. Making no effort to keep a child clean
11. Expecting a child to take semi-permanent/permanent care of younger children
<u>Emotional abuse</u>
12. Locking a child outside the house
13. Locking a child in a room
14. Threatening to abandon a child
15. Never hugging a child
16. Calling a child “useless”
17. Always criticizing a child
18. Making a child study for a long time
19. Telling a child others are better
20. Using vulgar language to scold a child
<u>Sexual abuse</u>
21. An adult appearing naked in front of a child
22. Fondling a grandson’s genital area
23. Watching an image of child pornography
24. Parent not protecting a child from sexual advances by other family members
25. Having sex with a child



- For each behaviour, the interviewees were asked to answer the question:  
What kinds of behaviour would you consider to be abusive behaviour and why do you think of it as abuse?
- The interviewees were required to state whether the behaviour was acceptable under the circumstances given (mitigating circumstances). The circumstances that were considered relevant were the following:
  - Age of child (*Is some behaviours wrong for children of any age?*)
    - Acceptable only if child is younger (age not specified)
    - Acceptable only if child is older (age not specified)
    - Acceptable regardless of circumstances
    - Not acceptable regardless of circumstances
  - Sex of child (*Is it the same with respect to gender of children?*)
    - Acceptable if child is a boy
    - Acceptable if child is a girl
    - Acceptable regardless of circumstances
    - Not acceptable regardless of circumstances
  - Physical or mental handicap of child
    - Acceptable only if the child is handicapped
    - Acceptable only if the child is not handicapped
    - Acceptable regardless of circumstances
    - Not acceptable regardless of circumstances

- Treatment of child compared to siblings
  - Acceptable only if child is treated differently from siblings
  - Acceptable only if child is treated the same as siblings
  - Acceptable regardless of circumstances
  - Not acceptable regardless of circumstances
  
- Frequency of incidents
  - Acceptable if only happens once or twice
  - Acceptable regardless of circumstances
  - Not acceptable regardless of circumstances
  
- Whether child is disobedient or not (*Is it the same whether child is disobedient or not?*)
  - Acceptable only if the child is disobedient
  - Acceptable only if the child is not handicapped
  - Acceptable regardless of circumstances
  - Not acceptable regardless of circumstances
  
- Whether child is marked/injured or not (*How about the severity of punishment?*)
  - Acceptable only if child is not permanently marked or injured
  - Acceptable regardless of circumstances
  - Not acceptable regardless of circumstances



## Appendix H. Interview Schedule for Professionals

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me to do this interview. What I want to do with you today is a kind of general interview about your experience with abused children and their families and ask you some questions about your views.

I am a doctoral student in social work at the University of Nottingham in the UK. I am doing my doctoral thesis on 'Family patterns, attitudes and behaviour in relation to the upbringing of children in South Korea: the social construction of child abuse'.

The study has three main elements. First to find professionals' beliefs about the value of family life in relation to the upbringing of children. Second to find out what behaviours professionals today may *think* are abusive to children and what are thought normal and acceptable. Third to find out how far the concept of *child abuse* has influenced professionals' attitudes to the treatment of children.

You will be asked about your background, your awareness of the national trends regarding abuse and criticism of child rearing behaviour, especially regarding education, your experiences as a professional and your attitudes toward child abuse. The interview will take approximately one and a half hours to complete. Whatever you might say in the interview will be strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

In sharing your experience with me, you will be helping other people to understand the social construction of child abuse in the Korean context. Through such insights, I will highlight the need for a culturally sensitive understanding of the issues.

## **1. Factual Questions**

1.1. I would like to ask you for some factual information about your background and record your responses. Could you tell me about ~

- The number of years you have worked in the profession
- Your level of education
- Anything else?

## **2. Awareness of the National Trends and Criticism**

2.1. Have you ever heard about a Child Abuse Prevention Act, the main legislation for abused children? Could you tell me more about~?

- Child protection services
- The definition and types of child abuse
- Related laws
- Procedures, etc

2.2. Reporting of child abuse is made mandatory for some professionals and all citizens can report suspicious child abuse cases to the authorities. Have you ever heard (or experienced) anything about that? Could you tell me more about~?

2.3. Do you think child abuse should be reported?

- If yes, could you tell me why you support the idea of reporting it?
- If no, could you tell me why you do not support the idea of reporting it?



- 2.4. According to the Ministry of Health and welfare (2003), in 2002, among the 2,946 calls concerning child abuse, only 28 % were received from professionals who are mandated to report. What do you think are the reasons for (not) reporting it?
- 2.5. Have you ever heard about a practice manual (or educational material for professionals who are mandated to report) in child abuse?
- Do you think the practice manual (or educational material for professionals who are mandated reports) in child abuse has been (could be) helpful for you handling cases of child abuse?
  - What guidelines would you expect?
- 2.6. The Korean government reported criticism of Korean society by outsiders (The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child), which claimed that Korean children are now growing up physically and mentally unhealthy because they are overburdened with the pressure of studying.
- Have you ever heard about that?
  - What do you think about that?
- 2.7. In the UK and the USA, there has been quite a lot of effort made in dealing with child abuse. Do you think child abuse is a problem in Korea?
- If yes, why? / If no, why not?
  - To what extent do you think that child abuse as a social problem is serious enough to warrant an effort by Korean society to do something about it?
  - To what extent do you agree that the problem of child abuse is getting more widespread and serious nowadays in Korea?

### **3. Working Experiences**

#### **[For Doctors Only]**

I would be interested in knowing your overall experience in working with abused children and their families.

- 3.1. How often are you likely to need to deal with a case of child abuse?
- 3.2. How do child abuse cases usually come to your attention?
- 3.3. How do you actually recognise that a child has been abused?
  - If there are barriers to the recognition of child abuse, what are they?
- 3.4. What actions have you taken against it? / What would you usually do?
- 3.5. What influences you in deciding to take (or not to take) something further? /  
What affects your decisions as to the extent of the abuse? What cases of abuse do you know about?
- 3.6. Have you encountered any difficulties in relation to dealing with cases?
  - Based on your experience, what is the most difficult situation you have ever experienced and how did you deal with it?
- 3.7. Would you say that dealing with a case of child abuse is different from other medical problems? What is the difference?
- 3.8. What are the most significant features of child abuse cases?
- 3.9. What dilemmas do you face while handling cases of child abuse?
- 3.10. What feelings are provoked by working with abused children and their families? /  
Could you talk about your feelings and responses when handling a case of abuse?



- 3.11. What do you think are the common causes that are associated with abuse in the Korean context?
- Of the causes you have mentioned, which are the most important ones?
  - Do they alter the way you handle a case?
- 3.12. Have you reported cases of child abuse to any higher (other) agencies before? If yes, did you encounter any problems in reporting?
- 3.13. Would you say that the handling of child abuse cases should be a multi-disciplinary endeavour?
- Are there any difficulties in working with other professionals?
- 3.14. Could you tell me about what parents you met worry about with regard to their children and how they act?
- 3.15. What do you think that parents most want their children to achieve?
- 3.16. In your experience, how do family members react to the disclosure of child abuse?
- 3.17. After the introduction of the Child Abuse Prevention Act, do you think there have been some noteworthy changes in terms of attitudes and behaviour towards child abuse? If yes, how?
- 3.18. According to research studies, there is still a lack of social consensus about what is meant by child abuse.
- What do you think about that?
  - In your opinion, what reasons account for the lack of awareness of child abuse?
  - What steps do you think need to be taken to help people become more aware of child abuse as a problem? / What steps do you think should be taken for effective spreading of awareness about child abuse in Korean society?

- What part can you play in raising awareness and what are your dilemmas?
- At present what activities are being carried out at community level to tackle the problem of child abuse?
- If you were a policy maker (government officer), what would you do in order to raise awareness of damaging behaviours towards children?

3.19. In order for social policy for abused children to be implemented effectively, what main factors should be required, in your view?

3.20. Do you have any suggestions about how the handling of cases of child abuse (or the prevention of child abuse) might be improved?

### **[For Social Workers Only]**

I would be interested in knowing your overall experience in working with abused children and their families.

3.1. How do child abuse cases usually come to your attention?

3.2. How do you actually recognise that a child has been abused?

- If there are barriers to the recognition of child abuse, what are they?

3.3. What actions have you taken against it? / What would you usually do?

3.4. What influences you in deciding to take (or not to take) something further? / What affects your decisions as to the extent of the abuse? What cases of abuse do you know about?

3.5. Have you encountered any difficulties in relation to dealing with cases?

- Based on your experience, what is the most difficult situation you have ever experienced and how did you deal with it?



- 3.6. What are the most significant features of child abuse cases?
- 3.7. What dilemmas do you face while handling cases of child abuse?
- 3.8. What feelings are provoked by working with abused children and their families? /  
Could you talk about your feelings and responses when handling a case of abuse?
- 3.9. What do you think are the common causes that are associated with abuse in the Korean context?
- Of the causes you have mentioned, which are the most important ones?
  - Do they alter the way you handle a case?
- 3.10. Have you reported cases of child abuse to any higher (other) agencies before? If yes, did you encounter any problems in reporting?
- 3.11. Would you say that the handling of child abuse cases should be a multi-disciplinary endeavour?
- Are there any difficulties in working with other professionals?
- 3.12. Could you tell me about what parents you met worry about with regard to their children and how they act?
- 3.13. What do you think that parents most want their children to achieve?
- 3.14. In your experience, how do abused children and their family members react to the disclosure of child abuse and your intervention?
- 3.15. Do you think intervention is helpful and in what ways?
- 3.16. After the introduction of the Child Abuse Prevention Act, do you think there have been some noteworthy changes in terms of attitudes and behaviour towards child abuse? If yes, what?

**3.17. According to research studies, there is still a lack of social consensus about what is meant by child abuse.**

- **What do you think about that?**
- **In your opinion, what reasons account for the lack of awareness of child abuse?**
- **What steps do you think need to be taken to help people become more aware of child abuse as a problem? / What steps do you think should be taken for effective spreading of awareness about child abuse in Korean society?**
- **What part can you play in raising awareness and what are your dilemmas?**
- **At present what activities are being carried out at community level to tackle the problem of child abuse?**
- **If you were a policy maker (government officer), what would you do in order to raise awareness of damaging behaviour towards children?**

**3.18. In order for social policy for abused children to be implemented effectively, what main factors should be required, in your view?**

**3.19. Do you have any suggestions about how the handling of cases of child abuse (or the prevention of child abuse) might be improved?**

**[For Teachers Only]**

**I would be interested in knowing your overall experience in working with pupils and their families.**

**3.1. Have you ever come across any incidents you would consider to be child abuse?**

**Please try to give examples which you consider child abuse cases.**



*If yes,*

- How do child abuse cases usually come to your attention?
- How do you recognise that a child has been abused?
- If there are difficulties in the recognition of child abuse, what are they?
- What action have you taken against it, if any?
- What influences you in deciding to take (or not to take) something further?
- In order to help abused children, have you ever experienced working with other professionals? What would you expect from them? Are there any difficulties in working with other professionals?
- What are some of the difficulties that may arise in the process of handling cases of child abuse? What dilemmas do you face?
- What feelings are provoked by working with abused children and their families?

*If no,*

- Have you ever been concerned about the fact that other teacher's behaviour might be regarded as abusive of children?
- Could you tell me more about? What did they do? What would you do differently if you were in her/his position?
- If you found one of your students had been abused, how would you recognise (or get suspicious) that the student had been abused? What would you do? What kind of help do you think the student would need?
- What behaviour do you think might be considered harmful to children?
- What are the priorities to make sure children are protected from harmful activities? What would you think the smallest step?

- 3.2. According to research studies, there is still a lack of social consensus about what is meant by child abuse.
- What do you think about that?
  - In your opinion, what reasons account for the lack of awareness of child abuse?
  - What steps do you think should be taken to help people become more aware of child abuse as a problem?
  - What part can you play in raising awareness and what are your dilemmas?
- 3.3. How would you describe your relationship with your pupils?
- 3.4. What do you think is the most important issue for your students at this time?
- 3.5. What expectations do you have of your students (and their parents)? Also, what expectations do your students and their parents have of you and the school? What do you do in order to fulfil these expectations?
- 3.6. What kinds of things irritate you and your pupils about each other?
- Could you describe the rules and regulations you have in your classroom?
  - Are the rules ever negotiated?
  - How are the rules communicated?
  - What happens to those who violate the rules?
- 3.7. How do you deal with this situation?
- Do you use corporal punishment?
  - What else do you do?
- 3.8. On the whole, would you say that you are happy about the way you deal with discipline and education in general? When you are doing things with your students, do you think you do all the right things, or do you sometimes find yourself doing things that you should not do?



- 3.9. Could you tell me about what parents worry about with regard to their children and how they act?
- 3.10. What do you think that parents most want their children to achieve? What do they do in order to achieve it?
- 3.11. What are your feelings about the demands which many parents make on their children?
- 3.12. Do you have any suggestions about how the handling of students' problems, including cases of child abuse, might be improved?

**[For Nursery Staff Only]**

I would be interested in knowing your overall experience in working with children and their families.

- Children: children who are cared by nursery staff

- 3.1. Have you ever come across any incidents you would consider to be child abuse?

Please try to give examples which you consider child abuse cases.

*If yes,*

- How do child abuse cases usually come to your attention?
- How do you recognise that a child has been abused?
- If there are difficulties in the recognition of child abuse, what are they?
- What actions have you taken against it, if any?
- What influences you in deciding to take (or not to take) something further?

- In order to help abused children, have you ever experience working with other professionals? What would you expect from them? Are there any difficulties in working with other professionals?
- What are some of the difficulties that may arise in the process of handling cases of child abuse? What dilemmas do you face?
- What feelings are provoked by working with abused children and their families?

*If no,*

- Have you ever been concerned about the fact that other staff's behaviour might be regarded as abusive of children from your point of view?
- Could you tell me more about? What did they do? What would you do differently if you were in her/his position?
- If you found one of your students had been abused, how would you recognise (or get suspicious) that the child had been abused? What would you do? What kind of help do you think the child would need?
- What behaviours do you think might be considered harmful to children?
- What are the priorities to make sure children are protected from harmful activities? What would you think the smallest step?

3.2. According to research studies, there is still a lack of social consensus about what is meant by child abuse.

- What do you think about that?
- In your opinion, what reasons account for the lack of awareness of child abuse?
- What steps do you think should be taken to help people become more aware of child abuse as a problem?



- What part can you play in raising awareness and what are your dilemmas?
- 3.3. How do you manage your class?
- How many children are you responsible for?
  - What duties do you perform in the course of a normal day?
- 3.4. What is the most important thing to you in looking after children? (Prompt – health, toilet training, discipline, social skills, eating habits, education, etc)
- 3.5. Do you have differences in expectations of children depending on their age and gender?
- 3.6. What expectations do your children's parents have of you and your agency?  
What would you do in order to fulfil these expectations?
- 3.7. What kinds of things irritate you and the children about each other?
- Could you describe the rules and regulations you have in your classroom, if any?
  - What happens to those who violate the rules?
  - How do you deal with this situation? What would you usually do?
- 3.8. On the whole, would you say that you are happy about the way you deal with children in general? When you are doing things with children, do you think you do all the right things, or do you sometimes find yourself doing things that you should not do?
- 3.9. Could you tell me about what parents worry about with regard to their children and how they act?
- 3.10. What do you think that parents most want their children to achieve? What do they do in order to achieve it?
- 3.11. What are your feelings about the demands which many parents make on their children?

3.12. Do you have any suggestions about how the handling of children's problems, including cases of child abuse, might be improved?

#### **4. The Concept of Abuse**

4.1. I would be interested in knowing the way you understand 'child abuse'. What, do you think, 'child abuse' is? / If you were talking to the general public (or your students or your children), how would you explain it to them, so they could explain to their family and friends what 'child abuse' means?

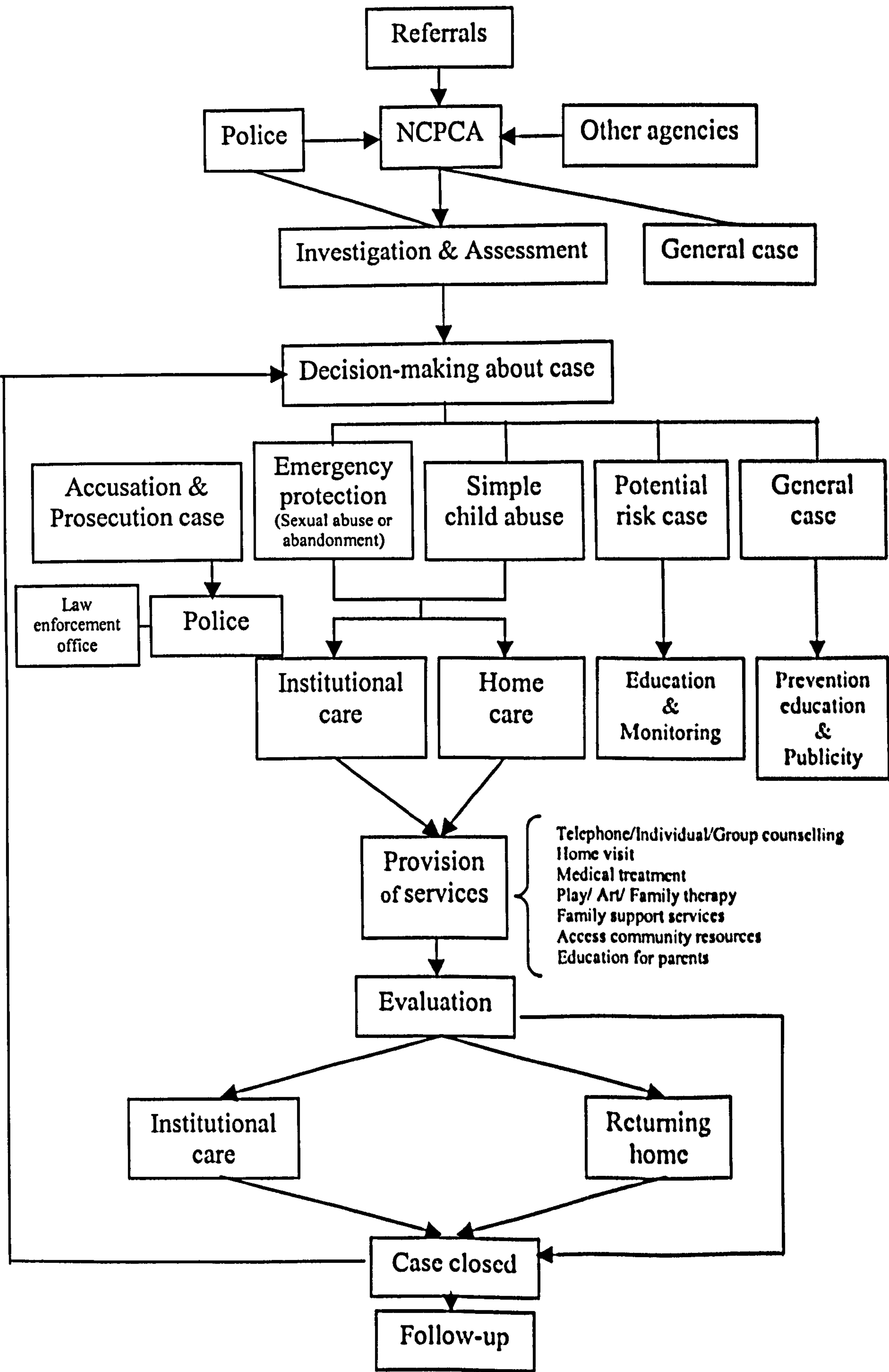
4.2. What kinds of behaviours would you consider to be abusive behaviour and why do you think of it as abuse?

- Circumstances are important in deciding whether certain actions are acceptable or not. The same action might be acceptable in some circumstances and unacceptable in others. Would you tell me how different circumstances affect what you think about actions adults might take in relation to children?

#### **5. A List of Questions about Behaviours (Appendix F)**



Appendix I. Child Protection Procedure in Korea



Adapted from Ministry of Health and Welfare and National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA), 2003, p. 14.