

CONTESTED MOTHERHOOD:
SELF AND MODERNITY IN SOUTH KOREAN HOMESCHOOLING

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To the faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of JAE HUN JUNG find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Chair

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Abstract

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This dissertation is an ethnographic investigation of homeschooling mothers in South Korea. South Korean education mothers invest massive financial and psychological capital in their children's schooling. In the midst of a neoliberal transformation of South Korea's educational system, increasing numbers of parents opt for homeschooling. The major driving forces are religious values and parents' discontent with the uniform public educational system. There are two distinct types of homeschooling: unschooling and Christian homeschooling. Unschooling parents believe in their children's individualities and want to promote academic independence and creativity. Christian homeschooling stresses character development and a Bible-centered worldview in educating children.

In South Korea, homeschooling typically signifies parents' adoption of Western individualism and fosters either independent citizenship or Christian moral maturity. Mothers are critical agents in homeschooling experiences and are usually in charge of educating children. Their new status as "homeschooling mothers," sparks significant transformations in their self-concepts and interpretations of motherhood. Homeschooling is a reflexive project through which mothers realize their separate selves and discover their children's idiosyncrasies. Instead of pursuing their personal ambitions through their children, they concentrate on developing their

potential. Reflexivity and a new sense of self empower these mothers to resist traditional values and to contest the traditional model of the self-sacrificing mother.

The time and space mothers and their children share contribute to generating maternal warmth and mother-child intimacy. Such psychological rewards provide motivation for further maternal commitment. Homeschooling in a South Korean cultural context is more than a pedagogic choice. It is a form of cultural resistance, which thrives on neoliberal discourses of education and helps restore family-centered values and lifestyles. In a rapidly changing and increasingly impersonalized society, home becomes a symbolic space where mothers retreat and equip their children with a competitive edge as successful members of the society.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to three women in my life:

my wife, my daughter, and my mother.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In most modern nation-states, school education has become a rite of passage, which separates children from their parents and homes and prepares them to integrate into the larger society. Carl G. Jung (1954) saw schooling as an intermediate stage through which children gradually achieve independence from parents. On the other hand, parents should hand over their caring duties partially to the school with the expectation that their children will learn to become independent social agents. A number of progressive thinkers point out that the modern school system has latent functions other than a custodial function and learning: selection and indoctrination (Illich 1971:25; Reimer 1971:23). Schools do not simply transmit knowledge and values to the next generation. Under the rubric of protection and preparation, the liminality of schooling postpones the time of independence and confines them into disciplinary programs. Instead of promoting students' self-realization, schools as bureaucratic institutions promote children's conformity and submission to the authority. As a result, the collective school environments control the natural development of children and hinder children from growing up as unique individuals (Gatto 1992; Holt & Farenga 2003; Moore & Moore 1982). With the standardization of curriculum, textbooks, examinations, and age-graded system, the state controls what children need to know, when they need to learn, and how they acquire certain types of knowledge. The needs and interests of the individual child are overlooked or neglected in the schooling process.

Since John Dewey (1938) emphasized learning based on experience, there have been many stands of progressive educational philosophy in the West. Many critics of the modern

school system concentrate their criticism on the curricula and pedagogy. To them, the authoritarian pedagogic approach and its disciplinary controls suffocate children's natural vitalities, hinder their natural growth, paralyze the capabilities for self-realization, and make them more dependent upon others. Ivan Illich (1971), in his *Deschooling Society* advocates for the abolishment of a state-run centralized education system. Formal education based on authoritarian pedagogy and rigid curricula undermines student's potentials and its uniform application destroys their natural tendency to pursue learning based on their needs and interests. Therefore, he conceived a "learning web," a network which connects those who want to learn and those who can teach.¹

Pierre Bourdieu focuses on the reproduction of social class. According to him, academic credential or cultural capital is employed to support the hierarchical structure of colleges and justify social success of certain groups of people who graduate from prestigious colleges (Bourdieu 1973; Bourdieu & Passeron 1977; Grenfell & James 1998; Ortner 1984; Swartz 1997). Higher levels of parental investment, measured by quantity of money and amount of time spent playing with the child, are positively correlated with children's academic and social skills, and subsequent socioeconomic status (Geary 2000). The education system favors the people in the upper class. As social inequalities deepen, unsuccessful people tend to blame themselves for their own lack of such credentials and those who are in positions of power think that they deserve their successes. This way the hierarchical social structure is reproduced.

Michael Apple (1996) points out that curricula, textbooks, the college entrance system, and all the affairs in educational system reflect power relationships in the society. Schooling and the educational system cannot be separated from politics, economy, and ideology. People with

¹ Everett Reimer (1971) in a similar vein criticizes the school system and suggests "democratic institution."

social and economic power try to control the educational system for their own benefits. In this process, underprivileged families are alienated from educational decision-making and are less likely to succeed in the system. In the world in which educational credentials really matter, people from these families are less advantaged in getting jobs and advancing in their field of careers. Social justice and distribution of opportunities, therefore, should be considered in creating a better educational system. School is not the only institution which selects winners and losers and justifies an unequal social structure. To revolutionize the school system, we need to scrutinize politics surrounding education, rhetoric used about educational reform, ideology of legitimate knowledge, pedagogy, and criteria determining effectiveness.

Neil Postman (1995) criticizes the state's intervention and control over knowledge (re)production and the collectivistic school-based education. He states,

the idea of school is that individuals must learn in a setting in which individual needs are subordinated to group interests... the classroom is intended to tame the ego, to connect the individual with others, to demonstrate the value and necessity of group cohesion (45).

Textbooks are just “instruments for promoting dogmatism and trivial learning” (Postman 1995:116). Through giving tests based on such trivial knowledge, schools, the state to be exact, infuses young children with the social ideology and selects candidates who are better fit to the society. Postman (1995) criticizes the dominant discourse which indicates that “the purpose of schooling is to prepare children for competent entry into the economic life of a community” (27). In other words, a school has become a boot camp to train young minds to be diligent workers who can contribute to the nation's prosperity or, at least its survival in the global dog-eat-dog competition in the world market. Therefore, the quality of schooling is often seen as being associated with high standards of achievement and rigorous discipline, which boost the productivity of a nation's economy. The nationalistic and militant perspectives on education have

become more pervasive in the face of globalization than ever.²

In history, social changes had great impacts on family life, including the role of mothers (Glenn 1994; Thurer 1994). Patriarchal societies either idealize motherhood or blame mothers for unsuccessful mothering. There have been slow but increasing social and institutional supports for basic childcare and revolutionary medical aids for safe childcare. These changes make many mothers' active participation in the workforce possible. The overflowing information about child development and psychology generates various forms of child-centered ideology that make maternal care even more laborious and emotionally stressful by imposing sensitive nurturing responsibilities on mothers (Hay 1996). Mothers are forced to find meanings in their life from their mundane duties or to struggle with the double burdens of working and childrearing. As a result, more and more mothers consider being a mother as the most difficult job in the world.³ Such intensive mothering is often rewarded by children's achievements. To different degrees, the success of a mother was often recognized by her children's behavior, their performance in schools, and their success in their later social lives. If something is wrong with a child, it is always a mother who is first blamed for her lack of efficient mothering skills. Children's achievements are credited to their mothers.

² The ways to interpret the current problems and solutions in the education system differ from one society to another. To cope with global economy, for example, the Japanese education system is changing to promote students' creativity and individuality; the U.S. education reform aims at academic rigor and academic supervision through examinations (Spring 2006).

³ Contemporary South Korean mothers' sense of duty toward childrearing and household chores has changed throughout history. They see childrearing as an obligatory burden (Shin Kyōng-Ah 1998, 1999). Mothers take on responsibilities of organizing their children's after-school activities and supporting their children's schooling. Some mothers began to claim that "housewife" should be treated as a full-time job (Moon 1990). Some mothers often complain that childrearing is getting to be a harder and more stressful task because of the increasing importance of children's education. Some even say that they would be "more fortunate without children" (*mujasigi sangp'aljja*; Love of children is an eternal encumbrance).

In the West, even throughout the last century, the cultural meanings of motherhood and their ideological constraints have changed (Thurer 1994). In twentieth century Korea, the discourse centered on ideal mothers has changed from the “wise mother and benevolent wife” during Japanese rule to oversolicitous “education mothers” in post industrial society. In the meantime, social norms based on parental authority and social harmony have gradually faded and child-centered and mobility-oriented discourses have emerged. The myth of social mobility through educational success captures the majority of South Korean parents. Motherhood in Korea is hardly seen as an individual woman’s choice and having children is still a cultural norm among married couples. The boy-preference has weakened, but is still prevalent (Cho Uhn 2004a, 2004b; Chung Byung Ho 2001).

The social environment in South Korea is extremely competitive and academic credentials are increasingly important. In the discursive field in which educational success is the only path for class mobility and a mother’s contribution to her children’s education is essential, a mother cannot but take up the role of an “academic manager” and control her children’s learning. Mothers’ everyday practices revolve around children’s schooling: they devise a best strategy for their children’s college entrance, organize their children’s after-school supplementary programs, chaperon their children from home to school and to the supplementary learning centers, and try out every possible method to improve their children’s grades and school work. Due to the increasing importance of the private education, most South Korean families spend a substantial portion of their household income on their children’s supplementary lessons. The emphasis on education creates a feverish zeal among South Korean mothers and makes them to invest huge financial and psychological resources in their children’s academic successes. Therefore, a

family's economic background appears as a major force differentiating students' educational attainments (Kim Sang-bong 2004; Phang Hanam 2004; Shin Joon Söp 2004).

Homeschooling in the U.S. and South Korea

Ivan Illich and John Holt, early educators who paved the way for homeschooling emphasized the importance of self-reliance and independence of human beings. Raymond Moore also claimed that each child is unique and his or her uniqueness should be respected. Along with their educational ideals to promote self-reliance and individuality, the one-on-one pedagogic approach of homeschooling and its flexibility for each student's ability produce favorable conditions for positive educational outcomes. The homeschooling movement flourishes among the young, well-educated, middle class white Americans. The homeschooling movement has become a significant cultural phenomenon in the U.S., in which more than two million children, which comprises more than four percent of all school-aged children, are currently presumed to be homeschooled (Ray 1997). In the U.S., religious beliefs still seem to be the major reason for homeschooling: many Christian fundamentalists worry about spiritual challenges their children have to face at public schools which teach humanism, evolution, relativism, and atheism. However, other factors, such as an inferior quality of public education and increasing school violence, make more parents decide to teach their children at home (Gilmore 2002; Kirschner 1991; Lines 1991; NCES 2001; Ray 1997; Ray & Wartes 1991; Stevens 2001). A strong parental intention to spend more time with their children and to be a part of their children's lives is another driving force (Mayberry & Knowles 1989). Because family members can share plenty of time together, the most significant gains in homeschooling are producing the feeling of "family togetherness" and improving the quality of their family life.

The most common criticism against homeschooling is the children's lack of socialization opportunities. They are aware that they cannot live in isolation and that their children need to socialize with others. Therefore, they form local support networks through which they can exchange emotional and academic support with each other (Anderson 2003:51; Lines 1991:18). These networks provide a variety of forms of assistance to families who want to start homeschooling. These networks organize various activities for both homeschooling children and parents and members maintain intimate relationships with each other. The lack of professional training in subjects makes the quality of parental instruction uncertain, but homeschooling definitely has pedagogic superiority over public education. The homeschooled children can proceed at their own paces and they learn in a one-on-one or a small-group setting. This highly individualistic approach helps them learn efficiently. As a result, most homeschooled children received fairly high scores in most subjects (Ray 2002; Rudner 1999). The more consistent parent-child relationship and a parent's sensitive observations of and responses to the child's learning progress also help educational development. Since homeschooling parents focus more on literary education, children spend more time reading and less time watching television than public school children (Gilmore 2003; Rudner 1999). These new habits affect better outcomes.

While an increasing number of students are educated at home in the U.S., some scholars in education have raised objections to homeschooling. Sarah Riegel (2001) criticizes homeschoolers for choosing to simply exit from problems in the public schools, and worries that their indifference to school reform only deepens social inequality and goes against democratic principles. Michael Apple (2000) warns homeschooling parents and their social networks to become a "new hegemonic bloc," which influences policy making for their own interests, as seen in their growing anti-tax movement. Homeschooling curricula based on conservative Christian

faiths are another problem, he points out, because children may grow up to be narrow-minded and such a characteristic hinders social solidarity and harmony. Rob Reich (2002) sees the parent-led homeschooling as abusive in that parents push their children to do what they want, infringing upon children's human rights.

In typical home schools, mothers are not only housewives but also teachers. According to Ray (1997), "The mother did 88% of the formal teaching of the children while the father did 10% of the teaching" (xii). In addition to their ordinary household chores, mothers, as the main educators in home schools, organize curricula, order textbooks, teach classes, and arrange music lessons and sports activities for their children. To start their own home schools, many of these homeschooling mothers voluntarily sacrifice their careers to be stay-at-home moms. They even try to persuade their hesitant husbands to teach their children at home. Teaching is not an easy job; it requires specialized knowledge, pedagogic techniques, and emotional endurance. Homeschooling causes tremendous transformations in family life. Mothers are at the center of such changes. Mitchell Stevens (2001) notes in *Kingdom of Children*:

Anyone interested in the fate of motherhood in contemporary America should take a closer look at home education—a movement peopled by women from many different walks of life who appear to have jumped headfirst into an elaborate domesticity (16).

Why do these mothers sacrifice themselves for their children? This question led me to look at the meanings of motherhood and mothering practices among Korean homeschooling families.

Recently in South Korea, a growing number of parents claim their right to supervise their children's learning outside of the school system. As of 2005, the ministry of education estimates that the number of homeschooling families reached a minimum of 1,000 (personal communication).⁴ Homeschooling is illegal. More importantly, the rejection of conventional

⁴ There is no data available concerning the number of homeschooled students. A report in Dong-

school-based education in a collectivistic culture might mean the estrangement from the mainstream culture. Seeking out alternatives is seen as rejecting the group-oriented values. Also, leaving a school signifies relinquishing a conventional path for social mobility. However, parents' discontent with the uniform public education and their desperation to save their children from a detrimental school environment drive them into homeschooling. Christian fundamentalism is another significant motive.

Theoretical Frameworks

Parental investment is crucial for individual offspring to develop competencies for the survival in social groups (Tivers 1972). Through the prolonged period of youth, human children come to depend almost completely upon their parents in acquiring language, advanced level of cognitive ability, cultural knowledge, and other social skills. A woman gives birth, lactates, and provides exclusive care for the infants. Such a woman's reproductive capacity naturalizes women's motherhood. The maternal certainty is often used to explain high levels of maternal investment in offspring. A mother is the primary caregiver in terms of the quantity and quality of time she spends with her children.

Sarah Blaffer Hrdy (1999) labels the common pattern of shared mothering in human societies as "allomothers." She argues that a parturient woman cannot instinctively provide maternal care toward her newborn baby. Many mothers even abuse or abandon their children (Hrdy 1999:308-354). "Maternal instinct" is a myth. Some scientific data from experiments with mother mice suggest that maternal responsibility and caring behaviors are controlled by the existence of a particular gene, called "fosB gene." Hrdy focuses on the fact that mammals are

A Ilbo, one of the major news papers in South Korea, estimates 5000 in 2005 (Kim Hye-Sil 2006).

more capable of coping with social circumstances in a flexible way and a mother's previous mothering experiences influence her later nurturing. Therefore, a mammal's capability for learning helps a neglectful or even abusive first-time mother turn into a more responsive and caring mother with successive children (Hrdy 1999:148-155). Nature or biology alone cannot be the single element which determines a mother's mothering. Hrdy (1999) states, the pattern of mothering is determined by

the complicated interactions among genes, tissue, glands, past experiences, and environmental cues, including sensory cues provided by infants themselves and by other individuals in the vicinity. Complex behaviors like nurturing, especially when tied to even more complex emotions like 'love,' are never either genetically predetermined or environmentally produced (174).

As numerous cross-cultural studies suggest, culture determines how much mothers engage in childrearing and how mothers raise their children. Class and race also determine parenting styles (Kohn 2005; McMahon 1995). In addition, an individual mother's decision about the patterns of childrearing is largely determined by the sociocultural circumstances and individual characteristics (Belsky 1984).

Mother's Love and Maternal Control

Throughout the pregnancy and childrearing practices, a woman goes through physical and cultural adaptations to motherhood. During this process, a woman prepares herself for "the long-term giving of one's time and interest in the form of enduring love, altruistic self, self-denial, and empathy" (Bernard & Solchany 2004:10). Such reproductive and emotional capacities make women suitable for mothering. Simultaneously, a mother adopts the culturally appropriate way of childrearing and internalizes cultural expectations to be a good mother through continuously repeated narratives by others, mostly women in the older generation, and

latest information of childrearing from various media. The overflowing knowledge of child development, emphasizing the mother's effects on child's personality and socialization, generates child-centered discourses and emphasizes the exclusive one-on-one relationship between a biological mother and the child (Hays 1996). Such discourse not only contributes to shaping the idea of appropriate mothering, but also determines how individual women are supposed to experience motherhood. Thereby, mothers should become sensitive to their children's emotional needs and provide proper responses. They are often harassed with the idea of "perfect" moms (Chodorow & Contratto 1989; Ruddick 1989). Mothering has increasingly been considered as one of the most demanding and stressful jobs.

Even under the powerful influence of individualism and feminist liberation movements, mothers' self-sacrificing nurturing nature is still idealized and women's intensive mothering is taken for granted (DiQuinzio 1999). Why are many mothers so deeply committed to their children's lives? Early psychoanalytic theorists believed that women have a "natural" desire for motherhood and saw motherhood as determining women's maturity (Benedeck 1970; Deutsch 1945; Freud 1914, 1961, 1965). Mothers who are dissatisfied with childrearing are considered as having developmental problems and failing to adjust to their feminine psychosexual identity (Boulton 1983:3). In this line of thought, Donald Winnicott (1970, 2002) emphasizes the intuitive and empathetic basis of mothering and argues that mothers' natural empathy makes mothers grasp what their infants' needs and desires easily. He sees mothering experiences as naturally rewarding. Based on the biological concept of maternity, John Bowlby (1970) views mothers' care of their infants as instinctual. All mothers are *naturally* committed to childrearing. Humans who have grown up in "normal" families have a natural disposition to make "affectional bonds" with others. These bonds instill children with a sense of security and confidence. Bowlby

believes that physical separation between a child and his or her caretaker causes emotional crippling later in life (Holmes 1993). As Martha McMahon's empirical research (1995) suggests, mothering practices bring significant transformations in a woman's adult life and her perception of self. A mother's continuous interaction with her child requires not only physical labor but also intense emotional investment and endurance. Overcoming such hardships gives her a sense of accomplishment. Such positive feedbacks contribute to developing maternal commitment.

Nancy Chodorow (1974, 1978) attributes the persistence of women's mothering not to social learning or a woman's biology but to "social structurally induced psychological processes" (7). She claims,

Women's capacities for mothering and abilities to get gratification from it are strongly internalized and psychologically enforced, and are built developmentally into the feminine psychic structure. Women are prepared psychologically for mothering though the developmental situation in which they grow up, and in which women have mothered them (39).

Chodorow theorizes the psychic structures of femininity and masculinity based on gender-specific socialization. In the process of a child's early development, a boy and a girl experience the Oedipal crisis in a different way. The sex-based division of labor, in which a woman mothers her children and a father is physically absent at home, promotes a boy's separation from mother and a girl's continuous relationship with her mother. Therefore, it is mothering that reproduces gendered subjectivities: a girl develops her gender identity by identifying with her mother and she accepts the passive, dependent, and docile roles from her mother. On the other hand, a boy differentiates himself from his mother. As a result, he develops a distinct, independent sense of self.⁵

⁵ This model is developed based on the Western nuclear family in the post-industrialized society. The basic family structure of South Korean society has transformed into a nuclear family, in which mothers are exclusively caretakers. Cho Hae-Joang (1988) adopts Chodorow's theory on gender-specific socialization in her analysis on contemporary South Korean families. She also

Kathleen Barlow (2001, 2004) criticizes that psychoanalytic study of motherhood fails to theorize the mother as a subject and is rooted in the Western nuclear family structure that largely neglects the importance of cultural differences in shaping women's lives and goals. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1985, 1993) points out that mother-child bond and subsequent maternal care are not universal. Mother's love is a cultural construct concurrent with the rise of the modern nuclear family, the introduction of new reproductive technologies, and the decline in infant mortality. As other cross-cultural studies support, the meanings of motherhood and maternal practices are culturally constructed and change through time (Barlow 2004; Scheper-Hughes 1985, 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Whiting & Whiting 1975; Yun 2002).

Social changes modify the goal of mothering and the meaning of "good" mothers as well as change the cultural models of self. In her study among Kenyan families, Beatrice B. Whiting (1996) finds that the social changes from an agricultural economy to a wage-earning economy and the introduction of a Western style school system cause mothers to adopt the new concept of the ideal child and utilize a different mothering style. For the welfare of children these Kenyan mothers motivate their children to succeed in school and value more individualistic, self-centered, and egoistic traits among their children. Ruth K. Chao (1995) argues that the transnational experiences cause modification in parental goals and parenting styles. Chinese American mothers, who grew up in traditional collectivism, valorize their children's independence, which they believe important for successful lives in the U.S. They encourage their children'

argues that Capitalism promotes a type of masculinity of the "capable and responsible" household head and, as a result, male adults are pressured into fitting this idea. Coupled with the deep-seated tradition of boy-preference and increasing power of mothers, I think that the psychosocial dynamics among South Korean nuclear families unfold in a different way from Chodorow's model. Cho (1988) documented the current trend of the feminization of Korean men. Shin Kyöng-Ah (1998) also corroborates this trend that mothers raise their daughters to become strong and their sons to become gentle. In this regard, mothers counter-recycle their experiences. Even if they were taught to be feminine, they expect their daughters to be strong. Dealing with their busy and uncommunicative husbands, they expect their sons to become gentle and delicate.

individualities and respect their choices. However, they expect that their children grow up to become contributing members of the family and society. The idea of self-reliance they try to instill in their children is still rooted in the collectivistic sense of the self.

Sara Ruddick (1989, 1994) deconstructs the conventional meaning of mother by redefining a mother as “a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives and for whom providing childcare is a significant part of her or his working life” (1989:40). By “his or her,” she liberates the concept of mother from the gender-based labor, historically assigned to women. She separates maternal work from birthing labor. Pregnancy and giving birth are not sufficient conditions for maternal activities. “A mother” is practice-based term; namely, one’s participation in roles traditionally assigned to the mother makes him or her “a mother.” Responses to the children’s needs are more crucial in becoming a mother. She believes, “all mothers-in-the-world are adoptive” (1989:218). Participation in maternal work brings about a distinct form of thinking, what she calls “maternal thinking.” Such an epistemological connection between practice and consciousness transforms the maternal behaviors and attitudes toward children. Ruddick (1989) argues that maternal perception of the child’s biological vulnerability makes the mother become sensitive to the child’s demands and committed to meeting three major demands: biological preservation, emotional and intellectual growth, and social acceptability. By emphasizing social acceptability, she demonstrates that maternal practices aim at helping children grow as individuals who can have reciprocal, mutually satisfying relationships with others and pursue people’s common interests.

There are individual and cultural differences in mothers’ perception of children’s needs. The degrees of maternal investments and caring are largely determined by the caretaker’s own decision. Some mothers abdicate maternal authority. A fantasy of “perfect control” of children

and the complexities of the maternal work render mothers vulnerable to frustration from childrearing and dependence upon others. Losing confidence in their protective love and decisions for their children, they voluntarily yield their right for childrearing to strangers, so-called experts. Ruddick (1989) explains:

Beset by the difficulties of her work, the recalcitrance of her children, much inappropriate praise and blame, and the real limitations of her power, a mother is apt to become fearfully susceptible to the 'gaze' of others (111).

Based on the intersubjective perspective, Jessica Benjamin (1988) emphasizes mutual recognition as an ideal human relationship. She defines domination as “a breakdown of the necessary tension between self-assertion and mutual recognition” (12). In mother-child relationships, a mother’s failure in recognizing her child as an independent subject easily leads her to dominate her child. Without responding to the children’s needs, this domineering mother judges her children based on the standards of others and uses punitive measures to raise her child.

A mother is an individual agent who creates her own path of life in the continuous interactions with the ever-changing world. As a social being, however, she cannot overcome the unique situation she faces everyday and the ideology of motherhood in deciding a pattern of childrearing. A woman's marginalized socioeconomic status and limited access for social activities makes her vulnerable to man’s domination. In turn, a mother’s sense of powerlessness in the society and her family is expressed with domination over her children. In East Asian contexts, where the fused mother-child identity is culturally emphasized, a mother is easily seduced to domination of children's lives and control of their behaviors by limiting their options based on her desire, mood, and lifestyle.

Self, Person, and Individual: a Confucian Model

Western societies have evolved into more individualistic societies in terms of increase in and expansion of an individual's autonomy and human rights. A number of ethnographic studies have illuminated the differences between the Western concept of self and its non-Western counterpart (Geertz 1973; Hollan 1992; Mageo 1998). Individualism and collectivism are two distinct interpretations of the self.⁶ The individualistic model of self is characterized as independent, autonomous, and separate⁷ while the collectivistic model of self is characterized as interdependent and relational (Gilligan 1982; Markus & Kitayama 1991; Kashima et al. 1995). These senses of the self shape and determine the nature of individual experiences and interpersonal relationships (Markus & Kitayama 1991). Individualism-versus-collectivism or independence-versus-interdependence has been used to frame the differences and similarities in cultures and personalities. It is often understood as a continuum rather than as two opposing views, in which each culture or individual can be placed somewhere between.

Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in East Asia has contributed to shaping its unique self model. In his analysis of classical Chinese literature, Mark Elvin (1985) finds that the

⁶ Discourses on self in Western academia have largely revolved around the individualism-versus-collectivism dichotomy. Much anthropological research seems to support such binary structuring even though most of them are aware of the danger of such a simplified generalization, which is evasive in explaining the continuously changing cultural paradigm and cross-cultural diversity (Mageo 1998). Rhee et al (1996) argues that this binary should be conceived as having two dimensions, which can be differentiated by in-groups and out-groups.

⁷ Independence, autonomy, and self-esteem are the core values in American individualism (Hsu (1972). Adrie Kusserow (2004) argues that the meaning of individualism differs with parents' class. Parents from different socioeconomic statuses instill diverse types of class-based individualism and formulate varied parenting strategies for their children. For example, working class parents emphasize the tough self to help their children to deal with poor circumstances—either to protect themselves or project themselves to a higher socioeconomic status. Upper-middle class parents cherish their children's delicate self and assist them in displaying their full potential.

Chinese had a clear conception of individual self.⁸ However, the existence of the distinct individual self does not necessarily mean that an individual is perceived as an independent entity. In Neo-Confucian tradition, self-reliance and independence are traditionally devalued, and human interrelatedness and harmonious social relationships are highlighted.⁹ In addition, the inner core self is often hidden behind the presentational self (Doi 1986; Lebra 1992). Wei-Ming Tu (1987) points out that the Neo-Confucian self¹⁰ is “an open system” and “a dynamic center of organismic relationships and a concrete personal path to the human community as a whole” (112). In Confucianism, practicing rituals and learning propriety are primary methods for self-cultivation. Such practice-based self-cultivation collapses the boundary between the self and heaven (*chōninhabīl*). Thereby, a practitioner can achieve the status of sage. Through learning, an individual can continuously enlarge his self, achieve the union with the heaven, and ultimately grow to meet the goal of the community (Tu 1987:113).

An anthropological concept of “the person” indicates a social agent who plays a role and has a social status in a given society (Csordas 1994; Harris 1989). Francis Hsu (1985) argues that the concept of person in Confucian societies incorporates relational aspects of the self and social roles. In other words, a person is expected to perform many different roles from his or her relationships with various social encounters. Since there are universal roles all humans should play in the relationship with Heaven, the person in Confucianism is a moral category. For a Confucian “role-carrying” person, mastery of basic social duties is essential (Rosemont 1997).

⁸ The idea of individual did not appear in Koreans’ minds until the end of nineteenth century. In the process of opening doors to the Western civilization, awakening from its long isolation, at the turn of the century, the idea of the individual began to appear in the discourses on enlightenment as then-intellectuals opened their eyes to their rights over the protection of property and life (Park Joo-Won 2005).

⁹ Neo-Confucian tradition laid stress on the human interconnectedness and interpersonal relations. However, the relations are hierarchal (Kim Mi-Yōng 2004:20-21).

¹⁰ In reality, the Confucian self refers just to the educated male.

To explain the cultural importance of interpersonal dependence, Koreans often use a Chinese hieroglyphic character for a human or a person, *in*, which was made after the shape that two persons are leaning against each other and *ingan*, another word for a person, literally means “the interperson,” which is “located in the transitional space between self and other” (Alford 1999:49). As this emic explanation implies, social orientation is important in understanding the concept of a person in a Confucian society. A person is part of numerous social networks, not solely an isolated individual.

The Chinese word for an adult literally means “becoming a person.”¹¹ In the Confucian *Book of Rites*, a person’s twentieth birthday signified his or her coming of age; a person was considered a full-fledged member of the society after getting married or becoming a parent (Tu 1998:35). An adult is someone who is cognizant of what is socially expected, being sensitive to how others feel, being capable of performing one’s own social roles, and being responsible for others. An adult in the Confucian sense refers to a “duty-conscious” person (Tu 1998). As the aforementioned translation implies, adulthood is not a fixed state of attainment, but a process of becoming. Because all human beings are inherently good, they have the potential to achieve Sagehood, the ideal self with moral perfection. The internalization of patterns of ethical conduct and the habitual stylization of the social norms can transform a self-interested individual into a sage. At this stage, the boundary between the self and other collapses and a sage who has an impartial perspective and unperturbed mind can contribute to the interest of the human community (Eno 1990). In this Confucian cultural system, cultural beliefs about child development centered on learning, and parental supervision of the child’s education was considered crucial. Learning Confucian teachings and mastering ritual propriety are an endless, life-long project, through which the self can be enlarged to embrace others. As a Confucian man

¹¹ *Sǒngin* in Korean.

grows, the ideas of success and the goals of achievement expand to a new level: from an individual to a household, to the nation, and finally the cosmos. As a representation of his extended family, his achievement was always seen as bringing glory to the family.

Through modernization and missionization, individualism or ego-centrism was introduced to Korea. Capitalist modes of lifestyle and modernization processes involving division of labor based on class and gender transformed traditional social agent into a more interest-conscious individual. However, Korean culture is generally believed to be highly collectivistic. Social networks and relationships are considered crucial for successful life (Alford 1999). According to Kashima et al. (1995), South Korean college students have higher levels of relatedness in their self-concept and value the emotional relatedness through mutual understanding of each other's feelings than students in Australia, the U.S., Hawaii, and Japan. Eun Rhee, James S. Uleman, and Hoon Koo Lee (1996) discover that Koreans are more collectivistic and less individualistic than European Americans in relations with their in-group members, but both groups do not show any differences in terms of their attitudes toward non-kin members or general others. This is because Koreans tend to define the boundary between "we" and "others" and develop affective emotion (*chǒng*) based on "we-ness" (Choi & Choi 1994). Koreans lack the concept of autonomous and differentiated state of individuality. Such distinct family-based collectivism characterizes Korean collectivism.

C. Fred Alford (1999) characterizes Korean culture as "high individualism coupled with high collectivism" (66). He remarks, "Koreans are both individualistic and collectivistic, and it is the conflict between their individualistic and collectivistic selves that is central to the culture, as well as the psyche of every Korean" (38). Individualism and collectivism are now eclectically given as a part of lifestyle to Koreans. Some people maintain more consistency in living, but

many others experience conflicts between individualism and collectivism. Alford (1999) describes this cultural paradox with one question: why do Koreans always say “we” and do “I”?¹² The state continuously reproduces collectivistic values to put the society together and justifies its authoritarian control over people. The ideological constraints such as filial piety and loyalty to the group and cultural values of interdependence persist. However, a strong resistance to the collectivistic culture and a desire for individualistic lifestyle emerge.

A Confucian Model of Development

The cultural model of self and cultural beliefs about child development play a crucial role in shaping this cultural model of parenting (Chao 1995; Chao & Tseng 2002; Small 2001). In America, where the individualistic model of the self is dominant, the notions of “independence” and “stage” have shaped cultural models of parenting and have become the framework for parents to interpret their children’s behaviors (Harkness et al. 1992; Quinn 1992). American individualism shapes its unique theories of achievement and motivation, which honor “individual accomplishment and the attainment of material prosperity” (Spence 1985:1286).

The Confucian model of the “interdependent” self permeated all aspects of social and family life in traditional Korea. It has contributed greatly to shaping parental goals and mothering styles (Kim & Choi 1994). Under the influence of Confucianism, interdependent parent-child relationships and paternal authority are core characteristics in East Asian parenting (Hsu 1982; Chao & Tseng 2002). Based on the absolute parental authority, parenting focused on the development of a child’s moral character. Behaving properly in various social situations, meeting moral standards, and fulfilling social obligations are basic norms to follow. Education is

¹² In everyday conversation, Koreans omit “I” in a sentence and use “we” if necessary (Alford 1999:35-36).

the key for self-discipline and filial piety¹³ has provided an ideological basis for child socialization and development (Ho 1996). Receiving their bodies as a sacred gift from their parents and feelings of indebtedness toward parents lie at the root of filial piety. Due to overemphasis on children's duties for their parents, as Hsu (1981) noted, Chinese parents take children's filial piety for granted and lack an idea of healthy parenting.¹⁴

In a patrilineal society, a son's filial duties go beyond obedience to his parents; he has to care for his elderly parents, materially and emotionally, as well as establish himself in life and bring glory to his family (Chao & Tseng 2002:65-66; Lee 1998:252; Yu 1985). This role emphasizes an individual's achievements and gaining public recognition, which is closely connected with the family name, more specifically his father's ego-ideal. Therefore, academic excellence is part of child's duty or role toward his or her family. Parents encourage their children to develop politeness, kindness, and a sense of responsibility, which can promote harmonious relationships with others. Through the practice of filial piety, individuals learn to suppress their internal impulses and conform to the external demands (Ho 1986). However, filial piety is not a unilineal demand on children. A father is also required to practice filial piety toward his children. This idea became clearer when Mencius, in his Five Relationships, emphasized that the primary virtue in the father-son relationship is love or intimacy (Tu 1998b:125). Filial piety

¹³ Surpassing the obedience to the parents, its meaning encompasses providing material benefits, emotional and spiritual supports (Chao & Tseng 2002:65-66). The Classic of Filial Piety (*Xiao Qin*) defines filial piety as "raising one's reputation in order to exalt one's parents" (Yu 232). Filial piety is not just one of moral tenets, but defines intergenerational and interpersonal relationships and expands to their belief system toward their ancestors and ritual practices.

¹⁴ This parent-child relationship was defined as somewhat unbalanced; namely, it emphasizes child's unquestioned obedience to parents but it lacks any prescriptions of parental responsibilities more than giving life. The belief in the cosmological basis for intergenerational continuity assures children that their filial piety would be rewarded by his children. The individual should be willing to sacrifice his or herself for the family honor and glory. Filial piety is not unquestioned obedience and a filial son can theoretically challenge his father's wrongful commands (Miller 1997:154). Therefore, an ideal Confucian father-child relationship is one of mutual affection or reciprocal intimacy.

has social and political implications, too. As the scope of social interactions grows larger, filial piety should extend to rulers and other subjects, as well as to significant interpersonal relationships, e.g., kinship networks and peers (Chao & Tseng 2002:65-66).

Filial piety is often associated with loyalty to political authority. Filial piety contributes to developing ideological and cognitive conservatism. Therefore, overemphasis on filial piety in the development process hinders people from adapting to social changes. David Ho (1996) characterizes the Chinese model of child development as “authoritarian moralism.” Overemphasis on obedience and indebtedness to the parents may lead to negating individuality and reverting to the collective identity. Based on his clinical observation, Ho (1996) summarizes typical patterns of Chinese children as following:

emotional distancing from parents, especially father; a generalized tendency to fear authority figures; a tendency to adopt silence, negativism, or passive resistance as a behavioral style in dealing with authority’s demands; a tendency to turn aggression inward; and a dissociation between affect and roles.....[P]eople holding filial attitudes tend to adopt passive, uncritical, and uncreative orientation toward learning; to hold fatalistic, superstitious, and stereotyped beliefs; and to be authoritarian, dogmatic, and conformist—a constellation of attributes pointing toward cognitive conservatism. They are also more likely to engage in superstitious practices, such as consulting an almanac or fortunetellers in making decision (162-163).

The “authoritarian moralism” in Confucian cultures has negative impacts on children’s psychology. In a collectivistic society, the self is always conscious of the others and their reaction. Achievement-motivation is shaped by the reactions of others and achievement-motivation is other or family oriented (Markus & Kitayama 1991; Spence 1985). Motivation for achievement and success is “exogenous” rather than “endogenous” (Miller 1994). Values of education and educational achievements are always emphasized as a child’s duty for his or her family and pursuit of their own desire is often considered as disobedient.

Based on parent’s demands and responses to their children, Diana Baumrind (1971, 1991)

categorizes four different styles of childrearing: an authoritative (demanding and responsive) style, an authoritarian (demanding, but not responsive) style, a permissive (not demanding, but responsive) style, and a rejecting/neglecting (neither demanding nor responsive) style. Diana Baumrind (1991) argues that authoritative parenting (responsive and negotiated) is most ideal because parents continuously negotiate the degrees of demand and response to their children as their children grow up. Ruth Chao and Vivian Tseng (2002) are skeptical about the utility of Baumrind's belief in authoritative control and argue that authoritarian control is the most effective as well as the most common in the Confucian cultural context. Wendy Grolnick (2003) criticizes authoritarian control by arguing it may lead to unhealthy domination that forces children's obligation and undermines their intrinsic motivation. She emphasizes the importance of autonomy in intellectual and emotional maturity along with many others (Rothbaum & Trommsdorff 2007). I also discover South Korean homeschooling parents' increasing resistance to authoritarian control. They even try to discipline themselves to actively and rightfully respond to their children's needs. They are deeply concerned about South Korean students' apathy to learning. Even though authoritarian control can bring positive outcomes in short-term educational attainment, its long-term impacts on child development and mental health may be tremendous (see Ho 1994, 1996).

Methods and Data Collection

In December 2000, I came to work part-time as an English instructor at an English institute for children, located in the middle-class residential area¹⁵ of my home town in South

¹⁵ The institute was located between a mid-sized apartment complex and the area filled with old houses. There are visible gaps in terms of living conditions between newly developed areas with high-rise apartment buildings and old residential areas. While I taught there, I learned that most mothers living in apartments told their children not to play with the children from the house-

Korea. Inside the private educational industry, I experienced the fever of mothers' undue zeal for their children's education. They were eager to discover their children's talents and develop them further. Since the exam in elementary education was eliminated due to the liberal curricula reform, most mothers I met at the institute were anxious to know their children's level of performance in English. Eight months later, I moved to an institute for adult learners by a local university near my home.¹⁶ For two and a half years, I taught English Grammar and TOEFL to students, from a six-year-old girl to a 55-year-old pastor.

I knew many mothers as parents of my students and as my students. A college graduate mother moonlighted as a factory worker to pay tuitions for her daughter's private education. Another mother enrolled in a distance learning program, majoring in English literature at Korea National Open University in order to save her two children's tuitions for private supplementary learning by teaching them English by herself. In addition, countless mothers asked me treat their children with special favors. It was not difficult to sense a nation-wide "education fever" even in middle-class families.

Unlike my initial impression that most South Korean mothers had excessive interest in children's schooling, I came to know many neglectful mothers. Many young students I taught complained that their mothers did not even cook for them. Their mothers spent most of free time exercising at a gym¹⁷ or socializing with friends after driving them to private after-school

living families. I was paid 12,500 to 15,000 won (approximately, 12 to 15 dollars) per class hour (50 minutes), which is around a half of the hourly wage of a college-graduate English native speaker who teaches conversation class.

¹⁶ Many middle and high school students enrolled in night classes at this institute because their parents perceive the programs for adults or college students as more advanced and they could not trust the instructors. These young students often say, "My mom said that I should take English courses in a specialized institute, at least." Such a mother's strategy for her children's English education is well described in Park and Abelmann (2004).

¹⁷ It is worth noting the media's spotlight on *öljjang ajumma* (married women with beautiful face). In the 2000s, it has become a new trend that married women participate in various

programs. I heard that a mother took a week-long trip to Las Vegas, leaving all the household duties in the hands of her teenage daughter. I briefly tutored a student who came back after he was expelled from three different high schools in Canada. His mother, a school nurse in her mid-forties, asked me to persuade him to go back to Canada. Despite his apparent struggles in Canadian schools, she simply cared more that his sudden homecoming might bring contempt upon her and her husband. She was concerned that he would not be able to survive in the Korean school system. To “save face,” it was better for her son to stay in Canada.

In fall 2001, I met Sök-Chun, a 13-year-old homeschooler whose father was an elementary school teacher and whose mother tutored English. When he was a sixth grader, his parents decided not to send him to middle school. Sök-Chun's mother had a very specific vision about his future. She wanted to release him from the prison-like school system and give him the freedom she never had. What made his mother want to give freedom to her son even though he had to give up school? This question motivated me to pursue more in-depth understandings of Korean mothers' anxieties for their children's futures and discontent with the school system. I decided to conduct comprehensive ethnographic research on homeschooling in South Korea.

In summer 2005, I scoured message boards on the websites for homeschoolers to locate informants. Based on the personal information provided in the message boards, I sent e-mails to more than 200 persons. I received only three responses. Only Ye-Ŭn's father showed an interest in my project and participated in an interview. I expanded the pool of informants through him in a snowball fashion. At a meeting for homeschoolers I came to know through a website, I met six homeschooling mothers. From them, especially Chin-Söp's mother, I could obtain valuable information about homeschooling movements in South Korea. In the summers of 2005, 2006,

programs to make their bodies slim (*momjjang madulgi*). Such obsession with their physical attractiveness appeared contradictory to their self-sacrificing zeal for their children's education.

and 2007, I interviewed 41 parents (32 families; 27 mothers and 14 fathers). Most parents I interviewed are so-called “386 generation” in their late-thirties and mid-forties. They have degrees beyond college-level. As Lee So-Hee (2002) argues, “Generation is an important attribute of identity in Korea, like race in the United States” (146). The generational characteristic of my informants will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In-depth and open-ended interviews were the crucial tool in collecting personal background data such as childhood memories, school experiences, expectations for children, the reasons parents started homeschooling, their problems in teaching at home, and so on. These interviews were conducted either with a single parent or with both parents at once, mostly at their homes. I interviewed some parents multiple times spanning three years. Korean was the primary language used in my interviews, and is my native tongue. I recorded most of the interviews. I participated in support group meetings, special meetings for curricula development, and counseling sessions for parents who planned to homeschool. I also consulted Internet-based resources such as family websites and blogs, where homeschooling families often wrote about their personal experiences and self-help books, which comprised real life stories of homeschooling families. Because of their hearty and frank writing styles, these sources were of great use in complementing my interviews. To protect the privacy of my informants, all names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms. In this dissertation, I identify my informants’ names by their oldest child’s first name as they are usually called in Korea.

This research was conducted at home. As a native Korean, I have great advantages in collecting and analyzing data. Strictly speaking, my fieldwork goes beyond the time frame mentioned above. Even before my ethnographic research, I lived in the same society as a child, as a student, and as a parent. I was mothered in a Korean way and observed other Korean

mothers' childrearing. I went through the totalitarian school system and witnessed students' democratization movements on college campuses in the end of 1980s. Such experiences were of much benefit to me in comprehending my informants' motives and practices of homeschooling. Choong Soon Kim (1987) points out the difficulties of a native anthropologist. My own cultural bias based on my personal backgrounds makes it hard to maintain academic objectivity in conducting an ethnographical research at home. However, my academic training in cultural anthropology and relatively long sojourn in the U.S. have given me a fresh perspective on my culture. During my first stay in the U.S. for the Master of Arts program, I was fortunate to observe closely the childrearing practices of the middle-class mothers in conservative Midwestern cities in the U.S. The cultural differences in their parenting styles were eye-opening and led me to be able to examine parenting of my own culture more objectively.

Because the interviews were conducted in Korean, all interviews cited in this dissertation are translated into English by myself. There are difficulties involved this process of meeting two goals: transmitting my interviewees' intentions and helping outsiders understand them. I do my best to deliver the original ideas of my interviewees. However, some Korean words cannot be properly translated with a lexical equivalent in English. For example, a Korean word, "*mosǒng*," is usually translated to "motherhood" in English. The Korean word indicates both the status as a mother and the motherly disposition. It also connotes sacred, self-sacrificial, and unconditional nature of motherliness. "*Sagyoyuk*" literally means "private education," but this does not refer to private schools. This is a generic term indicating various types of private after-school or extracurricular programs. Even though translating "*Sagyoyuk*" into "private education" might cause readers confusion, I often use "private education" to refer to these private programs. I also use "private supplementary lesson," "private after-school learning program," and "*hagwǒn*" in

different contexts. In this dissertation, I employ the McCune-Reischauer system to romanize Korean words and names. For Korean authors with publications in English, I follow their ways of romanization for citation. All Korean names appear in a traditional order (i.e., the last name first).

Research Questions

I have been interested in women's social power and mother-child relationships in South Korea. The phenomenal "education fever" in South Korea inspired me examine the field of education, a social space in which mothers' involvement is most active and their contributions are relatively well recognized. The field of education is also a hot spot in which governmental control and parental resistance collide in the name of children's better future. Since the mid 1990s, waves of globalization and neo-liberal educational reforms in South Korea have threatened many South Korean parents. While the majority of them tend to invest immense of amounts of financial and psychological resources in their children's educational success, a growing numbers of parents look for an educational alternative which can foster their children's individuality and creativity. In such a social atmosphere, homeschooling mothers resist a dominant ideology revolving around mother-child relationships shaped by the Confucian model of self and cultural politics on the instrumental motherhood. And their practice of homeschooling helps the mothers to recreate the meaning of motherhood; a new model of mothering emerges.

In the post liberal feminist era when more and more women want to pursue their own careers and independent lifestyles, what makes home schooling mothers choose to be committed mothers? Homeschooling mothers typically give up their potential careers to be stay-at-home moms. Why do more mothers endure additional sacrifices by joining in homeschooling

movements? What compensates the dedication they make for their children? Is it just temperamental characteristics that make certain mothers become involved with such demanding work of teaching at home? Such questions have lingered for the entire process of conducting fieldwork and even writing this manuscript.

Homeschooling is a reaction against an unsatisfactory education system. The meaning of homeschooling transcends beyond one of the educational alternatives. Homeschooling resists the dominant sociocentric ideology in the education system and experiments with an alternative, individualistic vision of learning and childrearing. Based on parents' religiosity or their own new views on children's education and development, homeschooling families are rebuilding their own family-centered lifestyle and equipping their children with competitiveness. As a cultural movement, homeschooling has received surprisingly little anthropological attention.

In this dissertation, I investigate a homeschooling mother's self-concept and family life. To do so, I focus on homeschooling mothers' narratives—from their decision to become homeschoolers to their everyday experiences as mother/teachers. I look into their relationships with their children, focusing on mothers' desire for their children and themselves. I delve into the cultural and psychological roots of maternal commitment at the intersection of mothers' personal psychologies and public discourses on "ideal" mothers. How do they reorganize their family lives based on their new roles? How do these new roles help them negotiate their power at home and construct the new self-image? Through the mothers' homeschooling experiences, I examine mothers' subjectivity and agency in a South Korean cultural context. I also explore the Korean model of mothering and the cultural meaning of childhood, and show how homeschooling mothers contest such a cultural model.

CHAPTER TWO

KOREAN WOMEN'S SITUATIONS AND THEIR MOTHERING

A South Korean woman has a visible power over her nuclear family (Hoffman 1995). A mother's enhanced status within a family in Korean society, however, is a by-product of industrialization and of socioeconomic changes during the later part of the twentieth century. A traditional gender division of labor was developed into a new norm during industrialization: an adult man works as a breadwinner and an adult woman takes care of all the household chores and childrearing. Industrialization also reorganized the power relations between husband and wife. A father's employment weakens his formal authority over his family and deprives him of chances to build intimate relationships with his children. The absence of the father empowers a mother in the nuclear family. Due to the social consensus which assigns educating children to mothers, mothers make major decisions regarding their children's education. Based on the literature on the historical developments of motherhood and mothering practices, this chapter traces the cultural roots and ideological foundations of motherhood in Korean history.

Women and Neo-Confucianism

Korea has long been one of the strongest patrilineal and patriarchal societies. As Deuchler (1992) noted, however, its patrilineal kinship system and strong patriarchal tradition were invented traditions manipulated by the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910). Until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Korean kinship was more likely bilateral rather than patrilineal (Kendall 1985). Prior to Chosŏn, women in the noble class were presumed to have more power and authority. In Shilla kingdom (BCE 57-935), there were queens who actually reigned over people.

In the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392) in which Buddhism was the predominant religion, patrilineal regulations were not as strict as they were in the Chosŏn dynasty; namely, a woman could socialize with men other than her husband relatively freely; remarriage was widely practiced and socially accepted; she could inherit equally with her brothers and be a legitimate heir of her father's ritual obligation for his ancestors. Even though women might have had more rights, they were socially disadvantaged. In the early Koryŏ, women were called "*saenggu*," denoting useful livestock, which implies women's low status and their value as property (Cho Sŏng-Nam 1998). Women's participation in social activities was limited. Women could not become bureaucrats with a few exceptions.

Neo-Confucianization during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) restructured the entire society based on a patriarchal social order. Neo-Confucianism¹ functioned as a social ideology to justify a hierarchal status-based social system and centralized power of the dynasty. The dynasty ordered noble Korean families into patrilineal descent groups and redefined women's roles. The king gave control of lands, slaves, and local communities to these noble families. This way the ruler could centralize his political power and maintain his influence on local communities.² Neo-Confucianism taught people to strive for perfect harmony in society. The idea of harmony was built upon the hierarchical social order. The harmonious unity can be attained when the members with varied talents and occupations perform their given roles and conform to the norm proper to their status (Fung 1948:174; Tu 1987).

¹ Confucianism was introduced in the second century. As a political philosophy, it encouraged people to internalize key virtues such as loyalty and filial piety. Neo-Confucianism was developed by Cheng brothers and Chu His who embraced Buddhist and Taoist elements based on Confucius' teachings. Neo-Confucianism was adopted in the thirteenth century. Since then, it played a crucial role in shaping patriarchal and strictly hierarchical social system.

² Chosŏn was the class-based hierarchical society. Aristocrats, who were less than ten percent of the whole population, monopolized government offices, economic wealth, and learning opportunities.

Neo-Confucianism developed a double standard for men and women based on the *yin-yang* principle: idealization of man's active and free-ranging characteristics and woman's passive and sequestered characteristics. Just as the *yang* is over the *yin* and the heaven over the earth, men are superior to women. This cultural perception is well addressed in a common phrase, "*nam-jon-yö-bi*": men are honored and women are abased. Because of ontological differences between men and women, the Five Principles (*o-ryun*) define the cardinal virtue in the husband-wife relationship as "separation" (*pu-pu-yu-pyöl*). This stresses the different roles and duties for husbands and wives, and men and women. After the age of seven, girls and boys were not allowed to have an acquaintance of the opposite sex. Girls became gradually confined to the inner quarters of the house and learned domestic skills from their mothers and other older women in the households (Cho Hae-Joang 1988; Cumings 1997:62; Deuchler 1992:258). From the early Chosön period, *Naeoeppö*p prohibited a noble woman from contact with anyone excluding her close relatives. When they had to go out, most wives of noble men were required to wear a veil or screen-hat that covered their whole faces, and wives of high-ranking officials had to use a closed palanquin. Virtually no social life outside of the house was allowed to women;³ they were kept in the domestic realm, called "*anppang*," inner room, and confined to domestic activities.

From a Confucian perspective, the family is like a small country in which a father is an emperor and children are his subjects (Keum 1983:22). Placed in the bottom of the society, a woman was suppressed. Even after the marriage, a newly-wedded wife does not belong to her husband's patrilineage. Her marginal status is well represented by the practice that married women do not take their husbands' family names (Ch'ae 1984). As a "married-in-stranger," she

³ In 1404, it was made illegal for women to visit Buddhist temples except for memorial services for their parents. In 1431, women's patronizing shamans was forbidden (Deuchler 1992).

was not considered as a full member of her husband's patrilineage. She had to suffer hardships in silence. The best advice given to her was to live "as a mute for three years, as a deaf for three years, and as a blind person for three years" (*kuibǒngǒri samnyǒn, pǒngǒri samnyǒn, changnim samnyǒn*). She could be expelled from her husband's family according to *ch'ilgǒjjiyak*, the seven codes: married women (1) had to obey their parents-in-laws blindly, (2) had to bear a son, (3) were forbidden to commit adultery, (4) were forbidden to be jealous, (5) were forbidden to have any incurable disease, (6) were forbidden to be talkative, and (7) were forbidden to steal. As this Seven Codes implies, a woman's faithfulness to her husband and her filial piety to her parents-in-law were considered as a woman's essential virtues.

From the mid-sixteenth century, as in China, chastity became the most important women's virtue in Korea (Kim Mi-Young 2004). Under the rubric of *ilbujongsa* a woman had to follow only one husband for her lifetime. The wife's faithfulness to her husband was supposed to continue after her husband's death. Women could divorce and remarry relatively easily. In the fifteenth century, the Chosǒn dynasty prohibited the remarriage of a widow and this prohibition lasted until the end of nineteenth century. A family that produced a faithful wife (*yǒlyǒ*), was rewarded by the king with tax exemptions or the advancement of class status (Cho Hae-Joang 1998:196; Duncan 1997:50-51). Neo-Confucian body politics controlled women's sexuality and Neo-Confucian "family-centered" ideology imposed various moral ideals on women in the noble class. When a woman met all the required behavioral codes and performed the expected role, she was given proper status and power (Kim Mi-Young 2004).

During the Chosǒn dynasty, access to the Confucian knowledge was limited to a selected few, mostly males in the noble class. Men could gain metaphysical truth and ethical values whereas women could learn through their life experiences. Because women were excluded from

access to official knowledge for public office, they had to be satisfied with the confinement in the domestic realm. A woman could not attain any status for herself; her status was defined by status of groups to which she belonged. This aspect of women's life was well expressed in *samjonjido*, the law of the women's three followings, meaning that a woman had to follow three men in her lifetime: her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and finally her eldest son in her old age. Therefore, getting married to a man from a noble family was a way for a woman to gain a status and the only thing she could do to improve her status was to support her husband's or sons' endeavors.

To continue the husband's patrilineage, producing a son was the most important obligation for this married-in stranger. The meaning of marriage was "to worship ancestors and to produce a successor" (Keum 1983:23). Martina Deuchler (1992) states,

Only after the birth of a male heir had the wife fulfilled her duty and gained the privileges and authority of motherhood. With her husband, she eventually received filial piety, the expression of a new generation's respect and subordination (263).

Producing a son was the way to secure her status in her husband's family. When a son became old enough, as a filial son, he would represent her interests. His successful life would bring honor to her. A mother with a son could also attain a certain amount of power over a daughter-in-law. Ultimately, the son's performance of death rituals could transform his deceased mother into a gender-neutral ancestor god of her husband's patrilineage (Ch'ae 1984:228). Having a son and raising him to respectful status in society was the only way to overcome a woman's marginal situation in her husband's family (Deuchler 1992:281). The mother-son bond is considered very special in the Korean family.

Korean Women in the Eyes of Outsiders

Protestant missionaries' observations in the end of nineteenth century help us glimpse women's lives.⁴ When the first American missionaries arrived, they were surprised to observe the low status of Korean women. Compared with women in the neighboring countries, Korean women were badly treated. Because women were strictly secluded from the world, the missionaries hardly even saw women in the street. When they came across women, their bodies were fully clothed and their faces were veiled (Underwood 1908:61).⁵ A woman's life activities were confined to the inner quarter of the house. She was a "nameless person" in her husband's family (Cumings 1997:61). Any men outside of her family were not allowed to come to this area. Most Korean women were illiterate because even women in the noble class had limited access to learning. James Gale (1909) lamented the low status of the nineteenth century Korean women: "No wonder girls in Korea are sorry to be born a member of their sex, and every boy walks in high hopes of his innings coming later" (103). Compared with boys, the future opened to Korean girls was extremely limited and gloomy.

Rather than a union between a man and a woman, the marriage was considered as an alliance between lineages. The relationship between husband and wife was not intimate. Most marriages were mediated by the parents. To get married, the bride normally brought dowry to her husband's family to avoid bad treatment from parents-in-law. Wives were considered just maids,

⁴ From 1882 Protestant missionaries came to Korea. Horace N. Allen, Horace, G. Underwood, and Henry G. Appenzeller, early Protestant missionaries from North America made a contribution to introducing western ideals of education and medicinal technology to Koreans. They built modern schools and hospitals, by which they taught modern technology and instilled the liberal western ideas (Lee Ki-Baek 1984:334-335).

⁵ This dress code was observed throughout the Chosŏn period. According to Cumings (1997), women in the noble class should have been "clothed and swaddled from head to toe, wearing a green mantle over their heads and brining the folds across their faces, leaving only the eyes exposed... [T]hey would come out after the nightly curfew... and find a bit of freedom in the darkness" (62).

somebody who made men's lives easier. Gale (1909) relates an interesting episode. A missionary came across a man who was crying because his wife left him. The missionary assumed he would love his wife very much and asked if he missed her that much. But the man responded this way: "Loved her? I never loved her, but she made my clothes and cooked my food, what shall I do?" (105). As this anecdote suggests, the husband-wife relationships were formal and lacked emotional intimacy. Wives were just maids who worked for the family. The circumstances of women in the lower class were even worse than those of women in the noble class. According to Isabella L. Bird (1898), the lower-class Korean women's

clothing is extremely dirty, as if the men had a monopoly of their ceaseless laundry-work, which everywhere goes on far into the night... This wearing of white clothes, and especially of white wadded clothes in winter, entails very severe and incessant labour on the women (148-9).

This remark implies the lower status of women, who had to work hard for their families. They could not look after themselves because they had to take care of their husbands first.

Vincent Brandt, a cultural anthropologist who did his field research in a small isolated fishing and farming village in the 1960s, reconfirmed a strongly patriarchal tradition in Korea. The male head of household had the all the power and authority in the decision-making process. Because a newly-wedded bride had to move in her husband's family, she suffered isolation from her natal family, relatives, and friends; she could not get any support and help in the strange place. As a married-in stranger, she was powerless and vulnerable. Sometimes, she was afraid because her husband could divorce her if she failed to bear a son or disobeyed her parents-in-law. The status of a woman was very low especially when she was first married, but it advanced conspicuously with a birth of a son and the deaths of the parents-in-law (Brandt 1971:131). Brandt observed the extreme separation between husband and wife:

In the case of attendance at a social gathering such as a wedding or funeral, a

husband and wife would leave their house separately, mingle with different groups, and return at different times (124).

In this fishing and farming village, however, the role married women played was seen as crucial for the livelihood of the family. During the off-season, many married men often wasted money drinking and playing card games. Women maintained financial solvency in their households. They discouraged their husbands from drinking alcohol and playing card games. Housewives also made extra money through gardening or oystering. Their significant financial contribution to the family made them the main decision-makers in household finances.

Roger Janelli and Dawnhee Janelli (1982) argue that ancestor worship in Korea has played a crucial role in reinforcing patrilineal solidarity and patriarchy. They focus on the fact the *Book of Family Ritual*⁶ prescribes Confucian women's participation in ancestor rituals, but only Korean women are excluded from the rites. Korean women's exclusion from sacred rituals and duty to prepare ritual food reflect their even more marginal status than women in other East Asian societies. Such an unequal treatment in ritual contexts have reproduced the patriarchal tradition in Korea. Also, the power and authority of the male head of the family were continuously reinforced in the extended family settings.

While Korean men have reinforced the male-dominant patriarchy and protected Neo-Confucian social orders through ancestor worship, according to Laurel Kendall (1985), women upheld indigenous customs and resorted to spirit belief to resolve their immediate problems. Not only were most shaman women, but women patronized them. Married women also often performed many mundane rituals for the household god in their own houses. Kendall saw that Korean women's high involvement in shamanism must have been related to their unsatisfactory status in a male-dominant patrilineage. Through shamanistic rituals, they released their oppressed

⁶ This is a primary Confucian text which prescribes rules of ancestor worship in East Asian societies.

feelings and gained cathartic compensation. She observed that many housewives performed their own rituals or asked shamans to perform *kut* for their conception of a child, children's education, or their husbands' security. Their unstable status and vulnerable situations made them resort to shamanistic beliefs and rituals.

Motherhood and Mothering: a Cultural History

Throughout Korean history, various religious traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Neo-Confucianism, and Christianity were introduced and took roots in people's lives. But there is no doubt that Neo-Confucianism has been the most influential ideological device structuring social hierarchy and governing people's lives. Even though most Korean families do not simply reiterate Confucian values and behavioral codes, Neo-Confucianism has provided cultural ideals for people to live up to. Due to its emphasis on self-discipline through learning, people have internalized its values and assigned social roles. As a result, Korean mothers internalize a culturally idealized pattern of mothering.

Angus Hamilton (1904) called motherhood for Korean women "a chief occupation" (42).

James Gale (1909) described the meaning of motherhood this way:

The mother is an important member of the family in her relation to children only. If she has no son, alas for her! Better had she never been born. Not only is she condemned by her husband and every member of the clan, but she condemns herself, and no ray of sunshine ever gladdens her broken soul (104).

As this statement implies, a married woman's primary responsibility was to produce a male successor to continue the family line (Cho Hae-Joang 1998, Gale 1909, Hamilton 1904). In a Neo-Confucian patriarchy, a son was valued because he could continue his father's patrilineal line. Among the nobility, a son's advance toward public office and achievements could bring honor to the entire lineage and his success was the main avenue for the class mobility of the

entire family. A filial son, therefore, had to fulfill his duty as a member of the lineage by “establishing himself in life and bringing glory to the family” (*ipsin yangmyōng*).

A son is the social extension of a mother. Making her son successful and controlling him were a mother’s common strategy for survival in Korean patriarchy (Deuchler 1992). Due to the value of a son in traditional society, the mother-son dyad had special meaning especially to the mother. The mother-son relationships did not occur at an interpersonal space of exchanging loving care and filial love, but they were by nature social and political. In the Chosŏn period, where polygyny was commonly practiced among aristocratic men, there were eight categories of mothers (Yun 2002). These mothers were hierarchically ordered by the relationship with the patriarch. The father’s first wife was considered as a child’s legitimate mother (*chŏkmo*). The birth mother (*sosaengmo*) was not important when she was a concubine. Children of secondary wives had to face various discriminations. By the practice of *sŏlch’adae*, from the early Chosŏn dynasty, if the biological mother came from a lower class or was not a first wife, her son was not eligible for government offices and other local administrative positions even if his biological father belonged to the nobility.

During the Chosŏn dynasty, a series of law enactments such as prevention of widows’ remarriage and interruption of support to widows curtailed women’s sexuality and made women more dependent upon their sons. In 1476, *Chaeganyŏjasongŭmgobbŏp* was enacted to prohibit the remarriage of widowed women in the upper class. Offspring of mothers who remarried was prohibited from taking Civil Service Exams to become government officers (Cumings 1997:63; Deuchler 1992). The *susinjŏn*, the land granted to support a widow, was abolished in 1466. Since primogeniture was observed as a principle, a widow could not claim the right of succession. A woman perceived producing a son as indispensable for her survival, and would become

financially dependent upon her son. Because a child's status was predetermined by his or her birth mother's social and marital status, a mother and her child were bound together by common fate.

In Korea, a "traditional" way of childrearing developed based on the Mencius' idea that humans are inherently good. Human nature, according to Mencius, is intrinsically genuine and complete. However, humans can easily be impaired by negative external influences (Shin Myōng-Ho 2005:47). Therefore, parental efforts for a child's discipline were seen as crucial to cultivate a positive human nature. "Prenatal education" (*T'aegyo*) was and still is practiced by many pregnant women in Korea. It is first and foremost a maternal effort to prepare for the child's future competent social life. Because of the belief that a fetus tends to resemble its mother, choosing the good spouse was the first step toward effective childrearing. In choosing a spouse, family background was important (Shin Myōng-Ho 2005:14). *T'aegyosingi* was published in the early nineteenth century to instruct pregnant women. According to this book, in educating children "the first ten months in the mother's womb are more important than the ten years later in school" (Yi Suk-In 1991:35; Kim & Choi 1994:239).⁷ A mother's prenatal education was believed to play the most important part in developing a child's personality. All that a prospective mother does, thinks, eats, and sees could influence a fetus, and so she needed to show good deportment and to maintain tranquility. Because the prenatal education began at the moment a mother conceived, a husband was not supposed to sleep with his wife when his mental and physical conditions were not well (Yi Suk-In 1991:38-41).⁸ To produce a filial child, a pregnant

⁷ In the past, *t'aegyo* (prenatal education) was commonly practiced to cultivate the infant's personality (Kim & Choi 1994). Today, however, a young mother emphasizes educational effect on her infant: listening to classical music and tapes to practice English conversational skills. She is concerned about stimulating academic potential and lending emotional stability to the child.

⁸ According to *Tongūibogam*, "A gentle woman has a regular menstruation, but a jealous woman suffers from menstrual irregularity... If a couple wants to have a child, a woman must have

woman made every effort to have a good prenatal influence on the child and to prepare for childbirth with modest behaviors and right attitudes. All family members were supposed to support the mother's prenatal care and protect her from negative external influences.

A mother's contribution to her child's development drastically dwindled after the weaning period. A mother assumed the responsibilities of managing her household and looking after her elderly parents-in-law (Yun 2002:19-20). In spite of the strong emphasis on mothers' prenatal care, children were taken care of by any women living in the house (e.g. grandmothers, older female children, or maids).⁹ Like other household chores, childrearing was a shared responsibility among grown women in the extended family. In cases of rich aristocratic families, a wet nurse (*yumo*) took care of young children. Since the child spent most of the time with the wet nurse, choosing a right *yumo* was a very important process for the child's healthy growth. *Tonguibogam*, a medical book written by Hō Chun in 1613, explains that the wet nurse was important "because a child tends to imitate his or her wet nurse and they become very much alike in appearance and personality" (cited in Shin Myōng-Ho 2005:162).

The traditional pattern of shared childrearing might have weakened the emotional attachment between mother and child, but filial piety, as a mandate from the Heaven, was taught to children as a norm. Since their bodies came from their parents, children were to remember mothers' throes of childbirth and fathers' provisions. In the mid sixteenth century, Chōng Ch'ōl (1536-1593) wrote,

My father gives me life, my mother nourished me.
Were it not for them, I could not have come into being.
Their love for me cannot be repaid; it is as boundless as the sky.

regular menstruation and a man must have enough semen. To do so, it is best that they should restraint their passions and purify their minds (cited in Shin Myōng-Ho 2005: 65-66).

⁹ Shared childrearing is still very common in contemporary South Korean society. Grandmothers often assumed childcaring duties for their daughters or daughters-in-law who work full-time.

As meant by *Pu-chǒng-mo-hyŏl*, it was believed that children received their spirit from their fathers and bodies from their mothers. In other words, a father was responsible for children's mental training and a mother for children's physical healthiness. Educating young boys was also a paternal responsibility because fathers held either Confucian knowledge or occupational skills. In Confucian societies, however, a father was not encouraged to actually engage in teaching because of the need to preserve the "intimacy" (*ch'in*) with his son (Tu 1998b). Choosing a good teacher was the father's most important duty.¹⁰ A father often sent out his sons to a close friend and had them learn under his tutelage or had them attend a nearby private school. From then on, a teacher was responsible for a child's learning (Yi Suk-In 1991:46).

In the Confucian system, childrearing was cooperative work done by parents and teachers. A father gave life, a mother raised, and a teacher taught a child. A mother's role in her child's education was quite limited. Because of the importance of a son's entry into a public office, much classical literature includes stories about mothers who encouraged their sons' learning and advances in life through successes in public examinations (Shin Kyŏng-Ah 1999).¹¹ It was unclear to what degree and how a mother in the past could be involved in her son's learning. Considering her low status in her husband's extended family and heavy duties as a daughter-in-law and wife, it seemed unreasonable to assume that she could be actively involved with her son's education. A woman's intellectual potential was undervalued and she could hardly participate in formal education. Only a handful of women could read and write Korean; only a

¹⁰ In Japan, as Hara and Minagawa (1996) point out, educating young a son was largely attributed to his father's responsibility until 1920. Fathers taught the basics and then the children became somebody else's apprentice to learn occupational skills. I presume this was true in a traditional Korean society.

¹¹ It is one of the famous anecdotes that Han Sŏk-Pong's mother made Han Sŏk-Pong, who was proud of his writing skill, write in the darkness and awoke him from his lack of competence; thereby, the mother encouraged her son to pursue the perfection of writing skill. Another story about Mencius' mother who did not mind moving three times in order to provide the best learning environment for her son is still addressed even today.

few were literate in Chinese. Therefore, her support must have been emotional rather than intellectual. Mothers were strong emotional supporters of their children's education.

The strict gender-based division in parenting is commonly observed in East Asian societies (Jankowiak 1992). In Korea, "Strict Father Benevolent Mother" (*ōmbujamo*) and gender-based socialization constituted the main characteristics of traditional childrearing practices. According to Hamel, a Dutch sailor who accidentally landed at Cheju Island in the seventeenth century, "Parents are very indulgent to their Children... and in return are much respected by them. They depend upon one another" (Hamel 1971:219). Parents were so lenient that they let their children do whatever they wanted. Young children enjoyed unlimited freedom and played to their heart's content. Parental discipline, however, started at an early stage of a child's life because polite and appropriate behaviors were associated with the reputation of the family. In the beginning, there were minimal disciplines, which increased as a child grew up. For example, *Sohak* encouraged parents to teach a child to use his or her right hand when he or she began to eat a meal, and to teach a boy to answer shortly and assertively and a girl to speak long and softly as soon as a child starts to speak (Shin Myōng-Ho 2005:181).

In Confucian moral philosophy, nurturing children was to bestow one's virtues upon others and to practice the Heaven's way (Lim 2007:78). Cultivating moral character through education was of overriding importance in the Confucian idea of development. When the child reached the age of seven, previously all-condoning and nonrestrictive parents began strict discipline by imposing the code of ethical conduct on children (Slote 1998:48-49). For future success children needed to equip themselves with the mastery of Confucian literature, competent literary skills, and the ability of effective management of social relationship. How children behaved outside of their homes was the visible markers of the quality of parenting and the status

of the family. Fathers played a role as the *ultimate* disciplinarian and their children saw them as “feared and distant figures” (Slote 1998:41).

At seven, a boy was required to learn Confucian classics, which was believed to be a way toward self-discipline and preparation for government office. The essential contents of education were filial piety and decorum. With *Sohak*, an elementary textbook written in Chinese for seven or eight year olds, children learned filial attitudes and appropriate behaviors in many different circumstances. As a boy grew up, he learned music, dance, and poetry at the age of 13, archery and horse riding at the age of 15 (Shin Myōng-Ho 2005). On the other hand, girls were confined to the inner quarters of the house and required to learn domestic duties from their mothers and grandmothers (Deuchler 1992:258).

A balance of paternal strictness and maternal benevolence makes a child’s development successful. A mother's softness eases a child's stress from a father's strict discipline. Margery Wolf (1972) describes these psychological dynamics in her ethnographic work on a Taiwanese village. Based on the concept of “uterine family,” which consists of a woman’s mother and her own children, Wolf elaborates on how the father’s symbolic authority and the emotional intimacy between a mother and her children were reproduced. A mother supports her children with devoted love. She is condoning and tolerant of all her children’s behaviors. Insightfully, Wolf (1972) remarks:

A mother uses father as a threat to a recalcitrant child, and in so doing places herself constantly in the position of arbiter between the child and his father. Threats of punishment that she makes in the father’s name and later retracts are remembered by the child with gratitude and with recognition of their shared fear of the father (161).

A Taiwanese mother takes advantage of her children’s fear of their father as a final authority to strengthen her bond with her children and to discipline them. Wolf’s analysis holds true in the

traditional Korean mother-child relationship. When a mother, as a primary caretaker, punished and corrected a child's misbehaviors, she often explained to her children that her benign punishments prevented the father's harsher punishments. This way, a mother could protect her emotional intimacy with her children while a father could maintain his symbolic power as an ultimate disciplinarian over his children's moral development. A mother's visible power over her uterine family was neither official nor publicly recognized. Because she believed that her limited power compensated for her personal oppression within the patriarchy, she contributed to strengthening the patriarchy.

Based on the reflection on his childhood, Chŏn In-Kwŏn (2003) illuminates the psychological dynamics of paternal power and maternal warmth. He said, "As a father's authority becomes higher, a mother's space becomes larger" (54). Just like a cone where the area of the bottom grows larger as the height of the cone gets higher, a mother's influential power over the household spreads even farther if a father's authority is more exalted. In other words, paternal authority was not something a father himself enforces. Rather, it is continuously reproduced by a mother herself. Nominal authority of a father deprives him of chances to build intimate relationships with his children as well as his wife. The father's presence makes his children uncomfortable. He is merely a "money maker" (*Tonbŏrŏonŭn kigye*). Despite his culturally upheld authority, he is powerless in his nuclear family. A mother supports her husband's authority because it is the only way to expand her influence.¹² Cultural norms surrounding parenting force the couple to sacrifice their relationship for their children. In

¹² This way, the father's symbolic authority is continuously reproduced in many contemporary families. Mothers' informal power contributes to the enhancement of Korean patriarchy. Mothers' negative use of the father's authority can negatively impact the children's perception of their own fathers. A mother is an essential figure who mediates and facilitates the smooth father-child relationship and she acts as a buffer against the potential tensions between a strictly disciplinary father and rebellious children.

traditional Korean families, the competition between father and son, suggested in the Freudian Oedipal triangle, ends without even starting because of hegemonic importance of maternal duty as a nurturer. A father should yield the right to sleep with his wife to his son who needs maternal care.

During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), Western feminist theory was introduced to Korea through Japan. Young educated women, “*sinyŏsŏng*,” literally meaning “new women,” gradually woke up to the ideas that motherhood is an individual woman’s choice and childrearing is parents’ collaborative responsibility. The colonial government instilled the ideology of “Wise Mother Benevolent Wife” (*hyŏnmoyangch’ŏ*) through school education. This newly produced idea emphasized women’s self-sacrificial commitment to their families (Kawamoto 1999). Married women were able to support their husbands to concentrate on their work and nurture their children to become successful members of the society. The expansion of public schools of the colonial government seemed to benefit women, but its real intention was to train women to be good mothers who would provide loyal citizens to the Japanese empire (Ahn 2004). The empire criticized the traditional image of Korean women as passive and indifferent to the external matters, and propagated the strong and tough image of “patriotic” mothers. Physical education was strengthened in school curricula for women and military training was added. Such changes seemed to empower women and enhance their social status, but it only served to confine mothers’ role to the domestic realm as a home educator, who could raise strong soldiers. After the Korean War, men were encouraged to participate in the reconstruction of the nation whereas women—behind that glorified scene of men’s rebuilding national economy from the war ruins—had to run the family by upholding their husbands’ dignity and financing their children’s education. Because of the needs of valuable human resources for the nation’s development plan,

the government assigned educating children as a mother's most important job.

Industrialization and the advent of the middle class in the 1970s and 1980s changed the ideology of motherhood. In the nuclear family, more and more married women became housewives who depended upon their husbands' incomes and assumed full charge of household chores and children's education (Yun 2002:19-20). The competitive educational environment makes childrearing even more difficult. Economic struggles and the relative sense of poverty mothers experience transfer into their devoted efforts to their children's success at school.¹³ Yun T'aek Rim (2002) noted the recent changes in the mother-child relationship. Keen competition at school and prevalent mobility-centered culture make mothers see their children as the object of investment and assume responsibility of their children's social successes, which are directly connected with children's grades and college entrances. Therefore, contemporary Korean middle class mothers are not empathic so that they do not respond to their children's emotional demands. Rather, they tend to evaluate their children from the perspective of others (20-21). Yun points out that the social emphasis on mothers' roles in children's education is quite a recent cultural phenomenon. Even 30 years ago, childrearing was not something mothers cared about; instead, mothers' major concerns were managing the family budget and providing financial support for family (Yun 2002:19-20).

In educating children, the double standard is as strong as ever. College education is important both for boys and girls, but with different reasons: boys need to go to college to make a living whereas girls need a college education to become better bridal material who are suitable for better grooms (Yun 2002:71, 84). As one of the female protagonists in a popular feminist

¹³ Becoming a good mother has increasingly been perceived as inducing children's academic achievements, not as fostering children's morality and emotional maturity (Shim 1999).

novel says, mothers “teach daughters to live differently from themselves but teach sons to live like their fathers” (cited in Lee So-Hee 2002:144). Mothers want their sons to be like their fathers in a sense that they need to pursue their own success and bring honor for themselves in their future. Yet, even though they want their sons to be like their fathers after the marriage, they also want their sons to stay obedient boys. Korean mothers—not only in their oversolicitous zeal for their children’s education but also in their self-centeredness—have become the target of public criticism. Due to the deep-seated tradition of boy-preference, mothers tend to overprotect their sons. The son, who grows up under his mother’s overprotection, tends to be more dependent and passive. This type of man is taunted by being called a “mama’s boy.” According to Chŏn (2005),

When my mother felt good, she called me “My prince! My prince!” That title hinted at her wishes that whatever I would become or what position I could gain, I would become a person like an emperor. As time went by, I gradually came to reign over my mother like an emperor and my mother became like a maid (137).

This type of mothering only produces a vainglorious child who believes in his superiority over others. Later he becomes a person suffering from “chronic sense of guilt” because of his unsatisfactory fulfillment of his roles (Chŏn 2005:262-3). Because the man continues to depend upon his mother and a mother keeps controlling her son after the marriage, the wife resents her mother-in-law. This is the hardest part of marriage for many young couples in Korea, but some young husbands gradually depend more upon their wives than their mothers (Hoffman 1995). In the meantime, the relationship between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law gets worse and it sometimes causes serious conflicts between them.

Because the number of pregnancies per woman is significantly decreased, the way a woman experiences pregnancy has changed. New scientific knowledge about proper prenatal

care and safer ways for giving birth has transformed the traditional belief system and rituals associated with childbirth. Instead of traditional prenatal education, many people use modern types of prenatal care, such as listening to classical music, reading aloud children's books, talking to the baby, doing yoga, and learning quilting and cross-stitching in order to stimulate the development of a fetus' brain (Kim Chu-Hee 2006:6-7). The cultural meaning of childbirth has not changed much. It is still placed in the center of femininity (Kim Eun-Shil 2001). Giving birth to a child is still a way for a woman to gain a minimum of power and status within her new family. At least to be able to demand proper treatment as a member of the family, a newly-wedded woman has to bear a child. Due to the pressure to create a beautiful body in the contemporary South Korean society, a young pregnant woman prefers to go through a Caesarean section to have a child and to maintain her slender body and youth (Kim Eun-Shil 2001:252). Thus, a woman's body is an instrument for producing a male heir to continue a patrilineage and to work in the national economy. Thanks to the nation's population control, women's fertility rate dipped from 6.0 in 1960 down to 1.3 in 2001 in South Korea. National population control policy in the 1970s produced the ideal of the "modern" nuclear family with a small number of children and promulgated this model through various media. Fewer children were implicitly associated with better maternal care and education.

The typical image of a Korean father is an authoritarian disciplinarian. Cultural emphasis on paternal authority hindered fathers from building warm relationships with their children. Most of today's young fathers feel uncomfortable when they have to spend time with their fathers. Since the mid-1990s, young fathers' increasing involvement in childrearing has become a new trend. The young South Korean fathers in this new generation do not want to follow in their fathers' footsteps. They want to be more involved with their children's lives and

spend more time with their children. They do not hesitate to show affection toward their children. Such a new image of “tender” father (*tajŏnghaŋ appa*) transforms the psychosocial dynamics of “strict-father-benevolent-mother.” To discipline and educate children, the maternal role has to change from an indulgent caretaker to a strict disciplinarian. Therefore, Korean children now are afraid of their overcontrolling and domineering mothers.

Industrialization and Mother’s Informal Power

Rapid industrialization in the early 1970s and attendant social changes dismantled the traditional family structure and transformed almost every aspect of traditional Korean lifestyles. Many young people left rural areas for urban areas to get a job, so the extended family gradually collapsed and the nuclear family became a dominant form of family. In nuclear family settings, a wife could have a more independent lifestyle and she became relatively free from the frequent intervention from her parents-in-law. A wife could also exercise informal power over her husband and her children. The export-centered economy was the main engine to stimulate Korean economy in the 1970s. A husband in the urban middle class had to dedicate himself primarily to his work and spent most of his time in the work place. Even after his working hours, he had to join social gatherings with his coworkers and attend to their clients for the business (Kendall 2002:7). Anne Allison (1994) describes the life of Japanese salaried men: “there is no clear-cut private-public distinction, for work doesn’t definitively end at five o’clock, and the worker has no personal identity that doesn’t somehow incorporate his work” (80). This is also true for Korean male employees. Men’s productive labor was strategically utilized to boost the national economy and state power. Men’s loyalty (*ch’ung*) to the ruler in the past, idealized by Neo-Confucianism, is revitalized in the twentieth century industrial setting. By this *ch’ung*

ideology, employees were expected to show loyalty to the employer and encouraged to work more hours with more responsibilities (Janelli & Yim 1993).

Laura Nelson (2000) argued that an imagined future in which their children would live a prosperous life motivates South Korean parents to work hard. For the development-first economic policy to be successful, men's productive labor was essential. The dream of an affluent future made people pour all their energy and time into their jobs. Such a domestic policy contributes to revitalizing the traditional gender relations. The ideology of "wise mother and benevolent wife" emerged again. The whole society emphasized the self-sacrifice of women because it needed persons who could provide a resting place for the male laborers and who could raise their children with wisdom. Housewives could support the workers and provide potential workers in the future. These ideas were reinforced through schooling and media. Women had to stay at home to perform undervalued household labor and nurturing roles.

Egalitarian sentiment in a democratic society rejects hierarchy in interpersonal relationships. Nuclear family settings let couples form a new type of relationship. Economic development and improvement in living conditions introduced a middle class lifestyle. Thanks to the increasing income and job security through lifetime employment, a family could maintain its domestic economy with one breadwinner's full-time job. As the economy stabilized, more young women preferred to be stay-at-home housewives and to get married to affluent men (Cho Söng-Nam 1998: 286-7). Marriage and motherhood are still considered more important for a woman's life than her career. Young mothers also share the desire of their mothers' generation, producing sons, and adhere to the interest of their own nuclear families (Cho Hye-Joang 2002; Chung 2001). They consider their husbands' success and their children's educational achievement as their own accomplishments and sources of their self-realization. Selfish ambitious mothers, who are ready

to face any hardships for their children, are harshly criticized (Cho Hye-Joang 1998, 2002). When children achieve educational achievements and success, however, these mothers became a role model for many others who envy them.

In the center of many social mobility narratives are South Korean mothers. Women are “critical agents in the production of family culture” (Abelmann 1999b:400). They play a pivotal role in shaping family life and class consciousness. The roles of Korean middle class housewives are no longer confined to the domestic sphere. According to Abelmann (1999b),

...women are the managers of patrilineal kinship groups and the nurturers of social networks that are critical to the production and reproduction of class standing, including their children’s employment and marriage opportunities and their husbands’ professional standing and advancement (409).

Their contributions to their husbands’ patrilineages enhanced their status in their lineages. Their active participation in various social networks had tremendous influence upon their social mobility. The ideal of “frugal housewife” (*alttüljubu*) dictated women’s lives in the 1970s and 1980s. In Korean culture, as Nelson (2000) pointed out, appropriate consumption has been frequently associated with morality. The authoritarian military government encouraged Korean housewives to save more, and their savings were invested to boost up Korean economy. Therefore, frugality was ideologically promoted as a strategy for national economic development and considered as an act of patriotism (113).

Three decades ago when the nation set out its economic development plan for modernization, frugality was the primary virtue required of most housewives who had to be frugal to make ends meet and to save for the future. In the 1980s and 1990s, some middle-class women invested money in the real estate and stocks and were quite successful in multiplying their wealth (Abelmann 1999b:408; Cho H. 2002; Nelson 2000:139). These women’s financial contribution made possible their families’ entry to the upper-middle class. As a result, some

families experienced an improved lifestyle and their consumption increased.

In the early 1990s, a commercial image of a pretty slender mother carrying an infant on her back sparked off new discourses on sexually attractive mothers among Korean housewives. Plastic surgery, special diets, and fitness programs became popular (Cho 2002; Lee 2002; Yun 2002). Women's realization of their own sexuality often led to extramarital affairs, which resulted in the collapse of families. Young educated mothers are often called as "*pŭrojubu*," meaning a professional housewife. As this new coinage implies, today's housewife requires specialized knowledge and skills. A young mother with a toddler is supposed to learn new research about effective ways for child's intellectual development. In the case of a mother with a school-aged child, enthusiasm for their children's education is not enough. She needs to equip herself with information, which is often time-sensitive due to the frequent education reforms and the college entrance system. Therefore, she spends most of her time gathering information about tutors and organizing her children's after-school activities. She should be able to give her children a boost. She also feels pressured to maintain her children's physical health by providing nutritious home-made foods and to decorate the apartment to display her tastes and living standards. Because she actually manages the household finance, she often engages in the speculative investment in stock or real estate markets to multiply the family assets. A housewife now has to be a nutritionist, economist, interior designer, and educator. A housewife is a real full-time job without any monetary reward.

To be successful or to survive in a highly competitive work environment, male workers have to give up fulfilling their roles as family heads, husbands and fathers. A father's full-time employment introduced distance into the husband-wife relationships and weakened a father's influences over children's lives. Because a husband had to work outside the home most of his

time, he had little time to fulfill his roles as a father and a husband. The father was degraded to a “money maker” (Yun 2002:29). The husband’s power and authority as a household head were left largely in the hands of his wife. A wife became a major decision-maker and she took care of most of things that occurred at her home. She was in charge of the household economy. She managed all her husband’s earnings: she budgeted and spent her husband’s incomes, and she gave a portion to her husband as an allowance. She made daily decisions for her children. Wives assumed a role of household representative. On behalf of her working husband, she participated in various family gatherings, such as wedding ceremonies, ancestor worship ceremonies, funerals, and so on. She was and still is in charge of major family matters (Yi Eunhee Kim 2001). While the father-son tie weakened, the mother-son relationship becomes even stronger.¹⁴

A woman’s informal power is everywhere. A housewife often assists her husband to get promotion in his workplace by expanding her social networks to the wives of her husband’s bosses. Increasing family wealth is another major role a married woman had to play. She could even decide about financial investment in real estate and stock markets. Some middle-class women were quite successful in multiplying their family’s wealth and made p their families’ entry to the upper-middle class (Cho 2002). And they achieved a dominant status in their families. Because of the power of married women in their nuclear families, some scholars now call Korea “a matrifocal society” (Cho Hae-Joang 1998; Lee Kwang-Kyu 1984, 1998).

In Korea, the traditional patrilineal kinship system has gradually waned due in part to the industrialization, urbanization, and nuclearized family structure. Married couples residing alone have become more common, but today, the first son feels obliged to live with his elderly parents even after marriage because such co-residency symbolizes his filial piety and indicates his

¹⁴ Due to the informal, but increasing power of wives, the mother-son relationship significantly weakens after the son’s marriage (Yi, Eunhee Kim 2001).

succession of patrilineal obligations. Young people who come to live separately from their extended families pursue a more independent lifestyle. These social changes have weakened filial piety, which is the moral basis of Korean patrilineage. Men now tend to have less frequent contact with their patrilineal kin members, and so they do not feel as connected with them. The new pattern of neolocality, however, supports a married woman's close relationships with her own mother and sisters. Her increasing power and her parents' influence on her life after marriage make her husband recognize her natal family as a close kin group. At the same time, the husband may feel stressed about his burdensome roles in his patrilineage.

Many South Koreans feel emotional closeness with affinal kin beyond the patrilineage. Available resources such as wealth of their kin have become important factors in determining their emotional closeness (Kim Song-Chul 1998). The Korean kinship system has evolved to become bilateral. Kin conception based on practicality has become conspicuous in contemporary Korea. Compared with official kinship, which is still patrilineal, the boundary of the practical kinship rarely transcends brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. However, this kinship relation is considered very important because their dyadic relationship is based on mutual trust and often results in socioeconomic cooperation.

Due to the increasing voice and influence of his wife, the husband has more filial duties to his wife's parents. He joins his parents-in-law's birthday parties and other social get-togethers with in-laws. In these gatherings, a man is well treated by his in-laws. Some affluent families are willing to buy a new apartment for their daughters or to give substantial amounts of financial support for their sons-in-law.¹⁵ In these cases, the couple often decides to get an apartment near

¹⁵ It is a Korean custom that groom's family provides a place to live and bride's family equips the house with electric appliances and furniture. However, when a bride's family buys an apartment for the newly-wed, a groom feels more responsible for his in-laws. Later, when a wife's parents are old and need any financial assistance, she has to help her own parents (Yi

the place where the wife's family lives. The man's parents do not refuse, but this situation allows their daughter-in-law to have more power even in her relationship with her mother-in-law (Yi Eunhee Kim 2001).

Social Realities and Women's Withdrawal

Mothers in their thirties and forties now represent the first generation that was baptized with radical feminism at the university. They dreamed of becoming professional career women and pursuing independent lifestyles. In reality, women's situation is unfair. Women's work is not treated fairly, and their opportunities in the job market are not equitable (Cho Uhn 2004a; Yi Eunhee Kim 1998). For example in South Korea, the number of women in the work force increased from 34 percent in 1963 to 48.7 percent in 1997. Nonetheless, in 1986 an average woman worker received 59.6 percent of the pay of an average male worker (Park Kyeyoung 1997:114). Also, their working conditions are unstable compared with that of male employees. Secretarial work is the most common job for Korean women. Because Korean society as a whole considers women's careers as only a temporary stage before their marriages or the pregnancy, many women work as part-timers. Even when they have full-time jobs, they are implicitly forced to resign when they get married or pregnant. They realize that they lack power over their own lives. Their heightened self-esteem, along with their educational background, is discouraged by the gender ideology of the male-dominated work place. Many single women consider their jobs temporary, and they are eager to marry men with economic power. Even though they could continue their jobs after marriage, they accept their jobs as only avocations to make extra money, and family matters always have priority over their jobs. Many married women fulfill themselves

Eunhee Kim 2001:22).

as housewives (Moon 1990; Park Boo Jin 2001).

There even exist double standards in understanding a woman's college education, which is often seen as a way to become a more qualified material for better men (Yun 2001:84). Young women often say, "A marriage is optional and a job is essential." In reality, however, marriage is still common. A stable job is seen as a way to make them stronger bridal candidates for a groom. In spite of the generational changes and feminist influences, young mothers' actual behaviors have not changed very much. As society pushes, they have to choose the path of a wife and mother. Even in the cases where married women have successful careers, some working mothers are forced to give up their careers because of the idea that children should be taken care of by their own mothers (Cho Hae-Joang 2002:179; Chung Byung-Ho 2001). Most contemporary mothers in their thirties and forties grew up during the time when boys were preferred. They grew up feeling that they were often neglected by their own parents and grandparents. Boy-preference, however, is still prevalent. Young mothers want sons. Some still consider bearing a son as an obligation for their husbands' patrilineages. The boy-preference is noticeable in the gender ratio of the third and fourth child, which as of 2002 are 141.7 male per 100 female and 166.0 male per 100 female respectively (Cho Uhn 2004b:208; Chung Byung-Ho 2001).

The 1997 financial crisis and massive lay-offs in S. Korea awoke the dormant male-dominant social ideology. Bernard Rowan (1999) points out, "From the fall of 1997 to January 1998, women's employment decreased four times that of men" (194). In face of socioeconomic crisis, female employees were forced to sacrifice their jobs for their male coworkers. The sudden economic problems reconfirmed to Korean women that men have a better position in society, that income from a husband is crucial, and that they should help their children be ready for a competitive socioeconomic world. Facing this national crisis, the "tough and strong" motherhood

was highlighted (Shin Kyöng Ah 1999). Mothers were now expected to be able to cope with their husbands' sudden unemployment and the subsequent financial struggles, and to protect the family from conflicts and collapses.

Young women, who used to have high expectations for their own hopeful future, now turn into mothers who are even more oversolicitous for their children's education than their own mothers. Social realities in which women cannot have independent careers and the recurrent conservative gender ideology make them choose to become self-sacrificing mothers. Children are the only path for their self-realization. These mothers feel obliged to invest all their energy and time on their children's education. They equate the name of the colleges their children go to as the quality of their children's future lives and the way to measure their successes.

Korean mothers have contradictory expectations for their daughters. Cho Hae-Joang (2002) writes:

While mothers wanted to see their university-graduate daughters become successful career women, they also wanted their daughters to be suitable brides for upper-middle class families (179).

So-yöñ's mother, in Abelmann's ethnography, wanted her daughter to be a pianist rather than a dentist because she believed that a pianist looks more feminine and thus can attract a promising young man (Abelmann 2002). Like their mothers' contradictory wishes, they also have very conflicting wishes for their marriages and love lives. Even though these young married women admired marriage based on romantic love, many of them chose their husbands based upon their family backgrounds and financial potentialities. To find a right man who meets their qualifications, an increasing number of young people take advantage of the private dating services, a contemporary form of matchmaking. They also want a professional career, but, at the same time, they want to be chosen by a rich man. To be chosen, they undergo cosmetic surgery,

believing that an improved appearance can make all the difference in marriage.¹⁶

Under these circumstances, the middle-class Korean housewives, unlike those in the Western societies or in Japan, have little interest in charitable roles or community welfare programs (Cho Hae-Joang. 1998:202; Pally 1994). They invest their time solely in immediate familial interests, such as visiting schoolteachers to give ‘envelopes’ of money to solicit the upgrading of their children’s scores or engaging in speculative investment in real estate or stock markets to improve family finances. Children rely heavily on their mothers’ effort in getting good scores at the scholastic aptitude examination and even in the selection of marriage partners (202). Such self-centered maternal practices influence children’s behavioral characteristics. Yun T’aek-Rim says,

The problem of the kids these days is that they don't care about others.... They are not giving time to show interest in others. Mothers always told them to mind their own business. It is good if you are doing alright. It is good if you study hard. It is all right if you are better off (148-149).

The meaning of self-sacrificing motherhood has become distorted in the extremely competitive social environment. As Cho Uhn (2004b) discusses, mothers do not mind living separate from their husbands to stay with their children who study abroad; they travel to give birth to children in the U.S. to have them to qualify for U.S. citizenship; they have their young children get special surgery to improve their English pronunciation, and some even give up their legal guardianship by having their teenaged children adopted by American families.

Summary and Discussion

The Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910), founded on Neo-Confucian philosophy, praised virtuous mothers and chaste women, while making them chattels of the household. In a pre-

¹⁶ A matchmaker says, “If the man has money and educational background and health, then he wants an educated woman with a pretty face and a tall slender body of more than 160 centimeters [5’3”]” (Kendall 1996:111).

modern agrarian Korea, an extended family was a key unit for (re)production and consumption. Also, it was the central place for learning and gendered socialization. Under the influence of Neo-Confucianism, the father-son relationship was considered the most important because it was the pivotal link which continued the patrilineal line. The neo-Confucianization placed women at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Women's motherhood and chastity were morally idealized and institutionally encouraged because of the importance of continuing the patrilineage through a male heir. The meanings of their lives resided only within their husbands' families. The ideological emphasis on motherhood and women's chastity controlled female sexuality and banned women's remarriage (Kim Mi-Yöng 2004). Having a son was an essential part of a married woman's duty for her husband and parents-in-law because the continuation of the patrilineal line has a great symbolic meaning.

For the last 30 years, the state-initiated "Growth-First" economic policy has accelerated social transformations: industrialization, urbanization, and nuclearization of family structure. Through the experience of state-initiated industrialization as well as the forced modernization through colonization, men were glorified as active contributors. Even after industrialization and succeeding socio-economical changes in Korean society, the traditional cultural constraints still limit Korean women's everyday life. Women as "wise mothers and benevolent wives" and "frugal wives" were placed in the shadow of historical progress in the later twentieth century. Women could not attain any status for themselves, and their status was defined by status of groups to which they belonged, including their husbands' or sons'. Therefore, the only thing they could do to attain higher status was to support their husbands' or sons' endeavors to reach higher status. Being betwixt and between tradition and modernity, they wish to control their own lives and at the same time try to exercise tremendous power over their children to (re)produce their

middle-class status. Korean women are still trapped in Korean patriarchy in which their children are their instruments for their social recognition and mobility. By the growth-first economic policy and the social emphasis on the education for nation's flourishing economy, women who cannot find their own path for self-realization, drive their children to compete with peers and succeed at schooling.

As a cultural construct, motherhood and mothering practices are influenced by the gender ideology and changing discourses on competent mothers. Industrialization in the 1970s transformed traditional family structure root and branch. The cultural meaning of motherhood and maternal roles also underwent a drastic change: the economic development and improvement in living conditions introduced the middle class lifestyle. Thanks to the increasing income and job security through lifetime employment, a family could maintain its domestic economy with one breadwinner's full-time job. Women became a full-time stay-at-home mothers and assumed full charge of household chores and children's education (Yun 19-20). As the class structure became stabilized and the chances for social mobility were quite limited in the late 80s and early 90s, educational background and academic cliques were considered even more important for success in life than ever before. Mothers' interventions became intense and took on even a competitive aspect with other mothers because the colleges the children enter become a barometer to measure mother's capabilities.

Michelle Z. Rosaldo (1974) points out that the extreme gender role division in public and domestic life is caused by male dominance and female subordination. In the Korean case, however, the extreme form of role division and the increasing importance of education brought significant power to the married women after industrialization. Fathers who work full-time were gradually distanced from their nuclear families whereas mothers became the center by taking

care of childcare, education, and household economy. In such a situation, children perceive their fathers even as strangers who interfere with their seemingly harmonious relationships with their mothers. Many Korean housewives also often revealed their hostile attitudes against their husbands. This is exemplified in So-yon's mother's portrayal of her husband: successful at work, but inattentive, noncontributing, and philandering (Abelmann 2002:42-43). Along with children's estranged feeling about their fathers, mothers' antagonism toward their husbands, fathers are losing their ground and authority in their families. The weakening power and authority of fathers afford increasing power and authority to mothers. This is why I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that women's enhanced power is a byproduct of rapid industrialization and attendant social transformations. Another aspect of Korean women's power is its "instrumentality." Mothers wield their powers mostly to enhance the status of their families. They do this because their contributions to the family are recognized only if their efforts bear visible fruits through their children's achievements or their extravagant lifestyle.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BIRTH OF EDUCATION MOMS: CLASS, CONSUMPTION, AND EDUCATION

Korean mothers' contributions to their children's education and their critical roles in (re)producing class-based family culture are discussed in the ethnographic literature about South Korea (Ablemann 1997a, 1997b, 2002, 2003; Cho 2002; Lett 1998; Moon 1990; Nelson 2000). Koreans often say, "The child's academic success is determined by the mother's network of information and the father's financial power" (*ai sŏngjŏgŭn ōmmaŭi chŏngboryŏkkwa appaŭi kyŏngjeryŏge talyŏitta*). As this adage suggests, both parents' united efforts play pivotal roles in maximizing a child's chance for educational success, but it is always a mother who is in charge of a child's education and discipline. Based on his own observation of a Korean family, Bruce Cumings (1997) describes a disciplinarian education mother as "hovering about her child and attending to his needs so long as he keeps his nose in the books" (160). This image shows that a mother controls every minute of her children's lives and forces them to study harder. This is not unusual in contemporary Korea.¹ In truth, such undue zeal for children's education among South Korean parents is not a recent social phenomenon. Already in 1653, Hamel (1994), a Dutch sailor who accidentally arrived in Korea wrote:

The Nobility and well-to-do people give their children a good education. They take tutors in their service to teach them how to read and write, skills to which this nation is much inclined... The children are constantly being told about the many wise sages of the past and how these obtained rank and honour. They mostly sit day and night and read. It is admirable to see how these young boys know and explain the texts which form the basis of their learning (64).

¹ Koreans traditionally liken childrearing to agricultural farming (*nongsa*). However, childrearing (*chasiknongsa*) is seen as more important than farming by calling it "superior farming" (*sangnongsa*). This implies that parents should nurture and support their children and they expect certain returns from their children's successful lives, such as honor and financial support.

Korean mothers' devotion to their children's learning has played a positive role in South Korean economic development. The public, however, criticizes the mothers' oversolicitous zeal for their children's education as being self-centered (Cho 1998:202; Nelson 2000:151). In this chapter, I examine the historical and cultural roots of mothers' zeal for their children's education and its development throughout the modern history of Korea. I also capture how education contributes to the fluidity and complexity of contemporary family life.

A Thumbnail History of Education in Korea

Beginning in about the fourth century, the rulers in the Three Kingdoms established various forms of public and private schools in their capitals as the fundamental foundation for social harmony.² Initially set up for the children from the nobility, schools began to expand to the areas outside the capital in the twelfth century. By the fourteenth century, the country had a comprehensive state-wide educational system. In the Chosŏn period, public schools, “*sahak*” in the capital and “*hyanggyo*” in peripheral areas, were established and the national Confucian academy, “*Sŏnggyungwan*,” was founded in the capital. Numerous private academies called “*sŏwon*” were established all over the country, which aimed at educating the youth from noble families and stimulating various academic activities among local scholars. By 1700, the number of *sŏwon* reached more than six hundred, which outnumbered the total number in China (Cumings 1997:61).

The Confucian education system was a part of religious practice in that it promoted the idea of socially desirable personhood as well as disseminated Confucian values and ethics.

² *T'aehak*, a Chinese-style state university, was the earliest public school set up by King Sosurim in Koguryŏ, where Confucianism and its classical literature such as *Analects* and *Book of Filial Piety* were taught. *Kyŏngdang* was the earliest private schools where Chinese and archery were instructed (Lee & de Bary 1997:65-68).

Learning is a self-controlled discipline which leads to personal salvation and, in turn, impacts the well-being of the entire community (Lim 2007:75-80). Because Confucianism stressed self-cultivation through learning, levels of one's academic achievement became the standard for government offices. One's successful performance at the national civil examination³ could not only give him a more favorable chance for his successful life but also bring honor to his family (Lim 2007:74). Usually in Korean history, therefore, most seven-year old boys from noble families began to attend private or public schools to prepare for the national civil service exam. Because the exam tested student's literary skills in Chinese, the education emphasized rote-memorization and choral recitation of Classical texts (Yi Ki-Baek 1984:180).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the nation began to open its door to the world powers and became the arena for power struggles among them. Many intellectuals tried to build up the modern education system to protect the nation and national identity from foreign powers and influences.⁴ The king ordered new schools to be set up in order to enlighten the people. Many intellectuals expected that modern education would enhance the national prosperity and defense (Seth 2002:17). Such patriotic ethos, inflated at the turn of the century, detonated the mushrooming establishments of schools (Yi Ki-Baek 1984:331-334).

Protestant missionaries and early native Enlightenment thinkers founded private schools to introduce Western knowledge and technology. A number of progressive intellectuals noticed the poor social conditions of women, who were considered too inferior to pursue learning and often abused by their husbands. They believed that proper education could better the situation for women. Still, however, Yu Kil-Chun, one of the prominent intellectuals, saw women's education

³ Since the opportunities for education were given to the young male aristocrats, they could become bureaucrats in higher ranks through exams. Commoners who lacked the opportunity for formal education could become lower level government officials.

⁴ As the result of Gabo Reforms in 1894, modern educational system was introduced in order to train elites to "save the nation" (Shin Joong Söp 2004:253).

as a means to provide better education for their children, not to improve their own lives (Ahn 2004:167).

During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), the colonial government aggressively expanded educational opportunities in order to fill the need of modernizing the colonized and disciplining them as loyal citizens to the Japanese Empire. Education under colonialism focused on primary education such as learning basic literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills. Because the school facilities could not meet people's fast-growing demands on secondary education, school admission and entrance into the upper level schools were very competitive.⁵ Therefore, many had to be satisfied with learning at night schools and unlicensed schools, and children from affluent families had to study abroad in Japan (Seth 2002).

Right after independence, the U.S. military government (1945-1948) attempted to establish an American style liberal educational system for the promotion of democratic ideals. Due to the increasing political insecurity in the peninsula and overly idealistic nature of the drastic education reform, its original plan for sweeping educational reform failed to bring any substantial outcomes to the nation. In order to prevent Koreans from being confused and resisting the U.S. military government, the military government could not help but keep in place the centralized and authoritarian educational system set up by the Japanese.

Until the 1980s, the centralized educational system and its uniform curricula, the basic frame of which was structured during Japanese colonial era, had been employed to instill the homogenous state-centered ideology into young students' minds. Traditional values such as loyalty to the nation and filial piety to the parents were emphasized in school education, which also served to justify the authoritarian dictatorship and to discipline students as loyal citizens.

⁵ To become an official for the colonial government which guaranteed power and mobility, secondary and higher education were essential.

Accepting and internalizing these values and ideologies were what young students who aspired to successful lives through educational achievements had to do first. Students had to take standardized exams to advance to the upper level schools. These tests gave young students and their families a constant source of struggles and emotional stresses, but, at the same time, the visible chances for social mobility through educational attainment must have given people a certain level of confidence that their hard work would pay off.⁶

The centralized governmental control over the education system worked efficiently enough to meet people's expectations in the early stage of nation building. The equal accessibility to the educational opportunities has been the fundamental basis of the educational system. As the society has become more diversified and competitive, the educational system based on a strong egalitarian sentiment is seen as falling far short of the parental expectation of high quality education which can prepare children to be successful members of the future global society.

“Education Fever” (*Kyoyungnyŏl*)

In South Korea, formal schooling starts at the age of seven, but most middle-class mothers put their children in two-year private kindergartens (*yuch'iwŏn*). This education is supplemented by other educational programs at private institutes (*hagwŏn*), which teach art, piano, tae kwon do, and English. Many mothers enroll their prekindergarten-aged children in private day-care programs (*ŏrinijip*). These early learning programs focus largely on developing

⁶ Exams are easy ways to gauge an individual student's level of performance and progress in his or her academic activities. There exists a hierarchy of high schools in terms of the students' educational achievements. The more prestigious university one can be admitted, the better opportunities he or she can have in the future. The mentality, in which a child's academic performance is related to the family's honor and the name of the school is associated with his or her chance for the upward social mobility, contributes to education fever.

basic reading and math skills in order to prepare children for their formal education. Becoming used to a group-oriented school life is another main goal of these programs. In today's competitive social atmosphere, educational success is considered even more important than in the past. "Education Fever" connotes the intense degrees of peer competition and parental intervention in children's education. It may not be so special that parents have certain ambitions for their children's educational achievements. The amazing characteristic of South Korean "education fever" is that virtually all parents, across the socioeconomic strata, are willing to sacrifice anything for their children's educational success. Such a trend has swept across the nation like an epidemic to the degree that there are no significant urban-rural differences.

Because of the range and intensity of parental intervention, "education fever" has caused wide-reaching socioeconomical transformations. Since parents move to a place with better schools, real estate prices are largely dependent upon the adjacent school's reputation (Seth 2002:1-2). The majority of parents drive their children to receive extra lessons at *hagwŏn* (private supplementary learning centers) or hire tutors to make their children receive better grades on school tests. Recently, families with students tend to move to the area where reputed *hagwŏn* concentrate. They invest a large portion of their income on these expenses. Table 1 shows that 77 percent of South Korean students in primary and secondary schools participate in the private after-school program.⁷ On average each student spends \$288 per month and 7.8 hours on his or her private lessons. Due to the importance of college entrance, college-bound high school students spend more money (\$388 per month) on their extra lessons. Due to the relatively expensive tuitions, there is a conspicuous polarization among high school students. Table 2

⁷ The rate of participation in the private education has continuously increased: 15 percent in 1980, 22 percent in 1991, 54 percent in 1997, 58 percent in 2000, and 72.6 percent in 2002 (Park 2007:190). Figure 1 in this chapter shows the increases in monthly average expenses for the private after-school lessons by the administrations since 1982.

suggests that the 38 percent of college-bound high school students do not take any after-school programs while around 16 percent spend more than \$500 per month. In terms of the size of household expenditure on private education, there is an unequal distribution among families. Table 2 shows that families in urban areas tend to spend more on private education than in those the rural areas.

Table 1. The expenses for private education and participation rate and time in 2007

	Total Expenses (\$)	Annual Average per student (\$)	Monthly Average per Student (\$)		Participation Rate (%)	Weekly Hours
			All	Participant		
Total	2,004,000	2,664	222	288	77.0	7.8
Elementary	1,020,980	2,726	227	256	88.8	8.9
Middle	561,200	2,810	234	314	74.6	8.9
High	421,810	2,368	197	359	55.0	4.5
College-bound	386,550	2,883	240	388	62.0	5.2
Vocational	35,260	801	67	198	33.7	2.5

(KNSO 2008:3)

US\$ 1=1,000 won

Table 2. Monthly Average Expenses on Private Education per student in 2007

	Total	Not taken	Under \$100	\$100-199	\$200-299	\$300-399	\$400-499	Over \$500
	100 (%)	23	11.7	17.5	18.8	12.7	6.9	9.3
By Region	Seoul	19.4	9.7	14.6	16.2	14.3	9.3	16.5
	Metropolis	21	11.1	18.4	20.9	13.4	7.2	8
	Cities	22.5	10.5	16.7	19.8	13.8	7.3	9.4
	Rural areas	33.6	19.7	22.6	15.2	5.7	1.9	1.3
By School	Elementary	11.2	14.8	23.4	21.9	14.3	7.3	7
	Middle School	25.4	8.6	13.5	21.2	13.3	7.2	10.7
	High School	45	8.7	9.7	9.7	8.7	5.7	12.4
	-College-Bound	38	7.6	9.8	11.2	10.4	7.1	15.9
	-Vocational	66.3	12.3	9.2	5.2	3.5	1.7	1.8

(KNSO 2008:18)

US\$ 1=1,000 won

How much parents can spend for children's education often has nothing to do with how

much they make. For instance, some middle-class mothers moonlight as housemaids for their children's tuition for supplementary courses or tutoring (Lim 2007:91). A great deal of expenditure on private education within the household income weakens the household economy. The overspending on private education dismantles the foundation of the national economy because it causes financial struggles for many middle class families. The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) estimated that in 1995, families annually spent 17 trillion won (17 billion dollars) on school-related expenditure and another six trillion won (six billion dollars) on private tutoring while the government budget for education amounted to only 16.7 trillion won (16.7 billion dollars) (Seth 2002: 187). According to this data, the household expenditure on education amounts to around 1.4 times as much as the government budget. In addition, the increasing number of students who study abroad or visit foreign countries for short-term English training causes serious trade-deficit. The concern about such impacts on the national economy has led to "*kwaoemanggunnon*" (a discourse on tutoring as a phenomenon that is ruining the nation).⁸

It is obvious how crucial English education has become for the last decade in the Korean educational landscape. In the name of globalization, the government expanded English education to the third grade in elementary schools and introduced speaking-centered practical English into school curricula. English has been given a great deal of weight on the GPA at school and college entrance examination, both of which determine college admission. Therefore, students have become even more dependent upon expensive English institutes, and children from the upper-

⁸ The unreasonable house expenditure on the private education has become a serious issue in South Korea. According to Kim Jae-Kyoung (2003), "Koreans spent a total of \$4.6 billion in overseas education in 2002, by attending language schools and getting formal academic training. The figure... was equivalent to 42 percent of the nation's trade account surplus worth \$10.8 billion and 25.7 percent of this year's budget for the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development estimated at \$17.8 billion."

middle class study abroad to take a shortcut for academic success. In 1997, the controversy about English as an official language agitated parents with force of an “English gale” (*Yōngō yōlp’ung*). In 2000, the seventh curricula revision, which strengthened the speciality education (*T’ŭkki kyoyuk*) based on individual student’s level and interest, allowed some to go to college solely with their English test scores. The current administration plans to adopt English immersion learning by which all subjects are taught in English. All of these changes have contributed to multiplying the English education market and widening opportunities for the business of English education. In addition, commercial marketing strategies of these businesses have aggravated people’s so-called “English complex” (Han 2000). Parents unsparingly put their money into their children’s English education. The escalating importance of English is one of the major reasons to increase the household expenditure on private education.

The overheated “education fever” is transforming traditional Korean family structure and lifestyles. All day long, children go the rounds from home to school to *hagwōn*: most high school students, and even some middle school students, leave for school early in the morning and return home as late as midnight. Children, especially in high school, are treated as heads of their families and their concerns are prioritized over everyone else’s. Under such conditions, mothers, placed at the bottom of family hierarchy, wait on their children like maids (Seth 2002:246). The seemingly low status of mothers within their homes is voluntary and purposeful. There is no doubt that mothers are in the center of this frenetic “education fever.” Korean middle-class mothers are not just full-time homemakers,⁹ but are also

responsible for ensuring that their children had the best assistance with their school work and for providing the best foods to keep their children’s minds active and bodies fueled, for staying up late with their children as they studied, for monitoring their children’s study habits, for assisting with their homework... and for

⁹ In 2000, full-time homemakers accounted for 22.1 percent of Korean married women (Chung 2001:131).

disciplining their children when their levels of achievement were not satisfactory (Nelson 2000:153).

To become “competent” mothers (*nŭngnyŏkitnŭn ōmma*), or at least not ruin their children’s lives, devotional love is not sufficient. Korean mothers must arm themselves with information and strategies. People call this type of mother “scholastic managers” (*haksŭp maenijŏ*) because they have very specialized knowledge and private networks to exchange valuable information and they can efficiently organize their children’s extra learning. They exercise informal power, a so-called “skirt’s wind” (*ch’imapparam*), to help their children gain a competitive edge. The success of a mother is measured by the tier of the college to which her child is admitted (Yun 2002). A child’s educational success contributes to enhancing the mother’s status and power in the household. To some degree, they can even gain social recognition among friends and people in their communities.¹⁰

The unstable social structure in the process of nation-building made more parents dream of their children’s taking a chance of successful life. Cultural obsession in education and social mobility transforms schools into a battlefield in which children are forced to compete to each other to produce better educational outcomes. In such socio-cultural environments, traditional education focusing largely on the cultivation of morality was no longer desired. A competent mother should be able to provide her child with as best educational assistance within their limited financial resources as they can. “Competent” teachers instigate rivalry and even contempt for students, which are justified as a way of encouragement. In such as inhumane and competitive learning environment, individual competition is a self-regulating mechanism for education efficiency while neither individuality nor cooperation is cherished.

¹⁰ Small rewards such as changes in teachers’ attitudes towards mothers at the teacher-parent conference and neighbors’ compliments about their children have an impact on mothers’ self-concepts.

Schooling as a Status-enhancing Tool

Koreans' obsession with educational success is often attributed to Confucian cultural roots and a long history of civil examination (Cho 1995). Under the influence of Neo-Confucianism, publicly-proved literary skills and a mastery of Confucian classics were the main way to show one's credentials, which justified their advance into government office. Still, most Koreans consider education as a path for upward social mobility and schools as essential venues for this to happen. Contemporary Korean society is relatively closed in terms of social mobility. As Kim Sang-bong (2004) points out,

In Korean society, where education already functions as a mechanism to classify people into unequal social standings, the walls between schools of different ranks come to define the walls between unequal social classes (280).

According to Abelman (1999b), "there were relative mobility opportunities in the immense aftermath of the Korean War, but... these diminished over time" (402). Throughout the modern history of South Korea, the myth of educational equality has been fed by the democratic ideals of equal opportunity, the high school equalization policy, and the ban against private tutoring (Abelman 2002). In addition, collective memory about the impoverishment after the Korean War and the experience of miraculous economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s make South Koreans overestimate their or their children's chances for upward social mobility. The parental misperception of open social mobility has instigated the nation-wide obsession with education, even though since 1980 hierarchical class structure has settled and chances for social mobility have drastically decreased (Abelman 1997b, 2002). The college entrance progress works unfavorably toward the students from the lower class families considering popular but expensive college-preparatory courses in *hagwŏn*. It is hardly true that the current education system can

provide all students with relatively equal opportunities. The equal chances for social mobility through education have been exaggerated in the popular imagination and manipulated through political discourse. Students' failures are attributed to the students themselves, not an unreasonable social structure.

Lim Hyunsoo (2007) claims that the egalitarian ideals emphasizing individual equal rights and the prevailing notion of meritocracy have gradually shaped the trend which equates one's ability with his educational background (86-89). At the same time, people generally view prestigious colleges with more powerful alumni as more beneficial for their children's future careers. Therefore, "*hakppŏljuŭi*" (credentialism), in which one's status is determined by his educational background, and "*hagyŏnjuŭi*" (academic cliquism), which uses college alumni networks as a stepping-stone for social success, constitute two major characteristics of "Education Fever". While experiencing the nation's successful adaptations to industrialization and visible improvement of the living conditions, South Koreans realized that academic credentials and academic cliques played a crucial role in developing a strong social network, which in turn augments their upward social mobility. They still believe that education is the only way to maintain or enhance their socioeconomic standings.

Today academic credentialism is becoming even more rampant even though inflation of academic credentials leads to their devaluation. Lim (2007) argues that Korean society has evolved so that no one can live a successful life based on his or her academic credentials alone and that they are a symbol of class distinction rather than a tool for social mobility. However, it is still true that many, albeit not all, leaders in the society graduated from prestigious colleges, the so-called "SKY" universities,¹¹ the admission to which marks the major academic

¹¹ S, K, and Y are the initials for Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University, which have been traditionally highly respected colleges.

achievement most students admire. In summer 2007, the story of an art history professor who ran the royal road to success based on her forged Ph. D degree from Yale University revealed the degree of the credentialism in Korean society, which places undue emphasis on educational background and cronyism based on the alumni networks for successful life.

Child-oriented Culture

Filial piety permeated all aspects of Korean society. It was a main pillar that sustained the whole structure of society and a key norm that defined interpersonal and intergenerational relationships. A father's absolute authority and a son's filial duty toward him constituted the fundamental order in traditional Korean families. A son was valued only as a potential successor who could continue the patrilineage and bring honor to the family. The family was a conservative space in which traditional values were relatively well preserved and even revitalized through various rituals and legal systems. Cultural changes were, therefore, delayed; authoritarian parenting, which emphasized a father's authority and a child's filial duty was dominant and the need for a change was repressed.

Emphasis on children's education has brought significant changes in family life and the traditional values attached to it. As a result, the traditional parent-child relationship has turned upside down. Transmitting traditional values such as filial piety has become rarely voiced and even communication between parents and children decreases (Shim 1999:364). Confucian belief in the perpetuation of collective identity through the patrilineal line promotes parental self-sacrifice for their children (Lim 2007). Instead of exercising parental authority over children, parents take their sacrifice for granted even though their continuous giving may take away their savings for their elderly lives.

As the maternal intervention is considered vital in children's education, the principal axis in the family relationship has been moved from the father-son to the mother-son relationship. The nuclear family has become a place for cultural rebellion as well as a base camp to train children to prepare for survival through a series of rise-or-fall competitions. The "Wise Mother Virtuous Wife" (*hyŏnmoyangch'ŏ*) mentality in the 1970s and 1980s emphasized self-sacrifice as a key feminine virtue. These sacrificial women were often considered asexual. Partly due to a culture which attaches greater importance to vertical parent-child relationships than to horizontal husband-wife relationships, housewives had to endure their husbands' neglect and indifference.¹² Such frustration with their marriages may have made mothers more emotionally attached to their children, especially sons (Spiro 1987).¹³ These mothers also had to fill the roles of fathers who were emotionally absent. As a result, children came to depend almost entirely on their mothers (Lee Kwang Kyu 1998). Traditionally, the mother's nurturing role was emphasized, but now mothers are also expected to be disciplinarians as well as educators.

These South Korean education mothers invest a big portion of their income in their children's tuitions for *hagwŏn* or tutoring fees. To pay the expenses of private education, families move to smaller apartments or the peripheral areas of the city for cheaper housing. Fathers get a second job and mothers also seek opportunities for part-time work. Lee Kwang Kyu (1998) characterizes such parental attitudes as "child-oriented."¹⁴ Such a trend might be an unavoidable

¹² This was caused by so-called Korean salaried-man culture. After work, men often release their stress by socializing with their coworkers at a bar. Nightlife and sex industries have flourished to meet their needs (Cho 2002: 175).

¹³ I noticed this phenomenon in my field research. Since that was not my primary objective, I have not collected enough data to report this as a trend.

¹⁴ In Western societies, childhood is conceptualized as a distinct developmental stage and part of a lineal progression to adulthood, which is a physically and mentally mature and independent stage. The concept of childhood has changed over time and differs across cultures and in different socioeconomic circumstances (Aries 1962; Heywood 2001; Small 2001; Smidt 2006). In Korean traditional culture, parental attitudes changed radically when children reached the age

ramification of the rapidly decreasing birthrate¹⁵ and the nuclearization of family residence. The emotional balance and power dynamic between a mother and her children is weighed in favor of the children and society has gradually transformed into being child-centered. In particular, parents of high-school students are extremely sensitive to their children's emotional ups-and-downs and are like servants helping them maintain the best condition for studying. Family now has become a unit to support the child's college preparation. The mother gathers information and strategizes to maximize her child's chances for better universities and the father finances the expenses. Parents' expectations of children's commitment to studying is often misplaced so that they even buy their children fancy gifts to encourage them to care about nothing but school grades and exam scores. In that way, the children gradually get used to materialistic consumption.

In the behavioral environment where achievement or successful life can be, or at least is believed to be gained through successful interpersonal relationships, individual motivation is largely other-oriented. South Korean children raised under their mothers' overprotection first internalize their mothers' expectations instead of developing and exercising individuality. They show a disposition to conform to the given social roles and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships.

of seven from indulgent parenting to strict discipline. Children were expected follow the gender- and class-specialized socialization. The "child-centered" or "child-oriented" characteristic of contemporary South Korean families simply indicates that the prime in intrafamilial relationships has moved from parental authority to children's welfare. In reality, however, children are not valued by themselves. Parents' concerns for their children's futures matter more than what their children want. This parental primacy underlies parent-child relationships among contemporary South Korean families.

¹⁵ As of 2002, the total fertility rate in South Korea is 1.17 (Cho Uhn 2005).

Expansion of the Private Education Market

In 1980, the Chun administration banned primary and secondary school students from receiving private tutoring or taking courses at private educational institutes. The main motivations were to narrow the gap between the wealthy and the poor, and to give all students equal opportunities to access higher education. This ban was held until 1989 when the constitutional court ruled the ban unconstitutional based on the interpretation that it would have limited students' rights to learn. As a result, in 1991, students in all grades were permitted to take supplementary classes at government-approved private educational institutes and receive private tutoring (Seth 2002:185-6). Due to the flourishing national economy and the increased household incomes of the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the legalization of tutoring and private after-school programs created a growing demand for various forms of supplementary lessons. Around that time, many former teachers who were dismissed due to their participation in the illicit Teacher's Union became private tutors or opened *hagwŏn*. As the demand grew, the industry expanded. More and more middle-class mothers have gradually taken advantage of private tutoring or supplementary courses at *hagwŏn* despite their heavy financial burden (Seth 2002:185-191). Now, franchised English learning centers (*yŏngŏ hagwŏn*) and supplementary learning institutes (*posŭp hagwŏn*) have spread into every corner of the nation.

The rapid expansions of the private education industry and competition among institutes have made more options available to new "educational consumers." The logic of consumerism has permeated the newly created education market. Mothers began to see open opportunities for their children's supplementary lessons as a form of consumption. They compare the available options in the market and choose the best. Parents have become increasingly aware that extra supplementary lessons are essential to equip their children with better academic skills.

Organizing a child's after-school activities has become a full-time job for most stay-at-home mothers. These overambitious education mothers drive their children to *hagwŏn* and tutoring, which, in turn, aggravate peer competition at school. They expect higher returns on their investment. If they are unsatisfied with the effect of an educational service, they always consider other options. Therefore, the industry has evolved swiftly to adapt to fluctuating demands according to inconsistent educational policies. The majority of students spend many hours taking supplementary classes at *hagwŏn* often until after midnight (see Table 1). Even elementary students plunge into exam preparation for prestigious high schools, which will better prepare them for the top-notch domestic universities and ivy-league colleges in the U.S. (Dillon 2008).

Private education in South Korea has become an essential part of learning. The majority of parents believe that school education alone is not sufficient for students to prepare for college entrance exams. Many teachers feel that the expansion of private education consumes their authority and causes the collapse of classrooms.¹⁶ Some teachers, on the other hand, voluntarily assume an auxiliary role in teaching. They are negligent of teaching students based on the assumption that they already studied ahead at after-school programs. The pattern of educational consumerism is not limited to groups of parents in higher income brackets. It is true that families with more resources can invest more in their children. The increasingly keen competition for children's education forces parents to spend more money on their children's supplementary learning. In a way, the battle over children's educational success is in fact dependent upon the amount of resources the family can mobilize. Mothers in the lower income brackets, however, want to provide their children with the best supports they can afford. In spite of a huge financial

¹⁶ The expansion of the private education market weakens the public education system. The collapse of teachers' authority is a problem. For instance, parents disapprove corporal punishment in schools but accept it as encouragement in *hagwŏn*.

burden for children to take supplementary lessons at *hagwǒn*, mothers think it is a worthwhile investment for their children's future and security for their aged life (Nelson 2000:170). The incapability of supporting their children's supplementary learning makes mothers feel guilty.¹⁷

Since the most of students take multiple private learning programs after school, *hagwǒn* has become the only place where children can socialize with their peers. Therefore, it is not always mothers who drive their children to various *hagwǒn*. Taking supplementary lessons at *hagwǒn* comforts students who are agitated over exams at school. One of my former students called regular attendance at *hagwǒn* "insurance." Regardless of what students really do at *hagwǒn* and what they expect from that supplementary lesson at the late night, being there with other peers gives them a sense of security and doing something for their future. Therefore, most parents of school-aged children have to spend a large portion of their salaries on their children's supplementary learning whether they want to or not.

In spite of a series of education reforms, expenditure for private education has been becoming extremely polarized between students from affluent families and students from rural areas or the low income bracket (see Figure 1). Children from the affluent families are more likely to benefit from expensive high quality tutoring and other expensive after-school programs. Many scholars and policy-makers view the growing market of private education as widening the gap between the rich and the poor, which not only contradicts the democratic ideal of equal opportunity, but also damages social harmony. To narrow the gap between the classes, some researchers even suggest that the government should provide monetary assistance for underprivileged children in rural areas to get benefits from extra supplementary courses. Ko

¹⁷ Ch'ang-Hun's mother who spends a significant portion of her husband's income on the tuition for Ch'ang-Hun's education at *hagwǒn* explained to me: "I don't want to be blamed for not having done what I could." She added that she felt obliged to provide minimum support to her children even though this meant significant financial sacrifices.

Hyöng-Il and Yi Tu-Hyu (2002) suggest that the equalization of colleges, the abolition of college entrance exams, and the reduction of governmental intervention in school management and curricula can solve the problems. This proposition sounds very idealistic and radical. Academic credentialism and the hierarchies among schools are at the root of the expansion of private education and inhumane peer competition at school. To eliminate the causes is the only solution for the overheated private education market and “education fever” among parents and students.

The Collapse of Classroom

“The collapse of the classroom” (*Kyosil Pungkoe*) straightforwardly describes today’s phenomenal crisis in the public education system. The operation of the school system has been paralyzed to the degree that normal educational activities cannot take place at school anymore. According to Pak Yun-Pae and Kim Kyöng-Sik (2002), teachers primarily attribute such deterioration of school-based learning to the failure of the government’s top-down reforms in the education system. School teachers blame the adoption of neo-liberal educational system, called “Open Education” (*yölin kyoyuk*). This reform, also called “the seventh curricula revision,” aimed originally at promoting a student’s creativity and individuality. To do so, it reorganized learning environments based on the learner-centered approach. A sudden change of school without exams made parents more confused because they had no clue about their children’s performance at school. Therefore, they became increasingly dependent upon tests offered at *hagwöñ*. Students who went through elementary school under this new framework had trouble in adapting to the traditional pedagogy and college-entrance-centered education at middle and high

schools. Students' academic mediocrity and weakened capability to handle pressure for study became a problem.¹⁸

The ubiquitous existence of private after-school programs and students' overdependence on them are the major causes for the collapse of classroom. From a students' perspective, according to Pak and Kim (2002), teachers' failure in dealing with the rapidly changing youth subculture relinquishes the teachers' authority. Most classes at school are typically structured with an authoritarian teacher's one-way instruction, and leave little room for student discussion and participation. Most students took lessons from private tutors or *hagwŏn* instructors, which exceed the progress in class at school (*sŏnhaeng haksŭp*). Since students are used to the one-on-one setting in tutoring and the entertaining teaching styles of *hagwŏn* instructors, they become easily bored with the school teachers' instruction. Dependence on learning from tutors and at *hagwŏn*, therefore, leads to students' low participation in class activities at school. Schools have become a sleeping place for students who take late-night classes at *hagwŏn*. In addition, students increasingly disrespect their teachers for their bribe-taking and favoritism. To many parents and students, schools are now only considered as the place students go for academic reports which are now the crucial portion of college admission processes.¹⁹

Many parents are highly sensitive to their children's educational outcomes. They are largely dissatisfied with the teachers' qualities. Therefore, they often protest school teachers' physical punishment while they appreciate *hagwŏn* instructors' as an indication of personal interest in their children's improvement in school grades. Parents also blame uniform school

¹⁸ This reform kindled parental eagerness for educational alternatives promoting children's creativity and individuality.

¹⁹ The academic records used for the college admission are based on the percentile ranks students attained from school exams. Exams consist of mostly multiple-choice questions which test specific knowledge from textbooks and teachers' instructions. Because each student is ranked by the test scores, rote-memorization for the preparation and competition with peers are unavoidable. Classrooms turn into battlefields as students fight for higher ranks and peers become competitors.

curricula and rigid school system (Pak & Kim 2002:103-105). One of the main targets of their criticism is “High School Equalization” (*pyōngjunhwa*). For more than three decades, the government has adhered to this policy to lessen the household expenditure on private education and ease students’ academic burden and emotional stress from their school work. Such an egalitarian basis of this educational policy has been maintained to promote social unification and to buffer the class conflict. Some parents really hope this legal apparatus can prevent the better-off children from getting the easy ticket to better schools and provide their children with fair chances in the college admission process. But it has been criticized as infringing on an individual’s choice over his or her own education. The truth is the gap between socioeconomic strata in educational attainment has increased even under the school equalization policy. As Kim Kyung-Keun (2003) points out, “private education expenditures in the equalized school areas were significantly higher than those in the non-equalization school areas” (190). He also claims that parents’ deployment of their resources for their children’s educational advantage should be respected because their assistance for their children’s higher quality education can be the source of national competitiveness.

Many parents also point out that the school equalization policy has leveled down the students’ scholastic abilities by lowering the standards of educational achievements and weakened the nation’s competitiveness. Educational policies based on this principle have failed to provide equal opportunities to students across socioeconomic strata and to ease fierce competition among them. Rather, it caused even more ferocious parental intervention and increasing dependence on private education. To resolve the prevalent problems in Korean education, some parents expect more competent teachers and efficient curricula. Based on the market principle, free competition is the only key to a solution. These parents want to enhance

the standards of school education, which can prepare their children for the ever increasing competitive global world.

There must be countless problems which cause “the collapse of classroom.” From my interviews, I have learned that school teachers’ lack of basic ethics about their profession aggravated the school problems. According to Hyön-Su’s mother, the teacher in Hyön-Su’s third-grade art class scolded a student who was having a hard time doing an art project in class by saying: “You are bugging me so much. Why didn’t you take any lessons at an art institute?” As this incident implies, many teachers simply assume that all children are taking supplementary lessons to perform better in school. Therefore, they tend to neglect their teaching duties. Hyön-Su’s mother continued:

It was not very surprising, though. It is quite common that teachers take a nap at the school nurse’s office after making students study by themselves... I have a doubt that they even have an idea that their job is to educate students.

I heard a similar story from a high school student. A teacher of a lower level English class told her students, “You probably cannot understand the textbook even though I try. Just memorize all the sentences in the textbook, and you can get more than eighty percent on your final exam.” The class was designed to provide instruction based on students’ levels, but instead of helping students study for the exam, the teacher offered an easier alternative to students so that they can get away without studying. Many teachers blame the growing private educational industry for their loss of authority as a teacher, but they often neglect their teaching responsibility for their own convenience.

School Normalization (*Konggyoyuk chǒngsanghwa*): Another Failure

A series of educational reforms have aimed at lightening the household burden on expenses of children's supplementary education. Near-sighted reforms centering around the college entrance system and the inconsistent educational policy have caused the private education industry to become prosperous. In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources released the Measure to Reduce the Expenses for Private Education by Strengthening the Public Education (*Konggyoyuk kanghwarŭl t'onghan sagyoyukppi kyǒnggam taech'aek*). To reduce the household burden caused by children's private education, the government expanded the existing Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) to provide supplementary lessons and test preparatory courses for students at all-level schools and decided to make up relatively easier questions for the college entrance exam. To normalize school education, Performance Evaluation (*suhaegn p'yǒngga*) was introduced in middle and high schools. In spite of the government's quite comprehensive reform in the college entrance system and educational support through EBS, the measures failed to soothe parents' anxieties. Some people were concerned about the lowered educational standards and the weakened competitive edge of young Korean students. Performance Evaluation also has become an additional burden to students. To receive better grades on the evaluation, students must take music and art lessons as well as take an English course to get assistance from instructors at *hagwǒn*.²⁰ Once again, the reform has made parents and students become more dependent on the private education.

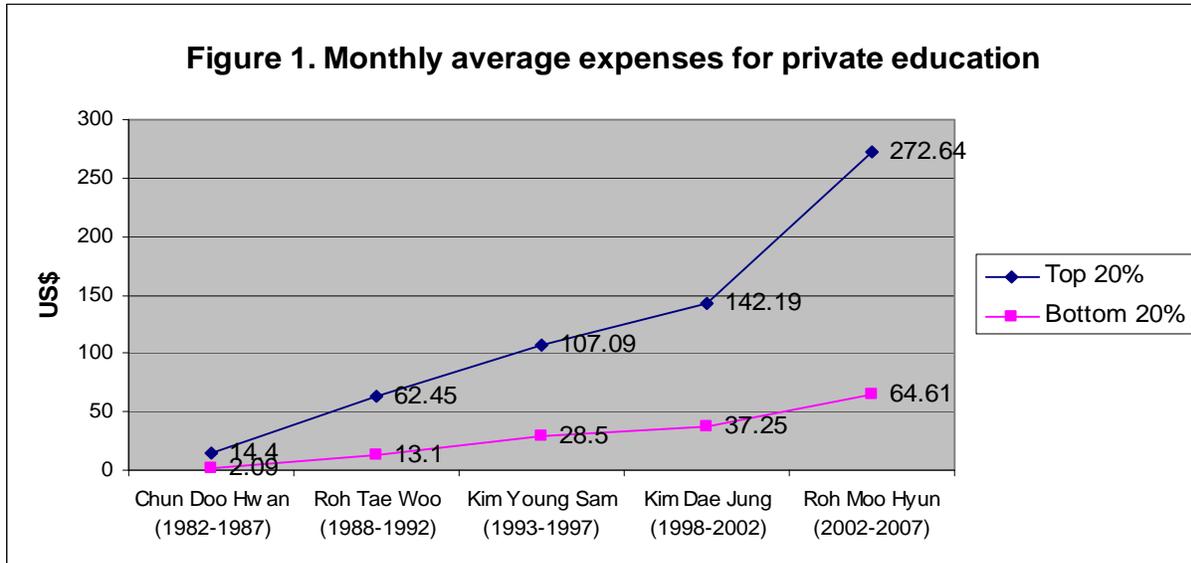
As Figure 1 suggests, the Roh Moo-Hyun administration's effort to normalize school education resulted in a sharper increase in terms of the household expenditure on private

²⁰ Performance Evaluation empowers teachers with more control over students because the grades they give to each student's performance can be subjective. Since Performance Evaluation in such subjects as music, art, and physical education is given a great deal of weight on the grades of these subjects, some students take special lessons at *hagwǒn* or ask instructors to do the projects for them (personal interview).

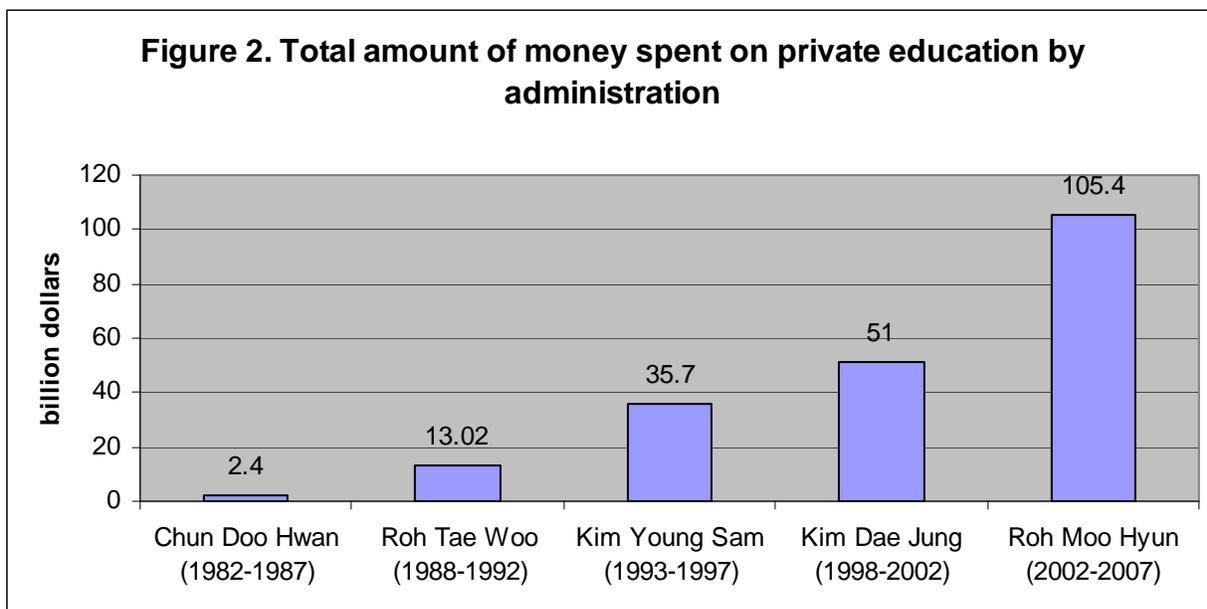
education. The top 20 percent of the income bracket spends around 272.64 dollars on private education per month, which is more than four times as much as the 64.61 dollars spent by the bottom 20 percent. Such a polarization in the investment caused differential impacts on children's educational outcomes. The widening gap, therefore, not only undermines social cohesion, but also induces parents' guilty feelings for not being able to support their children's learning as much as other parents. Seemingly egalitarian, the government's effort to normalize school education laid even heavier financial burdens upon the household than previous educational reforms did. Many households pay over thousand dollars per month for supplementary lessons for each child. As Figure 2 suggests, the total amount of money spent on private education during the Roh administration was twice as much as the total during the previous administration. The school normalization policy turned out to be another failed reform.

The financial burden is trivial compared with the emotional burden students have to carry. *The Triangle of Death*, a video clip produced by a high school student in spring 2006, illustrates the toll students have to pay because of another ineffectual educational policy. In the clip, a narrator, presumed to be the creator, criticizes the newly released government plan for the 2008 college entrance system, which was a follow-up measure of the school normalization. He deplors the situation of Korean high school students who are forced to struggle through fierce competition. The three major elements included in the new college entrance system are the Scholastic Aptitude Test (*sunǔng*), grades in high school (*naesin*), and an essay test (*nonsul*). Each element of this triangular structure symbolizes the government, the teacher, and the university, respectively. The government keeps trying to control students and evaluate their academic abilities with college entrance exams. The teachers want to take their authority back from the instructors at the private educational industry and control students by emphasizing

students' performance at school. With essay tests, the universities want to select better students to maintain their name value. As a result, the students are locked up in a prison called "school" and have to perform the required roles for 365 days a year even though such an oppressive environment has led some students to commit suicide (Yang 2005).



(cited in Kim Tae-Wön 2007)



(cited in Kim Tae-Wön 2007)

Hegemonic Culture of Motherhood

Today educational success continues to be recognized as the best way toward upward social mobility among middle-class families. Since it is a mother who is responsible for children's education, her success is measured by the degrees of her children's academic achievements. This leads to a mother's obsessional devotion to her children's education. Even if the value of academic credentials already began to decline and even if college education did not guarantee employment, the diminishing values of college diplomas and shrinking job markets cause even harsher competition among mothers who try to ensure their children's admission to prestigious colleges (Abelmann 1999b:406).

Many mothers criticize the current trends of mothers' frantic obsession with children's education, but the majority of them just push their children harder in order to prevent their children from falling behind in the competition. Koreans often say, "The success at school education depends on mothers' efforts and abilities" (Kim Mi-Kyöng 2000: 44). The night before test days, mothers with school-aged children cannot sleep because they worry about their children's performance. They are agitated from their incapability of assisting their children with school work (Shim 1999). They end up spending most of their time gleaning information about good tutors and reputed *hagwö'n* from their fellow mothers. They organize the after-school learning activities at private learning institutes (Park So Jin 2006, 2007).

Behind this frantic phenomenon are the ideological constraints revolving around gender roles and ideal motherhood. Patriarchal gender ideology, emphasizing women's obedient and self-sacrificing image, has supported Korean patriarchy in the form of the legal system and employment policy and limited women's participation in the workforce (Seth 2002:246). Many

college graduate women dream of pursuing professional careers and enjoying an independent lifestyle. Soon, however, they face cruel social prejudices and institutional discouragement in a real world where men are always treated better. They realize that they do not have many options for their own lives. Korean society as a whole still considers women's careers as a temporary stage before marriage. Secretarial work is the most common job available to them. Because of the conservative idea that children should be taken care of by their own mothers as well as the lack of public day-care facilities, successful career women are often forced to give up their careers after pregnancy (Cho Haejoang 2002:179; Cho Uhn 2004a; Chung 2001).

For married women, the available jobs, regardless of the levels and fields of education, concentrate on domestic and tertiary sector occupations, which are paid less than other lines of work. Even conspicuous economic growth fails to make social infrastructure more favorable for women. Some married women exercise unofficial power within households based on their earnings from speculative investment in real estate and stock markets. They still experience difficulties in pursuing their own careers through employment and gaining formal recognition. Women's desires for their self-realization are suppressed and distorted by traditional gender ideology. Their chances for entering the public sphere are very limited. The social impact of the 1997 financial crisis proves how powerfully the traditional gender ideology can haunt contemporaries and rearrange their socioeconomic lives. The 1997 financial crisis and massive lay-offs in South Korea threatened many Korean women into reconfirming that income from their husbands is crucial, men are in a better position to survive in society; therefore, they should be protected by men. In other words, the harsh social reality revitalized the conservative gender ideology, justifying patriarchy and emphasizing motherhood (Cho Uhn 2004a; Rowan 1999). Under such adverse conditions, official paths to their own self-realization are all blocked.

Mothers, not fighting for their own rights nor discovering the meanings of their own lives, seek vicarious gratification in their children's achievements. Korean mothers' perception, seeing their children as extensions of their own social beings, explains why mothers make their children fulfill their own unrealized dreams (Kim & Choi 1994; Cho Hae-Joang 1995).

Confronting social obstacles for their self-realization, many mothers choose to embrace self-sacrificing instrumental motherhood. Mothers are subject to culturally prescribed roles and the interest of their families, most importantly their children's educational successes. Many South Korean mothers seek self-actualization through their children's achievements and their symbiotic relationship with their children. Korean women remain silent in front of such institutional discouragement and discrimination against women. In spite of institutional obstacles and social stereotypes against women in Korea, women's rights movements are not vigorous enough and the majority of women are indifferent to such movements. Rather, they are essentially confined to their households and exercise their power over their nuclear family members. They are so preoccupied with their families' economic security and socioeconomic status that they fail to recognize the reasons why the society needs to be changed. They only try to improve their status and gain public recognition through the successes of their husbands and their children. Therefore, they invest huge financial and psychological resources for their children's education. They push their children to live better lives than theirs. Korean women suffer from "false consciousness," which is shown by their sense that their children can be successful if they help them and their children do their best in their current situations. Such a sense of openness contributes to justifying social inequalities. This only leads to their sacrifice for their husbands and children at the expense of their own self-realization.

Supervising children's education was considered to be Korean middle-class housewives'

most important role. Therefore, they organized their children's extracurricular activities: they hired private tutors or they had their children enroll in supplementary classes at private cram schools in order for them to get better grades at school. According to Lee Kwang Kyu (1998),

[Young children] are sent to expensive kindergartens and in addition to the local schools, they are sent to private supplementary schools for music, painting, and gymnastics. At times such a mother intervenes in school activities or problems and even intrudes into the selection of friends. In such cases, the children are, in effect, the focus of their mothers' personal ambitions, and many children do fulfill the mother's expectation (258).

They even intervene in their children's selection of friends, judging children based on their parents' jobs and wealth. Many mothers even gave bribes to the teachers to ask them to give special care to their children (Cho Hae-Joang 1998:202; Lim 2007: 91; Nelson 2000:158).

Korean mothers are portrayed as selfish and even greedy abusers of their children. Cho Hae-Joang (2002) takes a critical stance against middle-class mothers' selfish and competitive spirits in that these mothers caused many social ills and increased their children's emotional struggles.²¹ Rowan (1999, 2000) attributes Korean mothers' self-centeredness to their marginal status within a society. He writes, "Scapegoating of *ajumma*²² stabilizes the forces of hierarchy and patriarchy as they work on Korea's economic and political agendas" (Rowan 2000:234). Due to the institutionalized discrimination of women's pursuit of self-realization, children are their essential tools to exercise power in their society. They have struggled to gain recognition and self-realization through their children's educational achievements. In such a process, it seems

²¹ Kim T'ae Hyŏng (2006) reports on the drastic increase in the teenagers who are diagnosed as suffering from anxiety disorders. Even elementary school students have chronic stress-related illnesses such as stomachache and hair-loss. In 2006, 664 people committed suicide in the age group between five and twenty-four (one in the ages between five and nine, 35 between ten and 14, 198 between 15 and 19, and 430 between 20 and 24) (SRI 2008). In this year, an elementary school student committed suicide because he did not want to study. The same report indicates that 21.5% of middle and high school students experienced violence in school (41).

²² This word originally means "aunt," but it is more generally used to indicate most married women. Because *samonim*, whose literal meaning is "teacher's mother," is often used in the formal situations, *ajumma* nuances disrespect.

unavoidable for a mother to develop strong emotional dependency on her children in order to secure her status within her society and family.

Mothers' excessive participation in their children's education was suggestive of "a proxy war" in which mothers are the main players and their children are only toy soldiers. Many Korean parents believe that their children's educational successes can compensate for their own mediocrity. The regrets of their past school experiences and blame for their parents' lack of supports turn into the energy that fuels the parental passion for children's education.²³ These parents share optimism that their support can better their children's future. The parents' intervention is intended to offer the best support they can afford. To them, money spent on their children's private education is an investment for the children's future and security for their aged life.²⁴ The family transforms into a site from which they can obtain social recognition and power. This tendency is deeply rooted in the collectivistic orientation of culture and familism by which each individual member of the family is bound as the one. Mothers' identity is fused with their children's; they enact their selves through constant symbiotic relationships with their children and project their dreams on children's lives. On the other hand, a mother identifies her child's accomplishments and well-being as her own. In such a social atmosphere, a child is expected to become a warrior who upholds the honor of the family. Mothers turn into domineering and oppressive figures in terms of their children's education to secure stable status in a male-

²³ The parents' expectation that the affluent material support they provide should bring their children a better outcome is easily exposed by occasional rebukes, "When we were young, we did well without anybody's help. Now you have everything and we are willing to provide anything you need to study. Why can't you focus on studying?"

²⁴ Providing financial support to the elderly parents is an essential part of filial piety. The more young parents need to put their financial resources into their children's education, the weaker their duty toward their parents becomes. As adult children's financial dependence on their elderly parents is becoming a social problem, more and more parents come to wish their children would live without asking for any further financial help of them.

dominated world and gain public recognition as “wise mothers.”²⁵

Mothers of children who were admitted to prestigious universities were highly honored.

A mother in her late forties with three college students said:

When I was young, having rich parents was the best. Around the time I got married, most of my friends envied the ones who got married to the rich man. One of them is still rich and lives like a queen in the Tower Palace.²⁶ Years later, however, things changed. At my age, everybody looks up to the mothers who raise their children well and make them go to prestigious colleges. Rich ones who have problem kids cannot even raise their faces in social gatherings of friends.

This implies that a mother’s success is measured by her children’s achievements, which is also the most vital marker for a woman’s success. By supporting children’s successful starts, Korean mothers can contribute to honoring their husbands’ patrilineages, and their services are publicly recognized. Lee Kwang Kyu (1998) explains this by saying, “in modern Korean society, people dedicate themselves to the reputation of their families and identify themselves through the success of their offspring” (262). This implies that Koreans have a very distinct form of family-based identity. According to this cultural belief, parents’ sacrifices for their children are taken for granted and the success of children compensates for their parents’ exertions. Family honor is a symbolic mechanism which contributes to uniting individual members of the family. Therefore, Korean parents feel that providing their children with favorable learning environments is their most important responsibility. This idea can be traced back to the indigenous belief in the continuation of life through a family line.

There is certain ambivalence about maternal intervention in children’s education. Despite the trenchant criticism on oversolicitous education moms, many ordinary mothers agree that they

²⁵ A mother has become a dominant figure in her nuclear family. Her status and power, however, are conditional. Without her children’s educational achievement, their status cannot be secured.

²⁶ This is the name of high-rise apartment complex known as the place the richest people in Korea live.

cannot just let their children fall behind their peers. For their children's educational successes, therefore, these mothers do not mind learning the know-how from other mothers with experience and information. This is why many mothers with school-aged children become enthusiastic about "catching up with mothers in *Taech'idong*"²⁷ (*Taech'idong Ömma Ttarajapkki*). *Taech'idong ömma* refers to mothers of affluent families who are willing to provide any necessary financial and psychological resources for their children's education. These mothers guide their children's studies based on the thorough analysis of their aptitudes, talents, and study habits (Choi Sö-Yöng 2005). Stingy in sharing valuable tips with other mothers, these education mothers only exchange them with whom mothers who they form strategic ties. (Kim Jae-Kyoung 2003).

The collectivistic cultural orientation and the emphasis on mother-child symbiosis make the Korean model of mothering self-sacrificial and instrumental for children's successful lives. The actual degrees of maternal involvement in children's academic activities are varied by social class, mothers' levels of education and employment, and residential types (apartment or house) and location; but most ordinary mothers' everyday practices revolve around children's schooling. Mothers' increasing dependence on private education threatens the maternal sovereignty in childrearing and education. A mother of two high school students confessed to me: "Only well-educated parents can provide children with proper support (*Tuipparajihada*)... What a shame since I don't know what to do for my children!" Like this mother, many South Korean mothers feel diffidence about their own decisions for their children and become dependent on other professionals. To teach Korean alphabets to their toddlers, for example, most young Korean mothers simply hire worksheet-tutors (*haksöppi kyosa*) rather than trying to teach by themselves as their own mothers did for them. They believe that dry nurses at a daycare center (*örini jip*) are

²⁷ *Taech'idong* is these days the foremost and hottest area in the degree of parental zeal for children's education.

better than themselves (Shin Kŏng-Ah 1998). Whenever the government's new education-related agenda is released, parents who have been dependent upon specialists for private education tend to resort to them again because they believe that the private education system is more reliable than the constantly changing education system.

“Educational Exodus” and “Wild Goose Family” (*Kirŏgi Kajok*)

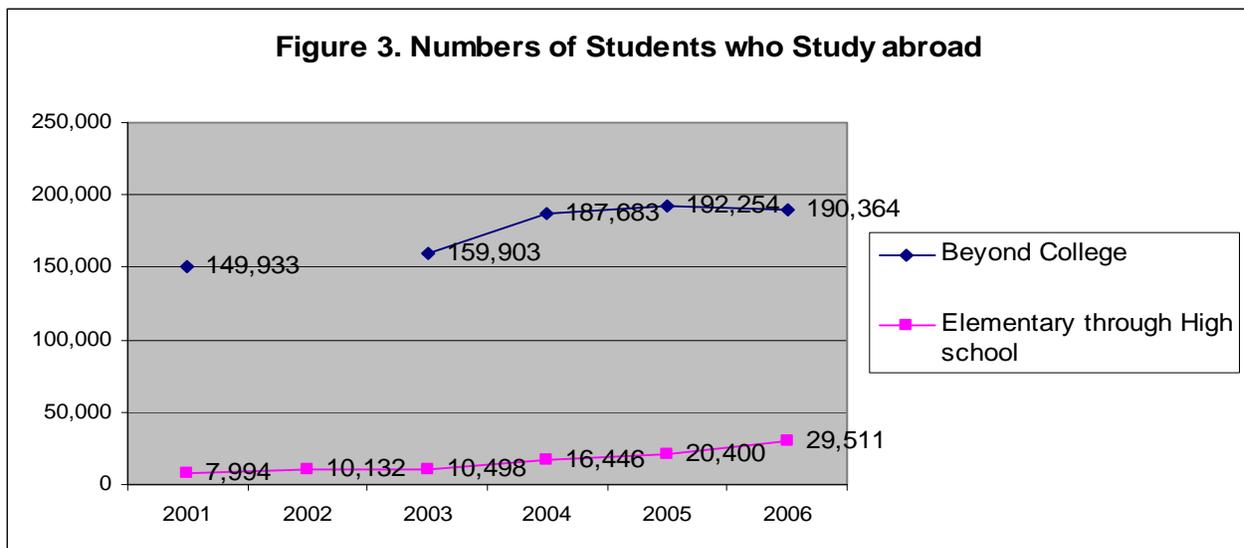
Better educational opportunities have been a central motive for emigration among South Korean parents. The so-called “educational exodus” at the end of 1990s was stimulated by the collective anxieties about the crippled operation of the public education system, going alongside the economic insecurity of layoffs as well as forced early retirement after the 1997 financial crisis. Because an increasing number of young professionals have been leaving the country for their children's better educational opportunities, the exodus is seen as serious “brain drain.” As parents perceive English as essential in a globalized future society, the exodus accelerates.²⁸

Many middle-class parents' anxieties about their children's future increased when they heard news reports that even the top-notch colleges in Korea fall short of the global standards. Some affluent families support their youngsters by sending them to study in foreign countries, such as the U.S. and Canada (Seth 2002:256).²⁹ The “wild goose family” (*Kirŏgi Kajok*), a type of family in which the father remains in Korea to support his family abroad for children's

²⁸ Many parents I have met tend to perceive that the U.S. public education system would be better than any schools in Korea. Research suggests that 43.1 percent of parents with school-aged children want their children study abroad if they can afford it (Kim & Kim 2006:53). According to KNSO 2007, the number of emigrants reached at the peak in 2001 and has decreased since. But this decrease is due to the relatively closed door of the host countries, not the decrease in the number of people who want to emigrate.

²⁹ As of the end of 2006, according to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the number of Korean students who study in the U.S. is 93,728, which is the largest among international students. Following Korean students, there are 76,708 Indian students, 60,850 Chinese students, and 45,820 Japanese students (Kim Tong-Won 2008).

education has recently been another serious social problem in South Korea (Cho Uhn 2004b, 2005; Onish 2008). The frantic trend for studying abroad is a result of the increasing importance of English in the global economy and the dissatisfactory quality of domestic educational institutions. Figure 3 indicates that the number of young students who are leaving for study abroad increased 3.7 times for the five years from 2001 to 2006. In 2005, six out of ten students chose English-speaking countries (KEDI 2005). This number does not include children who leave the country as dependents of students or employees. Long-term separation may destroy the traditional family structure and relationship, but many take it for granted that parents should endure such temporary sacrifice for their children's better future.



(KNSO 2007)

Due to the growing popularity of studying abroad, the amount of remittance has rapidly increased. According to the report from the Bank of Korea, the total amount has increased more than fivefold for the last five years (Kim Chi-Ŭn 2007). This news article reports on a mother obtained a loan of 600 million won (six million dollars) for her son's study abroad and finally

decided to commit suicide because of the stress caused by her responsibility of supporting his education. The report also cites Kim Sŏng-Suk, a professor who conducted in-depth interviews with “wild-goose” fathers: “Most fathers I met during my research remit 50-80% of their annual salaries, but there are cases where fathers send their whole income to their families in foreign countries.” A college professor said, “I remit my entire salary to my wife and children in America. My heart is full with the thought that my children are educated to become competent persons in the global society (*Kŭlobal Injae*)” (Cho Min-Chin 2006). Parents’ zeal for their children’s education and their distrust in the public education system make these fathers willingly submit to separating from their young children and spouses and pay for it.

Summary and Discussion

The combination of the deep-seated tradition seeing education as a status-enhancing tool, the increasing value of children due to their decreasing number within a household, and the growing private supplementary education market have created a so-called “education fever” in South Korea. The whole nation is a huge laboratory. The policy makers carry out drastic reforms in the education system to make the nation more competitive in the globalizing world. This series of educational reforms have caused more confusion to parents and students. The unpredictable and unstable educational policy makes students increasingly dependent upon the private education. Despite various educational experiments, the society as a whole fails to provide young children with opportunities for socialization and self-realization, as well as to equip them with better academic skills and knowledge for their futures. Schools have become a nominal institution that children must attend to get report cards. Parents, dissatisfied with standardized school education, are conducting various experiments to maximize their children’s academic

potential and their chances for prestigious college entrance. They discredit the government and the education system, and become increasingly dependent upon private educational institutes. Many parents help their children within the limits of the current school system by selecting the best private institutions or hiring good tutors within their budget. Some parents, who lack faith in the Korean educational system, are leaving the country solely to provide a better education for their children.

As the children's educational attainments and entrance to prestigious universities have increasingly been considered as essential for upward social mobility, most middle-class mothers make their children's educational achievements the number one priority just like the frugal wives in the 1970s considered the purchase of a house the most important project (Yun 2001). Neo-liberal transformation of the education system incites harsher peer competition and parents' stronger zeal for their children's educational successes (Park 2007). Due to the collectivistic orientation of Korean culture, mothering style and mother's everyday decisions for her child are more likely to be under the influence of public discourses and educational policy. Children are driven into *hagwŏn*, where they are expected to work hard to achieve higher academic successes or to improve their school grades. Because one's grades and ranks in class are visible and easily comparable with other children, mothers who take charge of children's education become sensitive to the gaze of others and easily tempted to control their children's lives to pursue higher academic achievements. The family, as an institution, is forced to adapt to the competitive social environment. Parents do not mind living separately to benefit their children's education.

The discourse on the school crisis leads to massive parental anxieties. The ineffective college entrance exam and the student evaluation based on the percentile ranks in class promote excessive competition among peers (and mothers). The competition is even more intensified due

to the social reality that a brighter future is open only to the few who have better academic credentials. The meaning of education is monopolized by overachievers and many students who left behind the competition consider themselves as losers. Such social stigmas degenerate children's self-esteem and take away their chances to develop positive self-concept. Such a competitive learning environment deprives young students of freedom and decreases the chances of the enjoyment of learning.

Without trusting their own maternal instinct, if there is such a thing, to protect their children, they are swayed by the hegemonic discourse on adequate mothering and the meanings on motherhood. South Korean mothers lose control over their mothering practices. Instead of building intimate relationships with their children based on trust and warm love, the majority of mothers exercise their power to drive their children to compete with others at school for the sake of their own glory. Therefore, children's interest and aptitudes need to be sacrificed. Traditional divisions of labor, collectivistic cultural orientation, mobility-centered capitalistic culture, and hierarchical structure of secondary schools and universities all contribute to making South Korean mothers more controlling and dominant. Colleges and high schools are hierarchically ranked while the better jobs and opportunities are given to the few who have better credentials. To live a better life, children are forced to sacrifice their childhood and to survive "hell-like" competition at school. This trend has already caused many problems, such as an increasing number of students who fail to adjust to school, school violence, and so on.

In this chapter, I described two opposing aspects of South Korean education mothers: strict disciplinarians (Cumings 1997:160) and devoted maids (Seth 2002:246), which are two different representations of maternal dominance. The patterns of mothering change according to the child's developmental stages. Young children who are afraid of their own mothers must grow

up and begin to see their mothers' interference in their studies as annoying. As a child grows up, the coercive mothers change the way of treating their increasingly rebellious children. Mothers willingly become subservient to their children and continuously intervene in their children's education. Most mothers share high levels of discontent with the current educational system. For their own self-preservation or for the sake of their children, however, the mothers just push their children to survive through the inhumane competition at school. In either case, they repudiate their "true" selves and desires for self-enhancement, and reject what their children really want. As a result, they become satisfied with their auxiliary role in educating their children and reorganize their everyday lives to suit their children's extracurricular activity schedules. They fail to discover their agency and doubt their caring capability for their children. In sum, these mothers subject themselves to culturally-laden duties and dominate their children to enhance their status and the welfare of their families.

CHAPTER FOUR

ON THE WAY TO HOMESCHOOLING

The First Impression

One hot summer day of 2004 in Korea, the People's Solidarity of Alternative Education (*Tae'an Kyoyuk Yǒndae*) held a workshop to discuss a revision of the educational law under review, which included the legalization of alternative schools. Just before the scheduled time, a group of homeschooling mothers gathered at the corner of the hall. Chin-Söp's mother said that that workshop would be very important because one representative from the ministry of education might be attending to collect public opinions. She stressed that the most important reason for their attendance at the workshop was to let the representative from the Ministry of Education know the existence of homeschoolers and she mentioned that she would ask him about the refund of education tax.

As soon as she finished, Woo-Chin's mother began to speak in quite a fiery tone. "I want to ask him what is going on with the new college entrance system." She explained that the new system would encourage colleges to select students solely based on their school records and she worried that homeschoolers without formal school records would be disadvantaged in this new system. She was the mother of two boys who dropped out of a middle school two months before.

What am I going to do for my two sons? These days, I really regret what I did for my sons. Didn't we start home schooling because it is in easier way (than regular schools) for our children to go to college? I wanted my kids to go to college with less effort.

Her remarks stayed with me and presented several fundamental questions: why did these mothers make their children quit schools and what did they expect to get from home schooling? I knew that these thoughts were merely part of her concerns and there were more complex reasons and

circumstances behind her decision for home schooling. From that day on, I began to suspect that people might use homeschooling as a strategy to give their children better chances to be admitted to colleges. Because the workshop was going to begin, the brief meeting ended without a productive outcome. When the meeting was dismissed, Chin-Söp's mother said, "Let's make our home schools better so that we do not have to send our children abroad for study." She might have been critical to the current trend, but her last remark sounded as if home schooling was her alternative to rich children's studying abroad.

At the workshop, more than 50 alternative school teachers and parents were packed into a small, multi-purpose room. A heated discussion ensued. I could feel anger and animosity against the public education system and inefficient government policy. Many weighed pros and cons. Since their children had to take qualification exams even after the legalization, they did not have a lot to gain. Perhaps the one thing that would change is they would no longer be labeled as law breakers. A dominant opinion was that alternative schools should not be legalized because legalization would cause more intervention from the government. A father of an alternative school student argued that many people seemed to forget why they started an alternative school. He reminded the participants of the fact that the alternative school movement was a way to resist government and power, so he strongly objected to having alternative schools under government influence.

The Search for Alternatives

Many scholars and activists argue that there have been problems in the modern education system from its onset (Holt 1990; Holt & Farenga 2003; Illich 1971; Reimer 1971). As a part of the globalization project, the government imported the liberal educational system. Beginning in

the mid 1990s, South Korean educational system adopted learner-centered (*haksŭppjjajungsim*) curricula in order to foster students' autonomy (*chayul*) and creativity (*ch'angŭi*). The 1997 financial crisis, which caused the shrunken domestic job market and the unstable domestic economy, plunged many Koreans into emotional turmoil. Anxious about their own financial security, parents gradually realized that the education system was lagging behind the rapidly changing global society. Awakened from the narcissistic pride in the nation's growing economy, people in this "Hermit Kingdom" began to grope for various educational options for their children. As discussed in the previous chapter, the majority of parents apparently believed that their children would need to be stronger to survive in a competitive world and would need to learn how to cope with harsh social realities through schooling. Growing numbers of parents have begun to look for better educational opportunities for their children outside of the existing educational system. Skeptical about their children's future, some parents even emigrate or send their children to foreign countries. In this chaotic educational landscape, some parents who seek alternative vision for their children's future take their children out of the school system and begin their own home schools.

Parents in the 386 Generation and their Resistance

The number 386 originally indicates a micro processor of the personal computer used in the early 1990s. This outdated model symbolizes the generation between the older generation (*kusedae*) who grew up in the preindustrial feudalistic past and the new generation (*sinsedae*) who are growing up in a highly industrialized democratic society. People who were in their thirties, when this term was coined, were born in the 60s, and went to college in the 80s are called "the 386 generation" (*sampalyuk sedae*). This generation, as children, experienced

economic growth and visible social transformations from a rural agrarian society into an urban industrial society. As a result, they grew up receiving greater attention from their parents in the nuclear family setting. These circumstances make them more self-assertive and individualistic. People in this generation were educated under a politically dictatorial regime and experienced the democratization movement during their college years. They witnessed the power of the people and subversion of the dictatorship in the end of 1980s. Han Sang-Chin (2003) characterizes this generation as “de-conventional” and “strong commitment to ideology” (12). He describes the character of this generation:

Without settling down anywhere, they continuously reflect themselves and challenge what has been taken for granted. This de-conventional attitude, which breaks away social conventions, is the essence of the 386 generation... [T]he hallmark of the 386 generation is to throw questions and to try to break through social conventionalities (12).

When parents in this generation look back at their school experience, it was full of unpleasant memories: authoritarian teachers, rote-memorization, and examinations. When they compare their experience with the current situation their children are facing, they realize that it is even worse than before.

In her autobiographical novel, Kong Chi-Yǒng (1995) recalls her school days full of violence, hypocrisy, and coercion at schools. The individual had no power to decide his or her future. Elementary school was chosen based on a student’s home address and middle and high school were arbitrarily determined. The individual had to submit to external power and authority.

Becoming a parent of a student is not something exciting. My child appears to feel the same way. It seems because she has already finished three years of kindergarten. Suddenly, my own admission ceremony came into my mind. I feel sorry for my daughter. If anyone asked me if I want to become ten or twenty years younger, I must shake my head. The suggestion is very attractive. If I can be rejuvenated, however, I would probably have to go back to school. I detest school even though it gives me my youth ten times (113-114).

In their critical and unconventional minds of some 386 generation parents,¹ compulsory schooling means submission to the kind of institutional violence. Uniform school curricula and inefficient pedagogic styles fail to cultivate students' individualities and maximize their potentials. They feel increasingly responsible for saving their children from this militant school environment which is governed by the monolithic goal of winning over others. Once used to fight against the dictatorial regime, the spirit of resistance and unconventionality is revived. In the struggle to seek an alternative, they raised their voices to criticize the structural flaws of the education system and to attack the militant learning environment. Through their own schooling experiences, they have learned that learning based on teachers' authority and rote-memorization is not working anymore. In the post-industrial society, the inundation of information technology requires a new type of education, which can promote creativity and individuality, and the contents of learning should be changed to the knowledge-based in order to meet the needs of the rapidly changing global society.

The parents in the 386 generation share a sympathetic attitude toward their children who are stressed out by exams and the supplementary courses which continue after school even after midnight. The fierce competition at school suffocates children and guarantees nothing. Because the government-led education reforms have caused more confusion and problems, people distrust any bureaucratic intervention in their children's education. In an essay, contributed to a newspaper, titled "What is School?" Yi Chu Hön (2007) wrote:

¹ It may not be proper to associate homeschooling and alternative school movements with the general characteristics of the 386 generation because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, people in this generation contributed to expanding the private education industry as popular instructors and program developers as well as educational consumers. It is also true, however, that the drastic transformation of the South Korean educational landscape, which is caused by the continuous tensions between reforms and resistance, can be understood by the spirits of the 386 generation, which are "self-reflection" and "resistance."

Schools should be a resting place in which children can enjoy their free time. Relaxation and leisure can motivate students to think independently, share what they think, unfold their opinions, and craft their crude ideas to more sophisticated ones. If a school cannot provide such a space and works like a desolate factory, it is not a school any more... My second son rejected advancing to middle school because of too much study at school.

Schools have become monstrous institutions, which consume childhood. Competitive learning environments and authoritarian pedagogic approaches deprive young students of autonomy and freedom. Children have lost their free spirits in order to adapt to the coercive learning environment.

Table 3. Educational Contents which should be more emphasized than offered in present curricula

	Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	First choice	First-third choice	First choice	First-third choice	First choice	First-third choice
Environment and Ecology	17.8	52.4	5.2	17.0	2.6	10.0
Sex and Sexuality	6.4	31.7	19.9	49.8	6.6	21.1
Foreign Languages	5.1	24.8	13.2	49.3	10.4	42.8
Chinese Characters	2.2	21.8	2.7	17.0	0.7	5.4
Computer Skills	3.8	20.3	4.6	19.7	2.1	8.4
Unification with N. Korea	0.6	3.0	0.8	5.3	0.5	6.1
Career Development	0.6	3.4	4.8	24.0	32.8	68.9
Personality Development	51.9	83.8	38.1	66.0	25.6	52.2
Civil Education	11.3	54.8	9.4	37.7	7.9	35.3
International Relations	0.3	4.1	1.4	14.2	10.9	50.0
Total	100.0	300.0	100.0	300.0	100.0	300.0

(Adopted from Kim & Kim 2006)

N=1,200

A somewhat exaggerated portrait of “education fever” in Korea makes us fail to see what Korean parents really expect from schools. Table 3 shows that not all parents have a single goal for their children’s academic achievements. As a child grows, parents stress more on career development; however, the majority of parents expect that school should become more

responsible for students' development. In other words, most Korean parents want their children to grow up as whole persons with mature personality and capability to plan and pursue their own careers. They expect that school education should accommodate their wishes. The discrepancies between parental expectations and actual school curricula focusing on academic activities, and between the parents' philosophy of education, and the actual pedagogic tactics employed at schools add more concerns and anxieties to parents. A mother in her late thirties shared with me her experience of coping with the educational reality.

Since I got pregnant, I sent my four-year old son to a day-care center (*ōrini jip*) to let him have his fun. Everyday after he came back from the day-care center, he told me he was scolded. I naturally assumed that my son was too prankish to go on the spree and told him to try to be a little quieter when he was around many other children. But he explained to me that he got scolded because he did not know the answer to some questions a teacher asked.... The day-care center teachers teach basic math skills and Korean alphabets. Because my son entered the program in the middle of the year, he obviously did not know the answer to the question.... A couple of days later, I visited the day-care center and complained to the head of the center. She seemed a little surprised with a mother like me. She explained that all other mothers really like their children to learn something at the day-care center and added that the children would be out of control without teaching.

As in this day-care center, the institutionalized education uses teaching as a way to control children.

In the mid-1990s, the influence of liberal educational philosophy,² political conviction, and religious faith caused mothers to reinterpret the meaning of motherhood and appropriate maternal roles. Resisting the extremely cooperative and discipline-oriented learning environment,

² Even before, in the 1980s, A. S. Neill's revolutionary educational philosophy and images of happy students at Summer Hill, introduced through media evoked the public curiosity in alternative schools and their possibilities. For students in the prison-like school system under the authoritarian political regime, Summer Hill looked as if it was a heaven on earth and contributed to stretching people's imagination for educational alternatives. When they became parents later, they would try to contrive the way to make their old dream come true for their children's generation.

they believe in children's autonomy and creativity, nature-friendly curricula, and the ideals of community and cooperation. They became aware that parental overcontrol causes children's lack of capability to do things by themselves. Gradually, they adopt a permissive parenting style. Therefore, they become the subjects of their children's lives and take an active part in their children's learning and other activities at kindergarten-level childcare (Chung Byung-Ho 2001; Yun Taek-Rim 2002:157). These mothers realized the importance of raising children as "mature citizens" and "creative individuals." Rather than becoming competitive parents, some parents who share similar beliefs and goals joined forces together to establish "Cooperative Childcare" (*Kongdongyuga*) for their preschoolers.³

Students' Rebellion

College entrance has been the number one priority in school-based education. Such a monolithic goal, popularly shared by most parents and teachers, has caused pathological frenzy in education. Even elementary students start preparing for the exam to get in prestigious high schools, which might improve their chances of getting in the prestigious universities. High school students are forced to study at school from the early morning to midnight because of the competition among schools for a higher college entrance rate. In such a situation, non-college-bound students are considered failures. Limited choice of elective courses, boring classroom environments, and strict regulations about the length of hair and the way to wear uniforms, all make them feel that the school signifies oppression and they decide to get out of the school. An

³ In private kindergartens, the heads decide virtually everything about management and curriculum and there is very limited room for parental intervention in such matters. In Cooperative Childcare, however, parents pay approximately six to eight thousand dollars for a down payment, and 450 dollars for monthly tuition. Because parents partially own the institutes, parents can take more part in the decision-making process regarding management and other educational activities.

increasing number of students voluntarily give up formal schooling because they consider it to be a waste of time or even an obstacle for them to prepare their future careers. They expect more practical learning with more specialized knowledge which can be used in real life. Some students dissatisfied with authoritarian teachers and their pedagogic approaches also seek alternatives for their education. Unable to accommodate students' diverse expectations, the current school problems cause more and more dropouts.⁴ This phenomenon is often called "*talhakkyo*," literally meaning "getting out of school." Many of these dropouts want to develop themselves with some practical skills or continue their study to go to college. They are often called "outschooler" in that they pursue learning outside of school. The number of these students was rapidly growing. The growth of private education business and the Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) make easier for these students to study outside of schools. Recent years, the central and local governments financed various activities to develop alternative programs for these dropouts.⁵

Children in the upper grades of elementary school who have an aversion toward their teachers' authoritarian attitudes and learning by rote-memorization, willingly give up going on to middle schools. While some often struggle with their conservative parents, who see the school system as the only option, others can start with their parental support. In the Sŏn-kyŏng's case, she wanted to leave school for the wide range of study and she could start homeschooling with the full support of her parents. Her mother explained the process of deciding homeschooling like this:

When Sŏn-kyŏng was in the sixth grade, she told me, "Mom, I want to quit school. I wish I can learn more in depth. In school, I have to memorize what teachers

⁴ In 2004, 38,202 students dropped out of school (14,165 middle school students and 24,037 high school students, 0.7 % and 1.4% respectively) (KEDI 2005a).

⁵ Seoul Alternative Learning Community Network is an exemplary organization funded by the City of Seoul, which provides various activities for the outschoolers and programs for alternative school teachers.

lecture to take test but forget everything after exams. I don't think this is the right way to learn. I want to try some other ways of learning." I trusted her, but, at the same time, I was afraid what other people think. She might be disadvantaged later..... She might be seen as a problem kid even though she doesn't have any problem at all. As you know, there are lots of mothers out there who put all the blame upon schools and teachers without admitting their children's faults. I am not that kind of mother... Because leaving school was what she really wanted, I should answer yes to her.

Ch'ang-Hun was a high school freshman who struggled with his homeroom teacher's unfair treatment. He finally decided to leave school. His father visited his teacher to complain about favoritism and asked him to persuade his son to go back to school. At the meeting, the teacher did not admit and had no intention whatsoever of correcting his unfair treatment of Ch'ang-Hun. The angry father consented Ch'ang-Hun's dropping out. For the mother, the abrupt situation was difficult to handle because she could not conceive any other ways of educating her son. She said,

Who can understand my half-burned heart? My husband was so angry at the teacher and it would be better for my son to drop out of the school. I kept trying to persuade Ch'ang-Hun to go back to school. But he wouldn't listen to me any more... Because I remembered that the kid in my neighborhood jumped out of a high-rise apartment building, I worried about my son, who might commit suicide... I had to give my consent to my son... For a while, I had problems seeing my son at home. Imagine that you have to spend all day in the same apartment with your kid who previously spent all day at school so that you could hardly see him at home? My depression came back. I had a really hard time. I don't know how I got through all of this.

A year later when I met Ch'ang-Hun's mother again, she seemed a little stabilized. She had a job to support Ch'ang-Hun's private education. Then, he was taking English lesson twice a week for two hours per session and attending a full-time college-preparatory program at a *hagwŏn*.

The Alternatives and Alternative Schools

The government's top-down education reforms result in the downward equalization of

students' scholastic ability. People need a new type of education which can promote autonomous learning and creativity. To meet their needs, the alternative education movement burgeoned in the mid-1990s. It was right after the birth of Civilian Government (Feb. 1993-Feb. 1998). Since a civilian leader in the democratization movement was elected president in 1992, student activism, which had focused on democratization of the nation, revised its long-term goals and expanded the domains of social reform into ecology, education, and human rights. The neoliberal reform of education in 1995 and the increasing number of dropouts made some parents reach a consensus on the urgent necessity of alternative schools. The child-centered liberal pedagogic philosophies emphasizing children's autonomy ignited parental fantasy of a creative child with ceaseless desire for learning.⁶

The significant gaps between school education and the parents' diversified expectations must have led to the alternative education boom. The first alternative school was founded in 1995 and the early alternative schools were established for drop-outs or problem students who were struggling at conventional schools. In the 2000s, various types of alternative schools have been established to meet increasingly various demands from parents who value creativity of their children or worry about deteriorating school environments and school violence. Parents who gained confidence and had joyful experiences from Cooperative Childcare extended their movement to another level. They established alternative elementary schools in which they could actively participate in organizing curricula and recruiting teachers.⁷ The importance of English causes the emergence of English alternative schools, which adopt U.S. curricula and textbooks

⁶ Many alternative schools espouse Rudolf Steiner's liberal educational philosophy. Pedagogical details have been developed, and their effectiveness has been proven by a worldwide network of Waldorf Schools.

⁷ Through study groups, they share the philosophical foundations for the meanings of school and new lifestyle.

and use English as a primary language of instruction.

Depending upon what one sees as a problem, from what perspective one sees the problem, and how one diagnoses the problem, each has a different vision about what the alternative school is supposed to be like. There are two types of alternatives: (1) alternative seeking something new within the existing paradigm and (2) alternative seeking a whole new paradigm (Kim & Hwang 2001). Most parents seek an “educational alternative,” which aims at improving the quality of learning environment and enhancing children’s competitiveness. These people may stress children’s creativity and the role of education as maximizing their potentials. Creativity they emphasize is just a skill which can bring better educational outcomes. It is not what can lead children to the self-actualization (Maslow 1968; Rivero 2002). Being in a league with a market-oriented approach toward education, they stress educational alternatives to strengthen the nation’s competitiveness and claim more choices to the educational consumers. Hyŏn Pyŏng-Ho (2004) points out that education is seen as a strategic instrument of enhancing national prosperity, controlling power and money, and inciting the desire for domination. Such an education system only promotes violence and conflict.

As “a new lifestyle,” alternative education inclines to emphasize the community-based life in which peace, communication, and ecology are the major elements. Therefore, many alternative education advocates attach great importance to historical meanings of alternative education. They see the alternative school movement not as the end of modern education but as the beginning of post-modernity. As echoed in a father’s voice at the workshop, the *raison d’être* of alternative education lies not in the provision of better educational opportunities for their children, but in the counterforce to fight against a society full of social ills, such as

authoritarianism, academic cliquism, and materialism. They do not want their original intentions for building a stepping-stone for social change to fade away.

Based on their fundamental philosophy of learning, some alternative schools provide children with unlimited freedom.⁸ Many parents are content with such free learning environments because they have never had such. They expect that the free learning environment at alternative schools would help their children to discover their true interests, to become voluntarily engaged in academic activities, and to enhance their hidden potentials. They give full support to their children's education at alternative schools. Soon, however, some of these parents become unsatisfied with the pedagogies of alternative schools, which previously appealed to them. The emphasis on freedom and spontaneous learning without teaching a fundamental part of education gradually disappointed parents who had to pay extensive tolls for their beliefs in alternative education.

The first Christian alternative school for dropouts was opened in 1999. Around that time, the erection of a Tangun⁹ statue in public schools provoked many Christian parents' attention, who believed it as idol worship. These parents increasingly became interested in alternative education. Because of their unique view on learning and history, Korean alternative schools incorporate Christian values and practices into their curricula and some schools use the U.S. curricula and English as the primary language of instruction. Many alternative education advocates, including Hyŏn (2004), warned this type of Christian alternative schools to renounce the educational sovereignty and to make negative impacts on children's growth to become mature citizens.

⁸ Yang Hŭi-Kyu (2005), a principal of an alternative school in South Korea, views the ultimate meaning of alternative education as "liberation of children from the prison [school]" (20).

⁹ A mythological founder of the nation.

It is known that there are around 100 alternative schools in S. Korea. Choosing alternative schools over conventional schools has certain disadvantages. Even after the legalization of alternative education in March 2005, students still have to pass qualification exams to become accredited for college admission.¹⁰ Also, the tuitions of some alternative schools are even higher than private college tuitions and the majority of Koreans still consider alternative schools as a place for problem kids. Despite such social prejudices and cumbersome processes, parents choose alternative schools because they believe that creativity is the most important resource in their children's future and liberal pedagogic approaches in alternative schools can cultivate and maximize their children's potentials.

Homeschooling in Korea Today

Most Koreans consider school as an essential place for child socialization. Recent media coverage about homeschooling and homeschooled children's exceptional achievements are slowly modifying these views.¹¹ The majority of people, however, still perceive homeschooling as a special education for child prodigies or children who fail to fit into the group-oriented school environment.

¹⁰ Regulations on Establishment and Management of Alternative Schools (*Taehanhaggyo Sölip Unyöngge Kwanhan Kyujöng*) on June 27, 2007 opens the possibility that students in small unaccredited alternative schools can enter a school of higher level without taking qualification exams. This new regulation allows the special task force organized by the head of provincial educational committee to assess the quality and level of alternative programs and decide if the students can get exemption from qualification exams.

¹¹ The most famous homeschooler must be Song Yu-Keun, a child prodigy who became a college student at the age of eight. His mother rejected sending him to an ordinary elementary school. Because he was too young to be eligible for the qualification exam to substitute for formal schooling, his mother brought a lawsuit against the government. Due mainly to his case, homeschooling became a synonym for meritocracy for gifted children. Homeschooling is still credited with producing highly capable children. For example, a news article introduces a homeschooled teenager as "who became a genius by himself for four years" (Chöng Si-Haeng 2006).

Support Networks

Like alternative schools, homeschooling in Korea is intersected with various motives: political resistance, educational advantage, and religious faith. Due to the lack of consensus in the overarching ideological goal and pedagogic practice, it is difficult to see a growing trend of homeschooling as “a social movement.” Despite parents’ apparently strong sentiment against public education system, they are just satisfied with their freedom to benefit their own children’s learning. Each family has its own goal and philosophy. In spite of their wide ideological pedagogical spectrum, it is most common that homeschooling parents tend to emphasize a more individualistic approach to cultivate their children’s idiosyncratic qualities. Homeschooling, therefore, goes against the conventional beliefs of learning. Learning is neither rote-memorization nor passive absorption of knowledge; rather, it is an interactive dialogic process. The two-dimensionality of knowledge expands to the three-dimensional realm of life-world. Homeschooling overturns the traditional authority of parents and teachers. Parents are just guides, but they often become fellow students.

Homeschooling is considered one of the key alternative ways of educating children, but it is still clouded by misunderstanding by the majority of people. In Korean way of social life, school is considered very important not only because Koreans consider education the most important thing in people's lives but also because school alumni networks are a key in a person's social life. To the majority of Korean parents, “home school” may still be a synonym for a type of group lesson offered at tutor’s home. Homeschooling is gaining popularity in S. Korea. In recent years, its educational advantages have come to the foreground and a growing numbers of parents and students have joined this new trend. Many parents and students who are interested in

homeschooling often use message boards on the web page of Mindle,¹² which issues bimonthly magazines about alternative education and homeschooling.

Currently, there are three major support networks in Korea: Haggyo Nŏmŏ (www.schoolbeyond.com), Korea Christian Homeschool Association (<http://khomeschool.com>), and Church Homeschool Network (<http://chnkorea.org>). Christian Alternative Education Association (www.caeak.com), founded in 2000, became a parent of the Christian Home Educator's Association Korea (CHEA KOREA). It was a web-based support network, regularly offering conferences for Christian homeschooling parents. Parents exchanged stories about personal experiences and curricula through the message boards on the website of CHEA. CHEA, initiated in 2002, evolved into aforementioned support networks to accommodate the needs of homeschooling families. In a non-Christian sector, *Kajŏng Haggyo Moim* (Home School meeting) in 1999 and *Sesangŭl Haggyorosamŭn Hagbumo Moim* (Meeting for parents who see the world as a school) in 2004 were organized, but did not last long. *Sesangŭl* was organized in 2004 with a goal to become a pivotal body to connect homeschoolers all over the nation; however, the organization has barely been kept in existence by parents who need special courses for their children.¹³ Since the courses were organized mostly for children in the middle school age, all regular participants have children about the same age and parents who have younger children have had to leave the organization. *Haggyo Nŏmŏ*, affiliated with Gandhi (alternative) school, began its mission as an on-line support network and expanded its roles to provide

¹² This publishing company issues bimonthly magazines with the same title, which are specialized in alternative education and homeschooling.

¹³ Unlike the conventional classes at school, these courses were designed to facilitate the interpersonal relationships among homeschoolers. The humanity classes were designed to broaden the individual student's interests and give him or her perspective on society and history. Such classes as Acting and Magic were organized to help homeschoolers develop interpersonal skills.

homeschoolers and drop-outs with special activities such as various types of learning camps.

Legalization

Current compulsory education law prescribes that all children must *attend* nine years of elementary and middle school. If anyone breaks this law, the legal guardian is charged a one million won fine (one thousand dollars). Despite the illegal status of homeschooling, no one has been fined and there have never been legal disputes related to homeschooling. By filing an application for the postponement of school education, children can be legally free from the school system. After the three-month-long class absence, students become eligible to take qualification exams for middle school admission or for high school admission. The passage of these exams substitutes for formal schooling.

In support of diversified educational opportunities, the government is now trying to legalize homeschooling. Right after this plan was released, it gained sharp criticism from both teachers and parents. The Teacher's Union (*Chǒngyojo*) warned that the new bill would negate the state's obligation to educate children and end up handing their education over to the private education industry. Homeschooling parents are worried that the wealthy families would take advantage of homeschooling as an elite education and their homeschooling would bring about a misconception about homeschooling. They are also concerned that the legalization would load them with extra burdens to meet the legal standards and the governmental regulations might cause fundamental damage to their educational practice. Even though the illegal status of homeschooling might limit parents' free choices over their children's education, paradoxically enough, the absence of regulations about homeschooling has let homeschooling parents choose curricula as they wish. Legalization would deprive homeschooling parents of autonomy over

curricula and load them with additional administrative burdens. Most homeschooling parents and advocates claim that the government should not interfere with their homeschooling because they can provide their children with better educational opportunities than the public schools do (Yi Ki-Woo 2003).

On Sociality (*sahoisǒng*)

Stevens (2001) claims the fundamental spirit of homeschooling, which emphasizes children's independence, is an American cultural phenomena. In such a socio-centric society as South Korea, homeschooling or leaving conventional places for learning and socialization might cause students to carry serious social stigmas. One of the main criticisms against it is based on the assumption that home schooled children must lack social skills which are crucial for social life. In January 2006, there was a debate regarding sociability on the *Mindle* website. It started with a posting on the message board by a mother named Shin:

Shin: I have been searching for alternative schools, but none of them fulfill my expectations. I am considering homeschooling because I want my child to have a joyful life. But I have to work... I don't like the curricula of the conventional schools. Should I quit my job to take care of my kid at home?

This on-line conversation attracted more than 500 hits in only two weeks. What follows is excerpted from the message board:

Kim: ... Even though you don't like both public schools and alternative schools, homeschooling may be even more stressful to you. What if things don't go as well as you expect? Try public schools for your kid. Then, you will get clearer ideas about what you really want... Besides, there are things kids need to learn among peers (at school)...

Cloud: In my opinion, kids should face each other, play together, quarrel and make peace, and learn to compromise and to care. These are how children develop sociality... In reality, homeschooled kids lack such opportunities and cannot develop social skills...

Happy Virus: ... I advise you to send your kid to go to school... Shouldn't it be the child's own decision to quit school?

Below the Spring: My oldest kid started homeschooling when he was in middle school. He was well-adjusted to school... But our different values made us begin homeschooling... How excited your kid must be to go to school! Your kid may be stronger than you think, and able to adjust to school pretty well. You seem to start worrying about your kid too early. Either for an alternative school or homeschooling, I basically believe that the child's own desire should be considered as at least 50% of the decision to homeschool.

Cloud: Just think about what growing children need most. If the children didn't say that they don't want to go to school, the parents should not deprive them of school days which can be filled with hopeful dreams.

Happy Virus: My memories of my school days are full of preparing for college, not having joyful dreams... How can you be so sure of homeschoolers' lack of sociality? Have you talked with some of them and tried to get to know them? Most homeschooled kids probably spent more time meeting people with various backgrounds than you think. Even though they don't share time with peers everyday, they learn how to live with others in different settings.

Cloud: If you homeschool your children because of your problems, it is obvious that your children cannot make friends who go to school...

A mother's question about her child's education turned into a heated debate as a person nicknamed "Cloud" attacked homeschooling as depriving children of opportunities to socialize.¹⁴

Cloud's criticisms or concerns about homeschooled children's lack of social skills show the typical reaction toward homeschooling in the Korean society. Another interesting part of this discussion is that even homeschooling parents do not support Shin's plan for homeschooling. They believe that homeschooling is supposed to be the child's own decision. They often blame parents who homeschool at the elementary level for ruining their children's future.

¹⁴ This person wrote a lengthy criticism. Since he deleted it after the strong counterattacks, I did not reproduce it here.

In Korean social life, as Alford (1999) discussed, the boundary (*uri*) determines “we-ness” (*uri*)¹⁵ and who you know is more important than what you know. If someone skips all the chances for building social networks through school, they might be able to gain some advantages of effective learning at home but permanently lose the crucial foundation of their successful social lives. At the same time, they missed the opportunities to develop social skills.

What is sociality? Can the school environment foster a child’s sociability? Chi-Hye’s mother believes that schools are the worst place to promote a child’s sociability. She said,

Undue parental intervention, children's dependency on tutors or *hagwŏn* instructors in school work, emotional pressure to survive through harsh competition at school... The process is of little importance and the outcome is what matters. Thus, children want to get better grades even though they have to cheat on the test.

Chin-Sŏp’s mother agrees with that. From her experience as a school teacher, she said,

Sharing friendship and helping each other are all ancient history. Today’s children don’t lend their notebooks to their friends. It’s all about competition. Some kids hid their competitors’ notebooks to prevent them from getting higher grades than them. Teachers encourage children to compete with each other to achieve more. Schools are not the places children make friends and play together, but battlegrounds. Children are divided by grade in schools. The older kids act superior and try to dominate children in the lower grades. It’s like playing soldiers.

To many homeschoolers who previously experienced the inhumane competition at school, schools fail to provide a safe environment for children’s socialization and growth. Rather, the militant nature of peer competition in school environments may even destroy children’s disposition to socialize with others. Chi-Ch’ŏl’s father said,

What do they mean by that? If that means having many friends, what is the good thing about it? They will keep bugging you to sell insurance and ask you to co-sign for a bank loan... Who has many friends these days? If one succeeds in his life, there will be many people looking for him and trying to be close to him.

¹⁵ Korean words for “boundary” and “we” are homonyms.

This cynical comment reflects today's socioeconomic reality, in which people are drawn to the rich and successful and take advantage of their friendship for their own successes. Because sociality does not simply mean the social skills of becoming acquainted with many people, it is not developed by spending more time with peers and maintaining shallow formal relationships with them for the extended period of time. It is a disposition to form interdependent, trustworthy, and intimate relationships with others. Homeschooling parents argue that school children have more problems in sociality than homeschooled children.

Because of the importance of sociality and the values of school-based education, the opposition from the extended family is not a matter to be taken lightly. Ye-Ŭn's father told me about the changes his family went through.

In the beginning, my father was really mad when I told him we were going to teach our 3 children at home. He said, "Are you going to make my grandchildren all big fools?" We had not talked for three months. Now, he is happier than anybody in my family because my children can spend more time with him. So I commissioned him to teach Chinese Classics. Now he is a teacher of my children.

Like Chi-Hye's family, the dispute over homeschooling is an unavoidable process because most people in the older generation believe school is the only way to gain proper education.

Avoidance of Private Education and Emphasis on Foreign Languages

Excluding homeschooling parents who take advantage of homeschooling as an educational shortcut or a way to promote academic excellence, most homeschooling mothers generally assume negative attitudes about education based on uniform school curricula and tend to avoid supplementary lessons at *hagwon* or through tutoring. In principle, unschooling mothers adhere to their conviction about their children's natural ability for spontaneous learning. These mothers mostly communicate with either unschooling parents or parents of students in alternative

schools who believe freedom and autonomy can lead to true learning. Some of them even think that attending private supplementary institutes will inhibit children's natural proclivity for autonomous learning.

The flexibility in organizing curricula and managing the schedule allows each homeschooling family to maintain its unique characteristics. When it comes to English education, however, homeschooling parents have the same zeal as, or even higher expectations than, schooling parents. Chi-Hye's mother said,

Speaking fluent English is not good enough for our children. They will be able to write perfect English to compete with the elites from other nations in a global world.

From her long sojourn in the U.S., she learned that the current trend of speaking-centered English education would not be good enough for her children to live the world of global competition. Because some of the homeschooling parents I interviewed teach English or run English institutes, parents who can teach English become an indispensable resource for the subject in their homeschooling curricula. Because many Christian homeschoolers use the U.S. homeschooling curricula based on a Christian worldview, English becomes a crucial part of learning. American missionaries and their active roles in the Christian homeschooling movement and many social gatherings inspire many young children to learn English more eagerly. These children take advantage of group lessons offered by American missionaries. Some parents encourage their children to watch American movies without subtitles everyday (among the families I have interviewed, Kyöng-Hui's family uses this approach intensively). Other than English, many families emphasize foreign languages in their home-based learning. Chinese and Japanese are popular choices. Some families travelled Japan or China to motivate their children to learn Japanese or Chinese. Chin-Söp's family hosts foreign visiting students to broaden their

children's views on other cultures and to encourage them to learn foreign languages.

Some of the mothers I interviewed were or are tutors or instructors of various subjects ranging from music to math and English. From their firsthand experience, all of them are deeply concerned that the private education has destroyed children's natural learning capabilities. Thereby, children become dependent upon supplementary programs at the private education, lose motivation for learning, and become computer-game addicts. In addition, Christian homeschooling parents are concerned about secular influences from children at *hagwŏn*. In order to instruct their children in subjects they cannot teach by themselves, these parents prefer to subscribe to the internet-based learning program.

Summary and Discussion

Due to the deep-seated tradition which values school-based learning and the collectivistic cultural orientation, South Korean homeschooling families are often stereotyped as social deviants who object to the group-oriented social life. Recently, the public recognition of homeschooling has gradually changed. The media illuminates some successful cases in homeschooling even though they are mostly academic examples. Such a media focus on the academic successes and pedagogic advantages of homeschooling has caused the public's misunderstanding about homeschooling as a special education for a child prodigy or an elite education only rich families can afford. In the sociocentric Korean society, homeschooling parents themselves are sensitive to how they are seen in public. They are protective of their children's self-esteem. They do not want their children to be compared with other children in terms of the progress of learning and educational attainments. They testify that their children are just ordinary kids and they homeschool for the sake of their children's happiness. Happy lives,

they think, cannot be pursued in conventional Korean schools. However nontraditional their choice is, some South Korean families opt for homeschooling as a way to have an ordinary life. Most homeschooling families are eager to keep their children out of the competitive and intellectually deteriorating educational system. Homeschooling is a way to protect their children from secular materialistic culture. At home, these parents believe that they can provide better environment, in which their children's full potentials can be fulfilled.

There are tremendous external pressures over them. The illegal status of homeschooling may be one of them. Their children's lack of sociality, however, is a key used to criticize homeschooling families. The parents are even criticized as ruining their children's lives. The debate concerning homeschooling and sociality has never ended. What does sociality mean? Raymond Moore and Dorothy Moore (1982) differentiate "a positive sociality which is altruistic and independent in thought" from "a negative sociality, ego-centered, seeking approval" (60-1). Unlike social concerns about homeschooled children's lack of social competence, they point out that a child's early exposure to the structured learning environment and social life with cohorts may have detrimental impacts on the children's development of positive self-concept and their internalization of social values (Moore & Moore 1982, 1994). They argue that until children can build up enough ego-strength to deal with peer-pressure based on positive self-concept and the internalization of values and standards, the compulsory schooling should be postponed. Otherwise, children are more likely to sacrifice their independence and chances for developing a positive sociality and learn negative behaviors from their peer-groups to earn their approval. According to them, homeschooling is essential to promote a child's positive sociality.

Based on an extensive survey of research on child development, Moore and Moore (1982) warn that children are at stake in the compulsory education system. Schools rearrange

children's lives into the age-based and learning-centered social group. The state forces young children to follow a uniform track along with similar educational content regardless of their different levels of cognitive and perceptual skills. Disregarding individual differences in terms of readiness for structured learning causes children's apathy toward learning or lack of initiative. The repetitive nature of school curricula and pedagogy deprives children of the chance for active exploration and thereby fails to improve students' cognition and perceptual skills. During the early childhood period, the quality of parental care is crucial for the development of child's academic potential. Parents' consistency, warmth, and responsiveness can foster a child's positive self-concept and internalization of values. In a rapidly changing unstable environment, children seek security from an available authority figure. The malfunction of family and loss of parental authority fail to equip children with positive self-concept and values and make them vulnerable to peer pressure. For the effective child education, therefore, educators must take into account an individual child's "*integrated maturity level.*" This is determined by "the development of the child's brain, vision, hearing, perception, emotions, sociability, family and school relationships, and physical growth" (Moore & Moore 1982:91).

Even though Moore and Moore's ideas about sociality and the impact of schooling are not known to South Korean homeschoolers, it stands out in the homeschooling parents' narratives that a competitive and morally degenerative school environment is harmful in the development of a child's positive sociality. In addition, South Korean homeschooling parents do not intend to sacrifice their children's sociality. They simply stress more on their children's unique individuality and their natural capability of developing their own potentials. They expect that their children will become an independent person. Because of their conviction on such

individualism, homeschooling families believe that homeschooling helps their children grow up warm and responsible adults in the future.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOMESCHOOLING AS AN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

There are two opposing models of homeschooling in practice. These two philosophical backgrounds of home schooling started out with very different perspectives on children and learning. The research of Van Galen (1991) focuses on the values and beliefs that homeschooling parents want to teach their children. She differentiates homeschooling parents by their two disparate types of practice and calls them “pedagogues” and “ideologues.” Pedagogues value child-led learning, or what is also called “unschooling.” According John Holt, children are autonomous beings and they have rights to control their own minds and thoughts (Franzosa 1991; Holt & Farenga 2003). Since he believes that children have a natural ability and desire to learn, learning should be self-directed and purposeful. Therefore, parents should let their children do what they want to do. Pedagogues do not trust a bureaucratic and inefficient school system. They give more credit to their children’s creative and natural abilities to learn. Unlike the ideologues,

... the Pedagogues are more likely to encourage their children to pursue their own projects and to work at their own pace using resources that are available in the home or the surrounding community (Van Galen 1991: 73).

For example, cooking has become a popular math and science course, and observing building under construction has become a science project.

Ideologues, on the other hand, are mostly Christian fundamentalists. They follow the “school-at-home” model: they use textbooks based on a certain curriculum and teach in a very structured way. This model is based on the belief that children are not autonomous beings and they need to learn from appropriate authorities. Because parents can become their children’s best

teachers, they organize an individualized curriculum for their children and teach them as teachers would in schools. Many Protestant homeschoolers tend to choose the school-at-home model, but in real practice many homeschooling parents combine the two (Gilmore 2003). Interestingly enough, many Christian homeschooling parents originally planned to send their children to private Christian schools, but they started homeschooling because they could not afford the high tuition. After they began homeschooling, however, they suddenly realized that teaching their own children was part of their responsibilities as a Christian and considered homeschooling as following God's will. An example of this is found in the research of Van Galen (1991). One of her interviewees said:

If God has established us to be educators, then he'll enable us also. If you make a commitment, the Lord will equip you with the knowledge, the time, and working out your schedule (68).

As this implies, they believe in God's personal involvement in their home schools as well as their lives more generally.

In Korea, the causes and the patterns of homeschooling vary from one family to another. Most commonly, they have lost hope for the current education system and claim their rights to provide better learning environments to their children. In a posting on the Mindle website, Yi Chae-Keun explained why he had to take his two teen-aged daughters out of the school system:

First, many parts of classes taught in middle and high school curricula are not necessary. And so, students miss something really essential. Students do not need to learn that much detail in subjects like Korean, math, social studies, science, art, music, and PE. Secondly, if pedagogic approaches can foster children's creativity, I may allow my daughters to go to school. Even though the contents are flimsy, my daughters can pick up how to be more creative. But cramming and rote-memorization are all schools can offer. Everything was forgotten after the test. The concepts and principles are not taught in the accurate way. Thirdly, I would consider sending my children to school once again if teachers had put a lot of stuff in students' brains. Teachers do not teach hard enough. A lot of students give up learning at school. They learn at cram schools instead... Fourthly, I reject that students are separated into competent

children and incompetent children based on their test scores with good scores in the name of evaluating students' achievement. I really sympathize with the children who became supersensitive to their test scores, the median score, their ranks in class, and the percentile at school. Fifth, then do schools foster good characters and sociality? Due to the unlimited competition among classmates, we can hardly expect any of these. A child who sympathized with the isolated kid in class cannot express his or her own opinion. Everybody knows that school is the most undemocratic and violent organization.

He as a father sympathizes with his children's experiences in the education system, for instance, trivial learning and a series of exams. He also touches upon structural flaws in the Korean education system: ineffective pedagogy and curricula and teachers' incompetence in transmitting knowledge. Even though his children struggle, he seems like he would approve of the school education if it is proved to be effective. As most of my interviewees would agree, he feels that he must have been better off without schooling. Such a mentality is candidly expressed in his statements following the five reasons he rejects the school system:

I consider myself as a victim of the public education system and I plan to homeschool my children. In spite of that, I believe all of us should unite together to fight against public education.... Otherwise, our children will be another victim of the problems in education.

In a similar vein, but from a little different angle, Chun-Ha's mother said with a sigh, "Nothing has changed." Drastic governmental reforms in the educational system that were carried out for the past two decades have only aggravated confusions. The problems she witnessed throughout her own schooling experiences were not fixed at all. She was also worried that the bureaucratic public education system failed to prepare children for their real life experience. She continued,

Children have to memorize even all the small details in the textbooks to get 100 points on the exam. However hard they try to memorize, what they memorize is of no use in their real life. Isn't it waste of time?

She even considered public education a stumbling block and had no doubt that their children would learn at home more effectively.

Most homeschooling parents I interviewed had education-related jobs: professor, school teacher, full-time tutor (*kwawoe kyosa*), or instructor in a private institute (*hagwŏn kangsa*). They were aware of problems in the education system and the way to evade them. Carefully but firmly, most of my informants claim that their cases are not the same as “*t’alhakkyo*,” which connotes maladjustment. My interviewees fall into three groups: homeschoolers who considered homeschooling as an academic alternative, homeschoolers who emphasized pedagogic flexibility, which may increase a child’s creativity and individuality, and Christian homeschoolers who stress spiritual growth and moral values.

Academic excellence

Many parents in this category express their sharp criticism concerning the shallow educational contents of the school curricula and the poor quality of teachers. To overcome the deficiencies of the current education system, they take advantage of homeschooling as a shortcut to promote their children’s academic excellence, which they believe increases the chances for prestigious high schools or colleges. Unlike Yi who blames teachers for their lack of eagerness in infusing knowledge into young minds, Chi-Ch’ŏl’s father raised questions about the system by blaming the seventh revision of school curricula:

The performance evaluation really pesters students. In the middle school my children attended, a PE teacher gave students a project to describe handball in poetry. He is insane.... The seventh revision of curricula has made mothers become busier than ever before. Even middle school students return home from *hagwŏn* after midnight. In reality, who has the time do all the school projects? So it is mothers who have to take care of school projects to receive grades at performance evaluation.... My younger son participated in the music performance in the school district. He missed several classes due to rehearsals and failed to submit one project for performance evaluation. Because of that, his rank at school dropped a little. I went to school to complain that school was supposed to consider my son’s situation because he missed a project for the school activity.

Like many others, he was dissatisfied with the way the teachers treat his children. Chi-Ch'öl's father, however, described his children as successful at school and emphasized that his sons left school for *better learning*. He touted his month-long travel to Europe and said that knowing from experience is a better way than just learning at school. He explained why his 15-year-old twin boys quit school.

My twin boys quit school to read more books. For the last year and half since they quit school, they have gone to the public library without missing one single day. They have become quite famous in the library. They have read so many books. My heart is filled with pride when I see them discuss books they read. If they stayed at school, how could they read that many books?

These twin boys were as busy as most other children in school. After their eight-hour-long daily studies at the library, they moved to the music institute their mother ran to take violin and clarinet lessons. They returned home in the evening where they studied high school math from their mother, a math instructor at her own *hagwŏn*. On weekends, they practiced conversational English with an American tutor. Chi-Ch'öl's father spoke very highly of his wife's commitment to the children's education:

Since starting homeschooling, I've admired my wife for her devotion. She spent eight hours in the library with my twin everyday for a year and a half. These days she is sick in bed. She cannot even move because of her backache.

Based on his description, the degree of Chi-Ch'öl's mother's emotional and physical support is no less than the passion of other oversolicitous South Korean education mothers. Chi-Ch'öl's father, who used to run *hagwŏn* for 17 years and taught English Grammar, chauffeured his children around, but he was very satisfied with his sons' progress in learning outside school.

At the beginning, our goal was to send our twins to *Minjok* Leadership Academy.¹ The twins almost finished a high school curriculum, but I doubt that

¹ This is also known as *Minjok Sagwan Kodŭnghaggyo*, in which all courses except Korean and

they can enter that school. We were supposed to start the preparation earlier....
But they can go to a foreign language high school if they study steadily.

He considered homeschooling as special elite education. Based on his extensive knowledge about the current education system and profound analysis of his children's learning capabilities, he concluded that homeschooling is the best path for his sons to maximize their potentials for prestigious high school admission. Free from the fixed schedule and unnecessary subjects at school, they are able to take advantage of much spare time at home, which they can invest for their preparation for the entrance examination. A year and a half later the twins entered one of the well-known private high schools.

Chi-Ch'öl's father comments, "Unsuccessful parents with high expectations for their children homeschool." As his remark implies, parents' dissatisfaction with their own success drives their ambition to educate their children to be more successful than anyone else. There seem to be many families who employ homeschooling as a way to achieve higher academic goals. Media have focused on the successful cases of homeschooling. A story of an eight-year-old prodigy who entered the university was made public as his mother brought in a lawsuit that the compulsory education law is unconstitutional. On the Mindle website, a mother shared information about how her daughter could be accepted by Yale University with homeschooling. They pursue learning outside of the school system, but their goals and practices hardly fit into any aforementioned subcategories in homeschooling. Neither school-at-home nor unschooling, their sole goal was academic excellence which is often translated into admission to prestigious colleges and high schools.

Korean history are taught in English. As the most prestigious high school in S. Korea, around 25% of alumni have been admitted to Ivy League colleges in the US and Oxford and Cambridge in the UK.

Unschooling & Autonomous Learning (*Chuch'ejök haksŭp*)

Unschooling parents complained that the rigid curricula and exam-centered learning oppressed children's creativity and individuality. Based on the specialized curriculum tailored to the child's needs and interests, they encourage their children with self-controlled learning. Chin-Söp's mother is a unique case in many ways. As a school teacher and a mother of two children, she was actively involved with the teacher's union and parents' association for the improvement of the school environment.

What percentage of high school graduates can enter the most prestigious colleges? Probably less than five percent. Look at today's high schools, all cling to their students' college entrance. The majority, 95 percent, are forced to sacrifice themselves for the few five percent of students. Overwhelmed by the sense of inferiority, they feel small and have an inferiority complex.

She realized how impossible it was to overcome or correct the limitation of the rigid school environment and the bureaucratic education system. Because she believed in the smaller schools, she moved to the rural area and had her children attend a small branch elementary school. In a rural area, her two sons enjoyed freedom to the full without any restraints. As the time came for her first son to enter a middle school, which was relatively large in size, she encouraged him to pursue learning outside of the school system. It was quite an adventure because not many people had information about homeschooling. She organized curriculum focusing on literature, history, and philosophy and helped her son find interest in reading.

In retrospect, I was overly ambitious to believe I can change schools... Once I let go of my will for school reform and decided to provide my son with learning opportunities outside of schools, learning and family life became enlivened.

The framework of schooling is grounded on collective social orders. Rigid curricula lack flexibility for individual student's interest and capability. To survive, children cannot help adjusting themselves to the school environment. Through schooling, the potential of individuals

is gradually replaced by the blind submission to the collective social order and conformity to the dominant culture of the peer groups.

Some of the parents, who are conscious of college admission, tend to encourage their children to pass the qualification exam right after quitting school. Sometimes they have their children take some courses at *hagwŏn* for the test. Most unschooling parents simply wait for their children to decide everything about qualification exams and preparation for college admission. Most unschooling mothers tend to consider college education as optional. The parents make various efforts to enrich their children's homeschooling experiences. Many mothers said, "I know I am not supposed to do that, but I often go mad when I see my children snooze their time away." Mothers keenly feel the need for support groups in which they can get together, organize special classes, and seek public resources for their children's learning.

Chi-Yŏn's mother gained most of her education in Canada. Because she was teaching in private language institutes and tutoring young children in English, she was familiar with other ordinary mothers' zeal for their children's education and well aware of problems in private educational institutes. She did not want to put her children into an exam hell or push them to go the rounds from home to school to *hagwŏn*. When her daughter entered school, however, she was agitated to hear what other mothers were doing for their children. She was dissatisfied with her daughter's school experiences. She and her family had an opportunity to spend some time with a Canadian homeschooling family. She was amazed to see how young children in that family helped each other and studied on their own. Her husband suggested starting homeschooling and she agreed, but her parents-in-law stubbornly opposed their plan. Without resolving the months-long disagreement with her parents-in-law, her family finally started her home school six months before I met her first. Since she could not stay at home to take care of her children, her mother

moved in to take care of her children.

The home school for a nine-year-old Chi-Yŏn had only one goal: developing her ability to learn autonomously. Chi-Yŏn's mother soon realized that this goal was not easily attainable because her fourth grader was already used to doing things as she was told. Mrs. Kim decided to wait for her daughter to be able to prepare her own future on her own:

We did have many plans. We made a timetable and weekly schedule. But we did not practice as we planned. Frankly speaking, it sounded ridiculous to observe the fixed schedule even after leaving school... If my daughter is in school, she is in the fourth grade. However, she can't even multiply. It's very stressful because it is something even second graders can do. I am trying not to be sensitive. I ease my mind and just wait little longer.

Regarding college education, she believed that what college one graduated from would not matter in ten years by pointing out that college diplomas were already devalued in the job market. They would prefer their children to have some special skills to make their own independent living.

Kyŏng-Hŭi's family moved to the rural area four years ago. Her parents, tired of the busy urban lifestyle, opted for "*kwinong*" (return-to-the-soil). Her mother had been running a small supplementary *hagwŏn* for more than ten years and actively participated in an educational reform movement as a parent. However, she blamed the crisis of Korean education on mothers:

These days, kids get used to learning with the help from cram school teachers. They are too dependent upon others to do something they can do themselves. They are not motivated in learning... Some mothers blame the school system, but I think it is all mothers' faults. They don't give their kids chances to study by themselves.

When her family moved to the small town in a mountainous area, her mother considered homeschooling 12-year-old Kyŏng-Hŭi and nine-year-old Kyŏng-Ch'ŏl. She just let her children go to a nearby branch elementary school because they really liked the school; the total number of students was only twenty-one. Homeschooling was Kyŏng-Hŭi's own choice. Entering a middle school, she wanted to study at home. The mother explained her pedagogic strategies this way:

For a while, my children got bored. I borrowed a lot of books from a local library and had them read... Later, I bought a bunch of American animation movies and let them watch the movies without Korean subtitles everyday. We are still doing the same thing.

Both Chi-Yŏn's mother and Kyŏng-Hŭi's mother are critical about the current educational landscape, in which mothers' constant intervention in children's learning and supplementary learning at *hagwŏn* is a must. Instead of managing their children's daily schedules and academic progress, they deeply trusted their children's natural abilities to learn spontaneously and felt responsible for empowering their children to discover their own interests and go after them.

Hyŏn-Su's homeschooling is a case of his conflicts with coercive and neglectful school environments.

When my son was in the third grade, he said school was no fun. Everything he was learning at school was neither challenging nor interesting. Most of all, he seemed bored with the repeated teacher's instruction... A teacher often gives dictation to pupils and makes them write wrong words or sentences ten times. After she told kids to do the work, my son said, she just left for the teachers' lounge. While the teacher was gone, the class president wrote the names of the kids who rattle away on the board. He always wrote my son's name even though my son kept quiet. It might be just because my son was a new kid in class. The teacher who trusted the president scolded my son and made him clean the restroom as a punishment... After the same thing repeatedly happened, my son was checked as a boisterous kid and treated as a problem kid. The teacher called me up to visit school. If the situation had gone that far, it was quite obvious (She expected me to offer her a bribe for her special treatment of Hyŏn-Su). I didn't want to offer her a bribe... How could I explain to my son if she suddenly treated my son well? One day he drew up a picture in which his teacher was portrayed as a witch... I didn't like a coercive school environment. Learning at the elementary level is not that hard. I thought we could study at home and homeschooling must be the best for my son.

Because she was concerned that the uniform curriculum and rigid bureaucratic school environment might have destroyed Hyŏn-Su's spontaneous will for learning, she took her only son out of school. She had to face her husband's strong objection to the way she handled their child. He called her "a loud-voiced woman" who might destroy the child's life because he did

not agree with her plan for homeschooling. She made clear that the only goal she had in mind was “*Chuch’ejök haksŭp*” (autonomous learning). She wanted to broaden her child’s learning experience through homeschooling and help him find what makes him really happy and satisfied.

We have really had fun for the last two years.... Now we are realizing the importance of people who can stimulate my son intellectually... I wish my son had opportunities to meet respectable persons in different fields and could think “I want to be like him.”

As if she felt the need to cleanse Hyön-Su’s mind from the habits of submission to the voice of the authorities, she allowed him to do whatever he wanted after leaving school. He took the piano lessons he wanted even though he had to take a basketball course nearby for exercise. She has encouraged him to take experimental youth programs provided by the municipal government. She values the social networks provided by these kinds of programs which can motivate Hyön-Su to find and pursue what he likes.

Most unschooling parents make every effort to find some special program for their children, which cannot be studied at schools. To them, what and how their children need to learn are their major concerns. They value the humanities to enhance the level of their children’s critical thinking and their depth of knowledge. Many unschooling parents are uncertain about the progress of their children’s education. This lack of confidence makes them investigate other approaches and then experiment with other ways of educating their children. Some consider sending their children to alternative schools if their children want to attend these schools or they cannot continue to homeschool their children. Because they think that alternative schools have limited room for their participation and flexibility for their children, they set up schools outside

of Schools.² Su-Chǒng's mother explained to me how she could start homeschooling her two children.

I wasn't so sure I could gather all the information needed for homeschooling my children. My children wanted homeschooling. They said that they would figure out everything. There was no trusting everything children said especially when we had to decide such an important matter as homeschooling. So I kept pushing them to go to regular schools... They resisted going to school... I cannot say I was not interested in my children's education, but I didn't know how to help my children.

With two other families, she organized a group home school. I had a chance to observe these parents' meeting to design a curriculum for their group home school. They strongly felt that they needed to provide their children with best educational circumstances which make their children realize what they want in the brave new world. They also cherish humanistic foundation in their children's out-of-school-education. They emphasize parents' roles as a guide in determining what to study. Because they wanted to foster their children's interest in the broad fields of study, they were looking for external opportunities for learning. These three families were relatively satisfied with their past a-year-and-a-half-long experiences and positive changes in their relationship with their children. When I met these families, they desperately wanted to change the way they educated their children. Kyǒng-Ch'ǒl's mother said,

For last year and half, we forced our children a little bit to study what we wish them to choose. We are now at the end of our ropes. We realize that parents cannot fill our children's needs. The one other issue is that if we do not limit their lives, they tend to take the wrong paths. The shallow capitalistic culture is waiting to eat them up. Romance novel, manga, and computer games... Kids easily fall into temptation.

She thought, as other parents in her group all might agree, that controlling their children to certain degrees is essential to guide them into the right direction.

² In *Instead of Education*, Holt claims that compulsory "S-schools" should be disestablished and transformed into "s-schools" which allow more freedom and (Franzosa 1991:126).

In the fall of 2007, an organization of liberal scholars designed two full-day programs, called “Monday School” and “Thursday School,” and offered them to teen-aged homeschoolers.

The schedules of these programs are drawn up like this:

	Monday School	Thursday School
9:00		Yoga/Meditation
10:00	History	Korean Modern Literature/ Technology & Modern Society
11:30	Club Activities/ Lunch	
1:30	English (World’ Most Famous Speech)	English (Symbiotic Planet)
3:30	Reading Classics (Analects)	Reading Classics (Tao Te Ching)
4:30	Natural Science/ German Modern Literature	Western Philosophy/ Eastern Thoughts

The tuition for each school is 800 thousand won (800 dollars) for the 14 week-long program and the maximum number of student for each program is 15. In Reading Classics, students are required to read original Chinese texts of *Analects* and *Tao Te Ching*. According to the syllabus, Western Philosophy and Eastern Thoughts would deal with these thinkers and their philosophical ideas: Reminding me of a college-level introductory philosophy class, I can hardly imagine how this kind of course can attract parents and students and how effectively these topics can be taught to the middle-school- aged teenagers. As I discussed earlier, humanities are important part of homeschooling curricula among unschooling families. Parents’ limitation in providing the broad learning opportunities and academic stimulation make these parents depend upon other professionals.

PART I. WESTERN CLASSICS	PART II. EASTERN CLASSICS
Lecture 1. Plato-Apology	Lecture 1. Confucius' Life
Lecture 2. Aristotle-Category	Lecture 2. Analects I
Lecture 3. Epicuros-Pleasure	Lecture 3. Analects II
Lecture 4. Des Cartes-Meditation	Lecture 4. Tao Te Ching I
Lecture 5. Rousseau-Social Contracts	Lecture 5. Tao Te Ching II
Lecture 6. Locke-Government	Lecture 6. Lao Tzu's Life
Lecture 7. Marx-Communist Manifesto	Lecture 7. Questions

The English class has a Korean teacher as well as a native speaker as the main instructors and consists of reading and writing. They explain their teaching strategy as follows:

After reading wonderful writings in English, you will make compositions with the titles of “My Dream” and “Living together,” and your teachers will proofread your writing. You will have to memorize them (English Composition skills can be improved this way). After that, you will listen to others’ writings and have opportunities to listen to what others memorize and have discussions based on what you read and wrote. After four months, you will finish up your essay and you can memorize the entire essay you will have written. You will be able to express your emotions and thoughts about the topics and debate about them.

The approach which connects writing to speaking by memorizing the written text is popularly used in many private English institutes. The host organization tried to offer very unique learning experiences to teen-aged homeschoolers, but these programs in many ways resemble the school system. They have the pre-determined schedules, which would not be flexibly adapted to each student’s intellectual capability and interest. Such a pedagogic approach seems to go against the foundation of their unschooling philosophy which values a child’s freedom and individuality.

While the term, “unschooling,” has become adopted by many homeschoolers, this trend among South Korean homeschoolers was not incited by Holt and his educational philosophy. Emphasizing a child-initiated autonomous learning, unschooling goes beyond school-based passive learning. Taking advantage of flexibility in schedule and curricula, unschooling parents

try to broaden the learning opportunities. They select a few advantageous subjects and concentrate the limited time and resources on them. The fundamental idea seems similar to the Holtian “unschooling.” In Korea, however, its ideas do not seem to be successful for parents to get their children’s academic achievements out of their minds. Especially in the circumstances that “education fever” sweeps the whole society, unschooling is easily guided into opportunistic homeschooling, the main goal of which is children’s academic successes. Korean homeschooling is not so much an educational movement based on the same theoretical foundation and consensual goals as a resistant social movement against the authoritarian and oppressive school environment.

Christian Homeschooling

In terms of their educational practice and its goals, Christian homeschooling keeps fundamental demarcations with nonreligious homeschooling which aims at children’s academic excellence or the maximization of their potentials. Stevens (2001) points out:

unschooling’s presumption about the inherent goodness of children did not sit well with conservative Protestants, who tended to balance their high regard for children’s potential with a strong conviction about the inherent sinfulness of humankind (25).

In Christianity, “the goal of human development is total conformity to the manhood of Christ” (Bouwma 1976:85). All humans have a sinful nature, but they have the capacity to grow up because they are created in God’s own image. Because humans cannot achieve the stature of Christ, the ideal model for development, spiritual growth and moral maturity are ongoing processes. In terms of spiritual and moral development, even adults are only “older boys” as John Calvin argues (Bouwma 1976). Childhood, however, does not refer to the premature chaotic state of mind. Jesus even praised children’s unquestioning trust as a prototype of faith. Biblical

images of children with purity and spiritual softness imply their bigger potentials for the continuous growth. Thus, it is the parents' mission to provide their children with rightful guidance through education and discipline (Stevens 2001:190).

There is no doubt that Protestantism has made tremendous impacts on shaping the new framework for cultural values in the contemporary Korean society. In the early period of rapid growth, its teachings focused on individual salvation and material prosperity. Successful industrialization and the resultant economic stabilization brought about the qualitative transformations in terms of promoting Christians' morality and participation in social justice (Sŏ Chŏng-Min 2003). The Christian homeschooling movement in South Korea was sparked by Christian parents' disappointment with the morally deteriorating schools and their critical reflections on the quantitative expansion of Protestant churches without bearing fruit, i.e. morally mature and socially successful model Christians.

The modifier "Christian" here does not simply indicate the family's religious orientations. The discipline-centered pedagogic approach and thoroughly Bible-centered curriculum characterize Christian homeschooling. Such educational practices are not always welcomed in Church. Most church leaders stress the members' devotion to the church activities and the majority of Christians often criticize the Christian homeschooling curricula as partial and its pedagogy as oppressive. Therefore, some homeschooling families confront the stereotypes that they are oversolicitous parents for children's educational achievements and the misunderstandings that they are self-righteous Christians. Sŭl-Ki's father complained, "Many church pastors object to homeschooling because church members would not be committed to church activities." On the other hand, some homeschooling parents find fault with so-called devoted church-goers who sacrifice families for the sake of church activities and many pastors'

teachings which do not emphasize the value of family strongly enough. Each homeschooling family has a different perspective on the meaning of church in its home school. Some homeschooling families put more value on family-centered learning while others put more stress on church-centered activities. In the latter case, several families have organized a group home school together within their church and they share teaching responsibilities with other homeschooling church members. Some families even set up a new church.

For the evangelical homeschooling parents, it is the most important parental duty to guide and encourage children to establish their own relationships with Christ. Chi-Hye's father says, "Becoming independent is a process from leaving parents to meeting God one-on-one and figuring out how to live based on the relationships with God." To achieve such a crucial goal, the school and humanistic school curricula are seen as obstacles. They also felt obliged to protect their children from the negative influences of materialism and morally deteriorating school environments (e.g., competitive learning environments, immoral teachers, humanistic curricula, etc.). Therefore, some of them started their own home schools to provide Bible-based learning for their children's spiritual growth. Christian homeschooling parents emphasize character development in order to raise their children to have a "Christ-like" personality. Chun-Yŏng's mother was particularly skeptical about the school teachers' morality and their favoritism based on the bribes they took. "How can I leave my child in care of such immoral person?" she asked. After her three-month exposure to a public elementary school, she sought an alternative school first. She decided to homeschool her only son, however, because of the high tuition of the alternative school.³ Some responded that alternative schools are just schools: they doubted that

³ According to Chun-Yŏng's mother, the approximate yearly tuition was five million won (five thousand dollars) and a special donation, at least ten million won (ten thousand dollars), was required for admission.

real learning based on their children's individualistic needs can be realized within a group setting.

In terms of pedagogy and actual curricula in use, there are a variety of types of Christian homeschooling. Most Christian homeschoolers make every effort to create a school-like learning environment: they name their home schools, decorate a room to look like a school classroom, and give titles to parents such as a principal, a chief teacher, and a director. Giving a name to home school is a particularly important process.⁴ The names of the biblical heroes, such as David, Solomon, and Samuel, and the abbreviated words of the biblical virtues (e.g. *Yedam* is the abbreviated version of *Yesurǔldalmǔn*, meaning "Jesus-like") are popularly adopted as the names of home schools. Chosen by all the family members, these names reflect the goals of homeschooling and provide children with a sense of belonging, a social identity as homeschoolers, and the pride of learning outside of the school.

These home schools have transformed the home and revitalized the rhythm of everyday life. As if going to school, children first take a walk in the neighborhood and then return home to prepare the first class. In the mornings, they focus on essential subjects such as math and English. The afternoon schedule is a little more flexible: they practice musical instruments, read books, and have free time. Drawing up a schedule is an important part of homeschooling because it symbolizes the commitment to the study. Chun-Ha's mother said:

I am not pushy with my kids. They are a little slow in following the curriculum. As my kids study little by little according to schedule, I am relieved that my kids are learning. My kids also seem to feel a sense of accomplishment.

Following the schedule ensures that children's learning is progressing and gives mothers

⁴ Korean adults tend to ask young children, "What school do you go to? What grade are you in?" instead of "What's your name? How old are you?" When they come across a school-aged child on school days, they often ask him or her why he or she did not go to school. Homeschooling children are often embarrassed because they do not know how to answer. Most homeschooling parents are concerned about others' judgments and impertinent interference which can hurt their children emotionally.

a certain level of confidence that they are doing fine.

Because Christian homeschooling parents emphasize character development and strict discipline, obedience to parents is of cardinal importance. It would be impossible to educate children if they did not obey parent/teachers. Chi-Hye's mother explains:

To learn from parents, children need to learn to obey their parents. Without infusing obedience to children, teaching will become more difficult. Mothers will get tired and eventually give up.

“Character development” is a process of learning what a believer should be like. And to achieve such character, children are required to study moral values based on the Bible. In teaching obedience, parents give Bible verses about obedience because they want to discipline their children based on God's authority. Then, parents and children together determine a list of rules children have to observe. The children memorize the verses and live by the rules. Mothers make keen observations of children's behaviors and help their children apply what they learn to their lives. If the children violate any of the rules, parents give harsh punishments. Chae-Min's mother explains to me how she punishes her children:

Children should learn the reap-as-one-has-sown principle... Sometimes I make my son eat only cooked rice without any side dishes. It may sound inhumane, but it is a punishment. For the first couple of months, I had to conjure up various ways to punish my children. The frequency of punishment drastically decreased after that period. Nowadays, I am glad to give more rewards to my children.

In this instance, the principle of sowing and harvesting was of significance. An individual who commits an error should be the one who is accountable for the consequences.

Strict discipline may not be effective without clear ideas about the goals of discipline. So-Hyön's mother acknowledges the American missionaries' contributions to the growth of Christian homeschooling.

From America, missionaries and their families have come to our nation. They want to witness that Korean Christians build up family based on God's values through homeschooling.... They have been supporting a variety of co-op activities and provide valuable aids for Korean homeschoolers' character development..... Honesty and obedience... we don't know how to reveal such values in our real lives... They have shown us through their lives.

In the development process of Christian homeschooling in South Korea, American missionaries played pivotal roles.⁵ For instance, American missionaries organized youth orchestras for Korean homeschoolers to provide opportunities to work together and offer lectures at the conference regarding how to discipline and educate children at home. Their way of life really have touched many homeschooling families' faith and lives and made them believe that homeschooling is the only alternative for the future of Korean churches. Even though there were Christian homeschooling families before homeschooled American missionaries and their families came to South Korea,⁶ American missionary families have become model families who showed how to discipline children, how to live a family-centered life as God intended, and what kind of person one can become through homeschooling.

Many Christian homeschoolers use textbooks and references that are used in Korean schools, especially for teaching Korean language, history, and math. Along with these textbooks,

⁵ The following is an excerpt from a thank-you note to an American missionary that a parent posted on the jiakorea.org message board: "We are what we are thanks to missionaries who faced death to spread gospel to this nation 120 years ago. Missionaries came back to this spiritually-barren land where a quarter of the entire population identify themselves as Christians but there are no "true" ones. They provide us homeschoolers with environments in which we can learn orchestral music only affluent families can usually access... We should live a life like them (the missionaries). We should homeschool our children, not to offer better education to our children, but to serve others as Jesus did." This complimentary comment demonstrates how South Korean Christian homeschooling perceive American missionaries and think of homeschooling as a means for spiritual growth of becoming a "true" Christians and a way to raise children who can contribute to a society at large.

⁶ Chi-Hye's family began homeschooling in 1999 right after they came back after the father's study in the U.S. Because the mother's sister had been homeschooling her children in the U.S., Chi-Hye's family could gain valuable information about curricula and pedagogy from her.

they use American homeschooling curricula because these would promote their children's faith. KONOS (Chae-Min and So-Hyön), Alpha Omega (Ha-Chun), Advanced Training Institute International or ATI (Sül-Ki), and the curriculum from Bob Jones University Press (Chi-Hye) are used among many Christian homeschoolers. Some mothers were amazed at the pedagogic approach of Christian homeschooling curricula, which was totally different from their own learning.⁷ KONOS is a six-year-long curriculum which consists of three books. Because they are written in English, mothers' literacy in English is crucial if they want to use it as a primary curriculum. A support organization revises English, American culture-based, KONOS curriculum to Korean situations and publishes "Logos."

The primary goal of this integrated curriculum is to promote a child's character development. All lessons begin with Bible verses, which lead to other related studies. In the lesson about "determination," for example, the lesson starts with memorizing a verse in the Bible: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). To acquire such a trait, children learn about history of the Japanese colonial period in the early twentieth century and particularly Ahn Ch'ang-Ho and his personal life as an exemplary figure.⁸ They visit historical sites and museums to learn about the Korean independence movement and how the Japanese colonialists treated Koreans. To help children gain the experience as close as possible to what their ancestors went through, they are encouraged to learn rudimentary Japanese language and to

⁷ Many private educational institutes use U.S. textbooks in their after-school programs. According to Chae-Min's mother, "In the beginning, many parents seemed to have misconceptions that homeschooling would help them focus more on English. Soon enough, most of those parents became disappointed and gave up."

⁸ Reading a biography is an important part of Christian homeschooling curricula. Its main goals are to promote certain positive characteristics of a great person in history, and to help children understand the contributions of an individual's conducts to the history. At the same time, a biography provides detailed information about certain occupations, which help children plan their future lives. Parents often read a biography written for advanced or adult readers aloud to their young children to promote intellectual stimulation to their children.

speak only Japanese. The history lesson even turns into a drama class. A mother becomes a Japanese police officer who oppresses Korean people and children play the roles of students who fought for Independence.

Most homeschooling operates by a strict curriculum and tight schedule, but some families do not have a fixed schedule other than Bible study in the early morning. Ye-Ŭn's father who has homeschooled his three children for almost five years explains how he organizes his homeschooling:

We wanted our children to find out what talents they receive from God..... The curricula and the progress of course are invented for school persons. They are meaningless for us. We teach math to our children. Other than that, reading and listening to the tapes (for English) are all they do... Homeschoolers in *Kangnam* and *Pundang* areas teach so many interesting courses. We feel sorry that we are not financially capable of providing that kind of opportunity to our children. But, we are satisfied with what we have been able to do for our children.

Ye-Ŭn's homeschool does not have any curricula. For the first two or three years, the parents struggled because of their oldest daughter, Ye-Ŭn's rebellion. As the homeschooling experience has matured, Ye-Ŭn's personality has changed a lot. Ye-Chi, the second daughter, discovered her real enthusiasm for piano music. Ye-In, their youngest child became interested in arts and crafts. Because all of the children in their homeschool knew what they loved, they did them with joy. The parents did not need to nag their children to study or practice.

Su-Pin's homeschool also does not have any schedule and curricula. Because Su-Pin's mother used to be an elementary school teacher, she was confident in teaching her children at home. She recollects her homeschooling experience during the first six months as follows:

I didn't know anything about homeschooling. I was anxious. That is why I taught my children as if I was their school teacher... We didn't have any model to follow, and nobody to compare with. There is no way to evaluate the progress of my children's learning. So I purchased a bunch of reference books and textbooks about every school subject. I taught my children like a school teacher. Soon enough, I realized that was wrong. My family decided to homeschool

because my son was tired of the fixed schedule at school. Most of all, the conventional pedagogic approach did not fit my children's dispositions. Since then, we haven't had a schedule... In the morning, after Bible study, I suggest what is needed to be done. But my children usually do what they like to do. Now my son is interested in world history and my daughter really likes music and arts. I feel like I am just a coach.

In her own struggling path to discover the right way to educate her children, she chose to trust her children's abilities and to respect their interests, rather than locking them into the fixed schedule and curriculum.

Like Ye-Ūn's and Su-Pin's homeschools, some families espouse so-called "Christian unschooling." Because each child has its own uniqueness and individuality, "different children within one family may need different decisions as to what educational system is best for them" (Macaulay 1984:8). Based on the educational philosophy of Charlotte Mason, therefore, parents should find out who the child is and how he or she is created by God instead of trying to fit the child into the organized schedules of activities and curriculum.

Mothers assume most of the educator's roles: gathering information about homeschooling curricula and methodology, participating in homeschooling conferences, and teaching. As an official representative of their home school, however, a father holds a superior rank. Mothers' sense of family mission, and their perception of homeschooling as a God-given privilege, are strong. Chae-Min's mother asked, "What can be more important than raising my children to be true Christians?" Chi-Hye's mother stated, "Parents are stewards who discipline children to live straight for the God's glory." Therefore, Christian homeschooling focuses largely on children's spiritual growth. Every school day starts with a prayer and memorization of Bible verses. In Chi-Hye's home, children cannot eat a meal without memorizing a verse. In Chae-Min's home school, the day ends with a blessing from the father who is also a pastor.

Most children participate regularly in various activities: AWANA Club,⁹ music lessons, orchestra, and regular support group meetings. The peers these children could meet are limited, but no parents think that this lack of opportunities would cause problems in their children's development and socialization process. Facing a common stereotype toward homeschooling that homeschooled kids would lack social skills and have problems in their future social life, Chi-Hye's mother questioned:

What is the use of good social skills (*sahoesöng*) if he has not become a *person* first? Look around! There are lots of people who made social and material success based on lies and deceiving other people.

As this remark implies, many Christian homeschooling parents did not think that their children's isolation from peers was a disadvantage. Rather, they believe the extended period of the strong parental protection and effective discipline can benefit their children's growth. At a homeschooling seminar, Chi-Hye's father compares his belief with the effect of a greenhouse:

If children are sent out to the world without proper spiritual discipline, they are more likely to fail. They need parents' protection and discipline. A young plant grown in the greenhouse cannot grow well outside. Children need a sort of greenhouse to live an upright and faithful life.

Christian homeschooling parents also considered homeschooling as a chance to better parent-child relationships. In Chi-Hye's home school, for example, the father is a physical education teacher, the grandfather a Japanese teacher, the grandmother an art teacher, and the aunt a music teacher. Sharing teaching responsibilities among extended family members contributes to harmonious and satisfactory intrafamilial relationships. Through homeschooling, these evangelical families try to restore the family-centered values and reconnect collapsed traditional

⁹ AWANA club is an international organization. It offers weekly meetings for school-aged children, in which children play games and memorize key verses in the Bible. Independently from AWANA club Korea, a group of Korean Christian homeschooling parents organized a club and the participating children are required to memorize Bible verses in KJV.

extended families. Ye-Ŭn's mother makes a confession:

My husband may be the one who has changed the most in the last year. He has become concerned about children's learning. He wants to talk about children and tries to spend more time with them.

Ye-Ŭn's father responds:

The homeschooling experience has taught me that parents need to change first. To the degrees parents are restored, children can be restored. Without changing first, parents should not expect children's changes. In a way, how much our children have changed tells me how much I have changed. Until children realize we parents have really changed, they won't open their hearts.

The same change occurred in the sibling relationships: the older ones took care of the younger ones and the younger ones respected the older ones. Such family-centeredness in homeschooling motivates some families to join the homeschooling movement. So-Hyŏn's father is another father who went through a dramatic change regarding the goals of his life and career:

I was successful as a youth pastor in a mega-church. Even after marriage, pastoral duties were my top priorities. One day when I was praying for the prosperity of the new church I branched out. God seemed to touch my heart with the thought of "love your wife first." In retrospect, God thought that was the most serious problem I had at that time. Due to my busy daily schedule filled with pastoral duties, I overlooked my responsibility as a husband and father. Around that time, the first homeschooling conference was held. I thought that would be it... Look around all the corrupted cultures, sex industry, gambling, and alcoholism, which are created because of fathers. If fathers uphold God-centered values and rebuild families based on a Biblical foundation, these families can exercise powerful influence on purifying the worldly cultures.

His mystical experience became a motive for him to sacrifice his promising career for his family. He chose homeschooling as a way to restore the intimate family relationship. Because he is now working for a Christian homeschooling support organization, he can spend much more time with his two children.

Min-Chu's father joined "Father School" (*abŏji hakkyo*), a nation-wide program sponsored by one of the largest Protestant churches in Korea. Throughout the program, he

discovered and overcame the emotional problems from the absence of his father in his life and to reconstruct the new father-image based on God's image of an intimate loving father. He felt guilty about having been incapable of treating his children with God's love. He redefined his roles from a biblical perspective and tried to restore a God-given authority as a head of household. This authority came with his strong commitment to the paternal roles, including becoming a model of a sincere Christian for his children in spiritual maturity and becoming a part of his children's life. He said, "If kids never see their fathers pray, how do they learn the importance of prayer?" In his case, the father's personal changes contributed to transforming parent-child relationships and creating new psychosocial dynamics within his nuclear family. Homeschooling should be based not only on the father's decision but also on the mother's commitment to the children's education. Because his wife witnessed his changes, she agreed to the idea of homeschooling. It was not an easy task. Soon she realized, "Parent's spiritual maturity is a more urgent issue than teaching children." She considered the hardships from homeschooling as spiritual discipline, the kind of discipline needed to be a mature Christian.

Christian homeschooling causes holistic transformations in all aspects of an individual's life, particularly in faith and a family-oriented lifestyle. The home has become a central space for learning and living. Christian homeschooling parents are concerned about silent permeation of the secular culture into their children's lives and emphasize spiritual discipline as a way to combat such permeation. Devotion to the family-centered lifestyle increasingly helps them find problems both in their lives and their children's and such discovery turns into a joy of growing up together as a family.

Many Christian homeschooling families stress spiritual growth more than academic development. Some Christian homeschooling families, however, have concerns about how they

can continue educating their growing children, which is becoming more academically challenging to parents. As young homeschoolers grow up, they are becoming increasingly resistant to parental authority. As a result, some parents turn to church schools or Christian alternative schools, which are unofficial, instead of continuing with homeschooling.

Summary and Discussion

The ineffective public education system in tandem with parental zeal for children's educational achievements makes children more dependent upon private education, which in turn damages their capability to learn by themselves. While the critical discourse on the education system targets students' intellectual dependency and weakening individuality, some parents envisage an entirely new way of educating their children based on their own interpretation of social changes and the problems of today's younger generation. Political resistance and religious faith are other critical causes that have pushed many parents to join this new trend.

Homeschooling is a fast growing cultural and educational phenomenon. It is used for: (1) an educational shortcut to prestigious high schools or colleges, (2) a child-initiated learning environment, which cultivates autonomy and creativity, and (3) the means toward a life centered around Christian values. My ethnographic research suggests that the motives of homeschooling vary from indignation at immoral teachers who play favorites, to enthusiasm for teaching the Christian worldview. The most commonly shared motive among Korean homeschooling parents, however, is a wish for their children to have autonomous learning opportunities. Promoting autonomy, individuality, and independence is the most salient theme in Korean homeschooling parents' narratives. All homeschooling parents are concerned about their children's idiosyncratic qualities, which may collapse in a group-oriented school system and its uniform curriculum.

They also value independence. While many unschooling parents emphasize civic or political independence based on their own thoughts and beliefs, Christian homeschooling parents wish their children to have a one-on-one independent relationship with God.

Homeschooling families take advantage of flexibility of pedagogy and curriculum. There are deep differences in how each family organizes its home school. Some customize their curricula to be more achievement-oriented and others more value-oriented. Educational content really varies: unschooling children focus on the humanities such as history, philosophy, and literature while Christian homeschoolers spend much time on studying Bible and Bible-based views on history and science. Christian homeschoolers' extensive use of the U.S. curricula might cause cultural conflicts with most non-Christians because most of these curricula are constructed based on very conservative Christian faith (Stevens 2001). Many non-Christian homeschoolers argue that Bible-based knowledge and world-view in Christian homeschooling educate children to become narrow-minded persons, who have difficulty in understanding people with different faiths and thoughts from themselves. To such a criticism, Christian homeschoolers respond by saying that the ultimate goal of Christian homeschooling is to raise children to be balanced whole persons who can embrace all kinds of people with Christ's love. There is a difference between unschooling and Christian homeschooling in terms of pedagogic approach. Unlike unschoolers, Christian homeschoolers employ rote-memorization and repetitive discipline. Most homeschoolers try to reconnect the gap between learning and real life through creative learning experiences and various volunteering opportunities.

In this chapter, I cited some of homeschooling fathers' direct voices about how homeschooling is connected with their life-changing experiences. As discussed in the previous chapters, mothers play the dominant roles in educating children in South Korea. Christian

homeschooling in particular stresses the restoration of father's authority, which was belittled in the industrialization process. The father's roles in educating children are essential not only because homeschooling is inclined to fail without the father's commitment or at least emotional support but also a father has the ultimate responsibility in children's education and spiritual discipline. A growing number of fathers come to the front in the matter of children's education. One of my male interviewees explained that this new trend is related to the 1997 financial crisis in South Korea. During that time, many fathers experienced and witnessed all the commitment they made for their jobs go down the drain. Out of deep anxieties about insecure jobs and uncertainty of emotional rewards from their employment, they realized the importance of family. Many of these fathers, however, struggled to find room for themselves within their own families. Most of my interviewees described their fathers as "workaholic," "alcoholic," "womanizer," "nonexistent," "abusive," and "negligent." Growing up under authoritarian and emotionally distant fathers, the fathers in their forties and fifties do not have a clue in enacting a healthy model in paternal roles. Following the biblical image of loving God, Christian fathers reconceptualize the meaning of fatherhood and restructure the parent-child relationship based on intimacy, warmth, and love. Not involved as actively as Christian homeschooling fathers, many unschooling mothers told me they would not be able to continue homeschooling without their husbands' emotional support. They also take family-togetherness as the most precious gain from homeschooling experience.

CHAPTER SIX

HOMESCHOOLING MOTHERS

In typical homeschooling families, mothers are not only housewives but also educators. To start their own home schools, many of these homeschooling mothers sacrifice their careers to be stay-at-home moms. Mothers assume more than 90 percent of teaching responsibility. They organize curriculum and schedules for their children as well as performing ordinary household chores. Effective teaching requires specialized knowledge about required subjects and subject-specific pedagogic skills. It also takes endurance. The continuous attention to children's progress of learning is emotionally challenging. Everyday they deal with new problems related to their children's unique characteristics. In many cases, mothers decide to home school their children and even try to persuade their hesitant husbands to teach their children. Under the influence of liberal feminism, more and more Korean women want to pursue their own careers and independent lifestyles, yet many choose the demanding work of homeschooling.

Contrary to the common stereotypes that homeschooling mothers are troubled with such burdensome responsibilities, Mitchell Stevens (2001) notes that homeschooling mothers enjoy their enhanced status at local support groups as well as at their own homes. Is their enhanced status as a teacher at home enough to compensate for their sacrifices? Stevens characterizes homeschooling mothers as having a "general commitment to home over work" (81). He presumes that they are "natural mothers." Homeschooling mothers tend to have certain temperamental characteristics that equip them for the demanding work of educating children on their own.

During my fieldwork, I came across many parents' strong aversions to the school system,

particularly learning by rote-memorization and authoritarian school environments. Recently in South Korea, the educational advantages of homeschooling have come to the foreground. Homeschooling is illegal, but some mothers claim the sole responsibility for their children's education because they feel strongly that their children are disadvantaged in schools. Since they believe that limited choices in school curricula, authoritarian pedagogic approaches, and punitive teachers only develop students' academic apathy and limit children's freedom to explore, growing numbers of families have been joining in this new trend. In this chapter, I examine eight South Korean homeschooling mothers in depth. I focus on their life trajectories and how homeschooling impacts their personal lives.

Yun-Chu's and Chi-Su's Mothers: the Explorers

Yun-Chu is a second grader in a public elementary school. Before elementary school, she went to Cooperative Childcare. She really liked its liberal atmosphere, but her mother was not fully satisfied with it. Despite its wide open possibilities in her participation in managing and organizing the program of Childcare, she continuously faced the differences in values with other mothers. Because she wished Yun-Chu to be educated based in Christian values, she considered a Christian alternative school. While weighing some available options, Yun-Chu began to attend a nearby elementary school. Through an American missionary family she has known from her college years, she learned about homeschooling. Yun-Chu's mother finally decided to homeschool her daughter, but she faced her husband's strong objection. He does not want to be fastidious in education for just one daughter. Living in a large apartment complex in a newly developed suburban area, which is well-known for excessive parental zeal for education, she is distressed by oversolicitous education mothers in her neighborhood. She does not want her child

go around several different *hagwŏn* after school, but many mothers warn her against making her only daughter a fool.

It may not be so wrong to say that I am forced to drive my kid to participate in extracurricular activities... I think piano lessons are enough for my child. A mother in my neighborhood informed me that an art instructor who graduated from Hongik University just moved in my neighborhood. That mother was recruiting children to organize a team, so she could reduce the lesson fee for her child... Even though the lesson fee was equally divided, the portion I had to pay was so high that I couldn't afford. So I told her that I would think about that. She kept rattling off the importance of learning art to get good grades. I felt like my kid had to take art lessons. If she wouldn't, I will be a bad mother... Mothers of school-aged children always talk about how to improve their children's school grades and what programs help them to do so. It is hard to pretend not to hear any of it... They make me feel that only my kid is getting behind at school work. I felt anxious about my decision about my kid's education... Under the current educational system, how can I not go with the flow? Every night, however, I couldn't stop thinking whether my decision was right or not and asked myself if I am fulfilling a mother's role properly.

Surrounded by passionate education moms, it was not easy for her to educate her child based on her own philosophy.

Chi-Su's mother is another mother planning to homeschool her two sons. She has been teaching piano at a music institute. As a piano instructor, she has witnessed so many problems in today's young children and the current education system. In her opinion, children are too dependent on after-school programs for their learning. However, the educational circumstances also make it hard for students to follow school work without supplementary lessons at *hagwŏn*. As she has experienced for last several years, the music institute has become an auxiliary means for formal schooling.

Children don't know the joy of learning... Everything is done just mechanically... After school, they pick up whatever bag they can find first at home and head out for the supplementary lesson. Because they don't know their own schedules, their mothers have to remind them of the schedules of their after-school activities... In spite of that, they have no idea of where to go and what to take for that... Some bring math books for the piano lesson... I am not talking about a few kids. Almost everybody is like that... We have to teach students for

their Performance Evaluation (*suhaengpǒngga*) at school. It is almost impossible for students to get good grades without taking music lessons.

As a Christian, her religious faith is one of the motives for her decision in favor of homeschooling. She thinks students' spoiled behaviors, disrespect to grown-ups, lack of basic etiquette, and apathy to learning as more urgent problems for her own children. Because she believes in homeschooling and its pedagogic advantage in promoting children's autonomy, she had Chi-Su quit a private kindergarten several months ago and began teaching him at home.

Hyōn-Su's mother: Autonomous Learning

Because Hyōn-Su's mother has taught English at a private language institute for a long time, she is aware of the importance of maternal intervention in children's educational success. But she thinks that excessive parental intervention deprives children of natural ability for autonomous learning and only causes them to overly depend upon supplementary lessons.

Since I all the time see children who are trapped in school and a series of supplementary lessons after school, I don't want to give such pressure to my son. I don't understand why such extra lessons are necessary for elementary school students. I think it is enough for them to read many books.

Like the schools she experienced, the school she witnessed through Hyōn-Su's eyes is oppressive and violent. Today's teachers are even worse than ones she had. Assuming that all students take supplementary courses at *hagwǒn*, they are neglectful of educating children.

She wishes that her only son may become an independent thinker with a creative mind who does not submit himself to authority. After Hyōn-Su went to an elementary school, his mother realized that her belief in the individualistic childrearing confused him. Hyōn-Su's assertive attitudes conflict with school teachers' authoritarian pedagogy. Hyōn-Su was bored by the rote-memorization and meaningless simple repetition at school. Finally, he wanted to quit the

school. She supported his decision to leave school because the continuous attendance to school was no more than an obstacle for his future learning.

It might have been better to keep quiet and follow what others do. I have always said to my son, “Speak up what you think right, but do in an appropriate way.” Because I taught him that way, he tends to be persistent if he thinks he is right. Such a character can be seen as resistant to the authoritarian teacher... It is true that I want him to be like that. When we grew up, we were taught to have a regard for others’ feelings (*nunch’iboda*). Probably, that is why I consciously taught my son to live in a reversed way.

Hyōn-Su’s mother grew up surrounded by many rules and restrictions in a conservative family and authoritarian schools. But she wants her son to have a life different from hers. Because the world has changed, she believes that her son can enjoy more freedom.

As an education major during college years, she learned about a variety of alternative models in educating children. She deeply believes that every child is a natural learner. She values the autonomous learning and she wants to provide her son with opportunities to discover what he can really enjoy. Although she values the importance of learning, she does not push Hyōn-Su to study by a fixed schedule and a curriculum: “Sometimes, we go to the bookstore to spend some time together reading books... It is not too late for him to start studying when he feels like doing.” Hyōn-Su’s mother was a little radical in encouraging Hyōn-Su to discover what he really wanted to do. She offered her son freedom of choice as well as space and time to explore himself.

She is a working mother. Because she teaches in the afternoon and the evening, she cannot spend time as much as she wants. Hyōn-Su’s busy father is not helpful at all. She feels sorry for Hyōn-Su because he is alone at home and a 12-year-old Hyōn-Su walks 30 minutes to take piano lesson by himself. However, she deeply trusts her son’s capability to study by himself. She thought that it is Hyōn-Su’s role to understand his parents’ busy lives and to glimpse a reality waiting for him. She wishes that Hyōn-Su could meet many different persons working in

various fields. Through such a human network, he can find what he really loves and know how to achieve it.

Chin-Söp's Mother: Anywhere from Anybody

Like most people in her generation, she grew up hearing, “Do not step on the shadow of a teacher.” A teacher used to be considered as the most honorable profession. As a young student, she was repeatedly told from her parents to pay attention to the teachers and do whatever they told her to do. From her experience as a high school teacher for more than twenty years, she realized that teachers are just human beings who make mistakes and the school system is not a perfect place to educate children. When Chin-Söp went to elementary school, she “told Chin-Söp that teachers are just normal persons like me. Because they misjudge and make mistakes, whatever you do, think thoroughly before you act.”

Chin-Söp's mother was active in improving learning and teaching environments at school. Becoming a parent gave her a new perspective on school education. She was disappointed with a coercive learning environment. “Let's become polite children” (*Kongsonhan Öriniga Toeja*) was a motto of school Chin-Söp attended. This motto reminded her of the militaristic control under the dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s, which reproduced the state-centered political ideology and infused young children with the blind loyalty to the state. Even after the democratization and subsequent social transformation, schools have not changed. Schooling still forces young students to submit blindly to the authority. Through strict discipline and regulations, they are forced to adapt to the collective school social order.

She decided to have Chin-Söp transfer to a small branch elementary school in a rural area, which his younger brother Chin-Su entered in the following year. Chin-Söp and Chin-Su enjoyed a rural life and the small school environment.

My own mother wouldn't be pleased if I placed second in the entire school. One day my younger son came home in excitement and shouted at me "I am sixth in my class." I had to praise and encourage my son even though I knew that the total number of his class was only six. He was at the bottom.

Chin-Söp's mother was satisfied with the small school, which had more room for parental intervention in school activities. The learning environment was less competitive than schools in the city.

Chin-Söp's mother could not give up her experiments with her children's education because she had witnessed conspicuously positive changes in their lives. She encouraged Chin-Söp to study at home under her supervision. Homeschooling was challenging, a bit adventurous for her entire family, but she had a specific goal.

I had a certain agenda... focusing on literature, history, and philosophy. However, I tried one thing after another for my older son because I didn't have any prior experiences. But now I had some regret, so for my younger son, I am going to make him concentrate on a selected few.

She believes that homeschooling is "a way to learn anywhere from anybody." She is not stressed out by her responsibility as an educator. She simply assumes her position as a *guide*.

Twenty-four hours a day seven days a week, the more time I spend with my children the more problems I find with my children. Chin-Söp was too self-centered and inconsiderate... Homeschooling experience is especially beneficial in finding such problems early enough to solve.

She values participation and changes through dialogue and negotiation. Her family decides all major decisions regarding homeschooling at the family council (*kajok hoeüi*). Because Chin-Söp is part of the decision-making process, he feels more responsible for the decision. Without any fixed schedule or curricula, therefore, Chin-Söp continues his study based on his interests and his own pace. He also enjoys a stress-free learning environment. He complies with the decision about his study which is determined by the family council. Under his mother's supervision, he reads a variety of books encompassing history, literature, and Eastern philosophical traditions.

He studies English at the English institute his father runs and in which his father teaches. Study is only part of his homeschooling experience. At home, he had to share the household chores. Civil education was the important part of curricula. He participated in NGO activities. Chin-Söp's mother cherishes the last five-year-long homeschooling experience through which her family has gotten together and she has learned the values of the family-centered life.

Chi-Hye's Mother: "Household Missionary"

In Chi-Hye's homeschool, the father was the one who suggested homeschooling. He heard about homeschooling from his sister-in-law (Chi-Hye's mother's older sister) who had homeschooled her children in American for ten years first. He realized that it was what he dreamed of for his children's education. In 1999, the family finally started to homeschool Chi-Hye, a nine-year-old daughter, and Chi-Hun, a six-year-old son. From the beginning, Chi-Hye's parents had a specific goal in their homeschooling: raising their children to be God's children (*Hananimui chanyö*).

It is becoming rare to find children who are obedient to their parents and respectful toward adults... These days, young parents don't know that they are raising their children as fools. Even college kids don't know how to take care of themselves because their mothers did everything for them.

Critical perspectives on the conventional childrearing practices and parents' "education fever" in South Korea were the major motives for homeschooling.

Because they are the one of the earliest homeschooling families in South Korea, they faced their neighbors' misunderstanding. Their unique educational philosophy and peculiar educational practice did not suit their neighbors in the community. Such incongruence often confused Chi-Hye's mother and made her diffident about what they were doing for their children.

When we lived in an apartment, I couldn't ask myself whether I was doing a

mother's roles right. Mothers in the apartment complex make strenuous efforts for their children's education. Mothers have to take care of everything for their children.

To avoid such an unnecessary conflicts and a competitive educational atmosphere, the family moved to the rural area where Chi-Hye's grandparents live. Living with the children's grandparents not only provides a safe niche for their homeschooling but also greatly enriches their homeschooling experiences. Grandparents become teachers and children help their grandparents with chores and receive an allowance.

For the first couple of months, Chi-Hye's mother had hard time because of her diffidence about her children's progress in learning.

I used to compare my children with other children at their grades at school. When I felt that my children might be left behind children at school. I anxiously nagged them to study harder. In that case, husband always told me, "All of our children are healthy and take care of themselves. On the top of that, isn't it alright because they have faith in God?" Then I came to ask myself, "Why should I care about progress based on school curricula?"

She also struggled because she did not know what to teach and how to do it. She collected many different homeschooling curricula available at that time: *School of Tomorrow*, *A Beka*, and *Alpha Omega*. Thinking of teaching one of these curricula itself was overwhelming. Her children were so confused because they did not know what to do either. She called her sister in America and asked how to start homeschooling. Her sister advised Chi-Hye's mother to teach obedience first.

It is a carrot and stick approach. It is said that Matthew's mother only gives her children two options: to obey willingly or to be punished... She even gives vinegar to the child who does not obey joyfully... I gave a spoon of vinegar to my oldest daughter. But, she liked it. Because each child is unique, he or she needs to be treated different way... We reward with fake money called "talent." If any of my children did not do what they have to do, they cannot eat. Because the reward and punishment were continuously repeated, they realized that obedience was important.

After their children were equipped with obedience, everything became easy. Children did their

given work. All she had to do is to answer the questions they faced while they studied by themselves. In many cases, the younger child asked questions to the older child and they tried to solve the problems by themselves. Teaching right characteristics and encouraging children to acquire them based on repetitive discipline is the only pedagogic philosophy she has.

I am kind of greedy for books. All we need to deepen knowledge is books... I have my children carry books wherever they go. While waiting for an order in a restaurant, I have them read. Now they are habituated to read.

Chi-Hye's parents see themselves as stewards of God's gifts. As parents/educators, they feel responsible for raising their children to be fully independent responsible persons. To do so, children need to be disciplined for the extended period of time. Until they believe that their children have solid foundations in their faith and relationships with God, they need to protect them from secular influences and exercise strict discipline.

Faith was Chi-Hye's parents' primary motive for their homeschooling. They homeschooled their children while they stayed in the U.S. for a-year-long visiting professorship. She sent two children to a nearby church school, but she did not like the very loose educational program. After the six weeks, she decided to keep homeschooling her children.

God gave us children to take care of them. To raise one human being right is too hard. A boy needs to be raised to become a responsible father. A girl needs training to become a good mother. There are so many things to be taught before they go out to the outer world... I have tried to communicate the basics to all of my children. I taught cooking and I plan to teach sewing next time.

Even though her parents-in-law and husband are very supportive and helpful, Chi-Hye's mother is the one who is in charge of her homeschool. She has an official title as "principal."¹

Without considering myself as a household missionary, it is impossible to do

¹ In Chi-Hye's homeschool, her paternal grandfather is a chief director and teacher of Chinese and Japanese, her paternal grandmother is a teacher of cultural experiences and a nutritionist, her maternal grandfather is a math teacher, her maternal grandmother is teacher of art and calligraphy, her father is a physical education teacher, and her mother is a principal, which makes her in the highest rank but most involved.

homeschooling. I think of myself as a missionary to serve children and home... I think it is easy for woman to throw away the caring duties to work outside successfully... Imagine that your children watch you twenty-four hours seven days a week. I have to become a role model in religious life. Sleeping time is the only time for myself. There is no place to rest... I pray God to prepare me to be a good mother and teacher. Without believing that this is my workplace and mission, I cannot continue homeschooling my three children.

Chi-Hye's mother and father do not know how long they will continue homeschooling their children. They feel a need to discipline their children until they can build the solid relationships with God and become confident of living the world based on their faith and Christian values.

Chae-Min's Mother: Growing up Together

When Chae-Min's mother worked full-time for a church, her parents-in-law were taking care of her two sons. During worship services or early Morning Prayer meetings, Chae-Min's mother often heard a voice, "How about your children? How about your children?" She thought she was working for God, but occasionally she felt empty and sorry for her sons. She began asking what she should do for her children. Her participation in the first homeschooling conference in 2002 was a shocking experience to her. She realized that homeschooling might be the way to educate the next generation and that was God's mission for her. She thought that God wanted her to serve her children before other children.

Around one hundred twenty families gathered at the conference... All of participants at the conference were struck with awe by the presentation of American missionaries who were homeschooled. We could not sleep and discussed how we could educate our children as God intended.

Like many other participants at the conference, she sensed the unlimited potential of homeschooling through the balance between character development and academic achievement. She witnessed its possibility through young American missionaries. In particular, he was amazed by a young man, Brother Matthew: his attitudes regarding serving others and spiritual leadership.

I had thought that I had been working for God. At the conference, I realized that all the work I thought I did for God was in really what I did for myself... It was my desire for myself... Brother Matthew and my sons' faces were overlapped. At that moment, I wanted to raise my children to be like this man.

Due to the lack of further information, she could not decide on homeschooling right away. Her newly-shaped expectations for education, however, increasingly came into conflict with the school teacher of her nine-year-old son, Chae-Min.

One day Chae-Min received a zero (*ppangjŏm*) on the dictation test. The teacher demanded Chae-Min to study harder. He got hurt emotionally. In fact, he was a little slow in learning. I had to decide to start homeschooling because I believed it was a right thing to do for my son. After the end of first semester of his second grade, I had him quit school.

She got to know several homeschooling families, including Chi-Hye's family. From them, she gathered information about homeschooling curricula.

For the first six months, I had a hard time figuring out what to teach to my children. Soon enough, I realized that the curriculum was not a problem. The real problem was with me. I was too anxious about the fact that I had to teach. I could not stand my children's slow learning. I got easily mad at them... I almost said to my son to go back to school... I hit the bottom of my emotional capacity. It was so hard to handle the fact that I was not good enough to homeschool my children. I cried a lot at prayer. I discovered my problem. What was really important was not what to teach but how to restore the relationships with my children. So I stopped trying to teach and started Bible study with my children.

She decided to start from the basics. She asked Brother Matthew to stay at her apartment for a week with the hope to learn how to discipline her children from him.

For the week, I really learned a lot. He became a good role model for my sons... I had an urge to meet his mother who raised this wonderful person... When Mrs. Liz, Mathew's mother, came to Korea, I asked her to let me stay in her place for three days... I wanted to learn how she raised eight wonderful children... Later, she offered a parent education program for six weeks. 15 families gathered at her place and learned about character development.

Three days with Mrs. Liz was a life-altering experience to Chae-Min's mother. For the first time, she learned the basics of Bible-based parenting skills. As a young child, she had a wish to

become a “wise-mother-benevolent-wife” when she grows up. But when she became a mother of two children, she found herself not ready to be a mother who could raise them as God wanted.

We were supposed to be disciplined [to be better parents], but we weren't... When I entrusted my children to the school system, there were less troubles arisen between my children and me. Frankly speaking, I didn't know much about my children. Once we started homeschooling, it was really hard because every moment about everything I had to face conflicts with my children.

Homeschooling provides her with the opportunities to understand her children and lay a solid foundation for better relationships with her children. To do so, she needs to set the limits. She gives specific guidelines of what they should do and how they should do.

In the beginning, I gave explanations of why I imposed new rules on them... I wanted them to grow to be men of God. They understood why I gave harsh punishment. As my children began to understand that, they began to change. As my children began to understand the rules, their abilities to control themselves also grew... Conflicts became less frequent. The relationship with me and everything becomes smooth and comfortable. Authority and order are the secret that make all of us happy... Later I read James Dobson's books, and I realized that punishment is important device to guide children to the right path.

Obedience was the key to the character development. Based on a new personality trained with obedience, they can grow spiritually and intellectually. They get up early in the morning, memorize Bible verses, and study according to the schedule. They do all without complaining.

The definition of obedience is “Quickly and cheerfully carrying out the wise direction of those who are responsible for me.” If any of my children did not obey quickly and cheerfully, he is not obeying. He deserves punishments... I reward my children for their accomplishments and good behaviors... We also struggle because our children do not obey. Kids often resist obeying parents. We talk and pray. Then, God mostly gives us wisdom how to resolve the problem... When I think that I haven't punished them. I declare that I will spank right after they did wrong.

Even though her children are ready for their intellectual growth with better personality, teaching is a real burden to her. She has a strong desire for more effective learning. She is swamped with materials she has to study ahead of teaching her children, but she said,

I myself feel really blessed to have had a chance to study... As a student, I have never enjoyed learning and I wasn't good enough. I went to school because I had to. Through homeschooling I've really learned a lot and come to enjoy learning together with my children.

Her children's positive gradual changes in character and attitude on a daily basis became the source of her achievements. In addition, she found herself becoming a faithful mother and a good student. She believed that these fundamental changes occurring in her deep heart were God's gift.

Su-Pin's Mother: For the Sake of My Children

Su-Pin's mother used to teach at a public elementary school. As a member of a Christian Teachers' organization, she studied Charlotte Mason's educational philosophy and dreamed of providing students with value-oriented experiential "living education" (*saraitnŭn kyoyuk*). When her younger child, Su-Kŭn, suddenly complained about school, she just pushed him to go.

I myself taught at public elementary school for more than ten years. When my son told me he wanted to study at home, I just persuaded him to adjust to the school environment. I thought he had problems in the group-oriented school life and he should have become stronger to survive at school.

Su-Kŭn had a different perspective. He said:

My teacher once scolded at one of my classmates saying, "If you do not pay attention to me, I will send you home to study at home." At that moment, I thought I would rather study at home. So I told my idea to my mom.

It was hard for Su-Pin's mother to embrace homeschooling as a way to educate her two children because homeschooling rejects the fundamentals of public education such as equal opportunity and universal education. At the same time, she worried that homeschooling would interfere with her work as a pastor's wife. What bothered her most was the burden of responsibility which she would have to shoulder. If she could avoid it, she would not assume such a full responsibility of her children's education.

What if I failed? That means that I ruined my children's lives. It was hard to endure... I asked myself what it means by living a better life. If my children can do what they want and, at the same time, they can honor God with the works they can enjoy. Isn't that a best life? What children can please God?... In retrospect, I wasn't happy when I worked for myself. But now I feel great because I try to come closer to God. I wish my children would live a life as God wants.

With the help of two homeschooling families she came to know from a web-based support network, she was inspired and started to homeschool her two children. The hardest experience she had to face was letting go of her habitual comparison of her children with their peers at school.

I was anxious of my new responsibility of educating my children and their performance... I was not sure of the progress of my children's learning because we don't have any standards we can use to compare... Frankly, my generation got used to evaluate one's achievements based on comparison. I planned out the teaching curriculum and drew up a schedule... Soon, I realized that if homeschooling is the way to raise my children as God wants I should not compare my children with other children at school... I cannot teach my children without entrusting everything to God.

After her own trials and errors for the first six months, she decided to follow her children's interests. Her homeschooling has slowly changed to adopt what her two children enjoy. She valorizes freedom and flexibility in her homeschool because she believes that they can promote her children's individuality and creativity. In her opinion, creativity is "an ability to take the lead in what one wants." She does not grapple with curriculum and schedules. She just encourages her children's autonomous learning with a variety of books. Despite not being in a classroom, Su-Pin and Su-Kün have made many close friends through the homeschooling support networks. They went on a week-long mission trip to Japan with a group of high school students. She is satisfied with her homeschooling experience because they make their learning experiences rich and fun together.

So-Hyön's Mother: Fruitful Trees

As a pastor's daughter, So-Hyön's mother grew up without knowing her father well. After getting married to a young pastor and having two children, she realized that her two children also were having the same experiences as she had: emotional distance with always-busy fathers. When her husband suggested homeschooling their two children, she agreed that homeschooling was the best way to provide their children with Bible-based education. She also thought that it would be the only way to get her family back together. Soon, however, she realized that there were so many things she had to give up for homeschooling. She had an ambition to continue her study in social welfare after her children entered an elementary school.

All duties fall to a mother's shoulders. Most women in my generation want to take part in social activities as soon as they can shake off their maternal duties... It was hard for me to give up opportunities to work... I had a strong desire to continue my study in social welfare. I planned out everything and waited for the time my children enter school and so I can have more time for myself... Since I relinquished my desires to free myself from family and children, my husband's heart has returned and our children have become happier. Homeschooling has revived my family... I doubt that all parents love their children. It might be a half truth and a half lie. By instinct, they might be able to love their children. Many parents prioritize their works and other social activities and often feel annoyed with caring duties for their children. Once I gave up the desires for myself and concentrated my love toward my children, they began to change. Now they are not overly sensitive and passive any more.

Like other mothers, homeschooling was an adventure for So-Hyön's family. In the beginning, So-Hyön's mother did not know anything about how to discipline and teach children at home. She admires American missionaries' devoted contributions to the Korean homeschooling families. She attributes the improved homeschooling environment to American missionaries. Her children benefit from extended educational possibilities offered by American missionaries.

American missionaries and their families have continuously come to assist our homeschooling movement. They organize a youth orchestra for our children, teach English... They offer character development seminars. About virtues such as honesty and obedience... We think we know about these. In reality, however,

we don't fully embrace them because they conflict with the culture of our daily lives... American missionaries taught us through their lives.

Including character development and Christian curricula, everything was new to her and hard to practice. However, becoming a role model to her children was hardest in her case.

Because I wasn't raised through homeschooling, everything was difficult. I do all the bad things; suddenly, however, I have to teach my children not to do certain things. Sometimes, I felt guilty and thought that it would be better if children are taught by somebody they don't know too much as in school.

It was stressful for her to become a good role model to her children. Such pressures even made her believe that school's intervention in the moral discipline of her children would be necessary because the discipline might be more effective if it is done by strangers who can expose their partial positive images to children. Soon she realized that she wanted to be the moral guide for her children through homeschooling. She wanted to develop her own moral maturity as well.

Homeschooling has changed her family's life completely. Her husband quit an assistant pastorship and started a small independent church with six other families who share family-centered values and a communal vision. A nine-year-old girl, So-Hyön, and a seven-year-old boy, Ch'ang-Hyön, enjoy a variety of programs for Christian homeschoolers. So-Hyön's mother sums up her year-long experience of homeschooling as "hard, but rewarding." She considered homeschooling as her God-given chance for her true satisfaction because she now enjoys the family-togetherness.

In the past, I always felt something was missing in my life. I always pursued something I did not have... I vaguely imagined that I would feel better if I pursued a graduate degree in social welfare and served God with my better capabilities... From a secular perspective, people might think that homeschooling is killing mothers. That is not the case. Rather, homeschooling completes and satisfies me. As a wife, I am completely contented with the relationship with my husband; in the relationship with my children, my expectations are 100 percent filled. Since I continuously have to develop myself to provide better education to my children, my desire for academic achievements is met... My sacrifice makes

my children healthier and happier, and lays the solid foundations for their future life... I have no doubt that homeschooling is what I need to devote myself to.

Through homeschooling, she realized a truly important mission from God.

To women, motherhood is the most precious blessing from God. In the Old Testament, Jacob blessed Joseph by comparing him to a fruitful tree whose branches reach over the wall. Children are like trees planted in my bosom. If the trees put down deep roots and produce lots of fruit, they can benefit the other living things in the world. If I can educate my children to become persons like a deep-rooted fruitful trees, my sacrifice can contribute to make the world better place to live.

So-Hyŏn's mother sees successful childrearing not only as a way to please God, but also a way to benefit the entire society. Because she can participate in such a great work of God through her children, she glorifies motherhood as a blessing from God.

Discussion

I have examined the voices of eight homeschooling mothers. Hyŏn-Su's and Chin-Sŏp's mothers are unschooling mothers. Yun-Chu's, Chi-Su's, Chi-Hye's, Chae-Min's, and Su-Pin's mothers are Christian homeschooling mothers.² In the discussion that follows, I look generally at all the homeschooling mothers I interviewed and offer an initial analysis. Most parents I interviewed describe their children as doing fine or even being very successful at schools.³ All these mothers share a very critical perspective on authoritarian teachers, their obsolete pedagogy, excessively competitive maternal intervention, children's increasing apathy toward learning, and the educational realities in which taking several supplementary courses is almost mandatory.

Unschooling mothers consider the uniform school curricula and authoritarian teachers as

²Joh Holt's term "unschooling" is becoming widely used. Considering its actual practices, however, it refers to the learning outside of school in general. Holt's well-known works, *How Children Fail* and *How Children Learn* were not available in Korean translation until 2007. Christian homeschooling mothers are also heterogeneous groups in their practices.

³One exception is Chae-Sŏ's mother who is considering homeschooling for her daughter with hearing impairments.

a stumbling block in unlocking their children's full potential. Therefore, they devise a reversed strategy: giving more choices in learning with lenient pedagogy. The inclusion of humanity classes into core part of their learning is intended to develop critical thinking skills. On the other hand, Christian homeschooling mothers' narratives center on the need for the development of better personality and God-given talents. They feel obliged to save their children from morally and religiously detrimental school environments (e.g., evolutionism, humanistic curricula, and materialistic peer influences). Therefore, studying through Bible and Bible study are given a great deal of weight in their homeschooling experiences.⁴

Even though nobody doubts that homeschooling has great advantages in educating their children, escaping from the conventional place for education causes alternating feelings of a sense of relief in being free from the public school system and anxieties caused by uncertainty of the future and diffidence in their performance as a home educator. Unschooling families have more troubling beginnings because many of them were more interested in getting out of the school system than knowing what exactly they were heading toward. They just ventured to step into the new world of homeschooling. Retreating from formal schooling, however, parents and children worked together as a team to create a new kind of school out in the world.⁵

Maternal Roles

Each mother's unique standpoint makes her conceptualize the ideal mother in a different way. Unschooling mothers and Christian homeschooling mothers have perceptual differences

⁴ For instance, Chae-Min studies Korean and English with Bible. He hand-copies verses from Korean and English Bibles and memorize them.

⁵ These families browse the internet to glean the information and find persons with whom they can communicate. They expand their social networks to other homeschoolers through support group websites. They established their own family homepages or blogs.

regarding their proper roles in their homeschooling. Unschooling mothers idealize “friend-like” mothers and assume permissive attitudes. They consider themselves as guides (*kiljabi*), not as teachers. They attach a greater importance to the liberal pedagogy than to the curriculum itself. Most of them follow the public school curricula but focus more on specialized activities based on children’s interests. Therefore, their learning activities are loosely structured. Unschooling children rarely have a daily schedule or a yearly-planned-out curriculum. When they agree to the necessity of a more organized plan, parents and children work together to draw up a schedule based on children’s needs and feasibility.

Unschooling mothers who are working mothers do not think that they need to give up their careers. Middle-class working mothers have a strong sense of independent self and perceive themselves as separate individuals from their families and children (Shin Kyōng-Ah 1998, 1999). Chi-Yōn’s mother believes that financial support for their children is equally important as caring duty. She spends most of her afternoons tutoring English conversation and moonlights as an instructor in a nearby English institute. In the meantime, her two young children are taken care of by her mother. Before her family moved to the rural area, Kyōng-Hŭi’s mother ran her own *hagwōn*. She was too busy to take care of her two young children. She sometimes felt sorry for not standing by her children’s side, but she also believes that her work in a way contributed to fostering her children’s independence.⁶ Sōk-Chun’s mother, who works full-time, explained that becoming a successful member of the society makes positive impacts on her son. She idealizes a mother who pursues her own ambition and keeps pace with her child’s growth. Many of these mothers believe that providing more substantial help (i.e., hiring well-qualified tutors) is more important than her presence whenever her child needs her. On the other hand, Chin-Sōp’s mother

⁶ Kyōng-Hŭi’s mother was very proud of her children who are academically independent. Such confidence made her start homeschooling.

regrets that her two sons were under her mother-in-law's care when they were young.⁷ As a school teacher, however, she has much more free time to share with her two children than any other aforementioned mothers who are tutors or instructors at *hagwŏn*.

Unlike unschooling mothers, typical Christian homeschooling mothers teach all subjects. Christian homeschooling mothers are strict “disciplinarians,” who do not mind applying corporal punishments to their young children. To be able to teach, they should distance themselves from simply being mothers and transform themselves into educators. The interchangeability (and balance) between two roles contribute to Christian homeschooling mothers' realization of their unique independent selves. Since a home educator is a labor-intensive full-time job, which requires the strain of work and emotional burden, most Christian homeschooling mothers are stay-at-home mothers.⁸ They explain that giving up their own careers and becoming stay-at-home homeschooling mothers is their calling. “Homeschooling mothers” are their profession and they have a strong sense of pride. For example, Chae-Min's and So-Hyŏn's mothers confessed that God channeled their selfish desires into having a vision of their children's future and made them raise and discipline their children as God intended. Christian homeschooling mothers place infusing Christian faith in their children as the top priority in their homeschooling. Soon, however, they realize their lack of their own faith and the problems in their own personality. They interpreted such hardships as the God-given opportunity for their spiritual and moral growth. They craft themselves into spiritually mature mothers and experience personal transformations. Chi-Hye's mother confessed, “At first, I was going to teach my children, but later I realized that God had tried to discipline me through teaching my children.” Such an

⁷ Such a sense of guilt is a dominant theme in Christian homeschooling mothers' narratives.

⁸ Among my interviewees, only Ye-Ŭn's mother works part-time for her husband's math *hagwŏn*.

attitude becomes their source of satisfaction and happiness. Because of such sense of rewards, most Christian homeschooling mothers claim that motherhood is a woman's privilege.

To the majority of South Korean Christians, homeschooling was introduced by American missionaries at the first homeschooling conference in 2002. The contact with American homeschoolers was a real eye-opener. Amazed by the pedagogic superiority of homeschooling in developing character and academic capabilities, these mothers began to think critically about their own indulgent childrearing and Korean churches which overlooked the importance of rearing the next generation. They also realized that their insensitivity to their children's untamed behaviors and lack of discipline made their children spoiled. Korean Christian homeschooling parents admire American missionaries, their devotional life, and spiritual leadership. Some mothers make every effort to learn a biblical childrearing style from American missionaries, which emphasizes obedience and strict discipline. They imitate the puritan lifestyle of American missionaries in many ways. For instance, they are plainly dressed: they wear modest clothing (for example, long skirts) with minimal makeup. The ways they dress make them conspicuous. In order to learn more about Christian homeschooling, Chae-Min's mother even traveled the U.S. to visit American Christian homeschooling families and stayed with them for four months. She sums up her experience as following:

For about four and a half months, I realized the importance of family. I could see how they maintain the close relationship with God, how sincerely they serve Him, and how devoted their lives are to Him. It wasn't just hypocritical faith. Families I really learn a lot from their faithful life.

They struggled in adopting a new parenting style, which was different from the way they were raised. They tried hard to cultivate their own empathy and sensitive care. They even organized a group in order to learn how to discipline their children from Mrs. Liz. The first and the most important step is to draw a clear line between their children and themselves. This way, they can

protect their own privacy, prevent children's overindulgence and dependency, and assure their authority as a mother/educator. By setting limits, mothers can maintain the emotional space for maternal authority. Clarifying responsibility is another important technique for effective discipline. For instance, if a child loses something, he or she has to work to reimburse the loss and purchase the same item.

Emphasizing spiritual growth and character development, Christian homeschooling mothers have more rigorous moral standards for their children's behavioral developments. Based on the increasing knowledge about their children acquired from more sensitive observation to their children's behaviors and habits, homeschooling mothers realize the needs to direct their children to the right path. Drawing up a schedule was an important part of homeschooling experience. The schedule is not another control mechanism as it would be in school. Following the schedule ensured that children's learning was progressing. Because parents and children plan together, scheduling is a process at which parental expectation and child's interest are compromised. The schedule is not fixed but continuously updated according to the child's capability and learning progress. Once decided, however, children must observe the schedule until it is revised. Based on the keen observation of their children's learning attitudes and progresses, they are willing to adjust the schedule.

Homeschooling mothers reorganize their lives centering on the one-on-one relationship with their children. Educational responsibilities, which were initially felt as very challenging and burdensome, have gradually been seen as opportunities to understand children and their needs. Passing through troubling beginning, a mother and her children gradually learn about each other and build their homeschool together. South Korean homeschooling mothers make every effort to suit their children's unique needs. Christian homeschooling mothers make sure that their children

understand their strict discipline and harsh punishments are for their growth. Unschooling and Christian homeschooling, these two different points of departure merge into one single common benefit, the mother-child interdependence or intimacy. The increasing time mothers and their children can spend together benefits mother-child relationships. Chae-Min's mother states, "Since I know what they are interested and what they study, it is a lot easier to find something common to talk about." Throughout homeschooling, they attain a higher level of mother-child attunement, which grows to mutual respect and trust. Based on the improved and more intimate mother-child relationship, the mothers gradually gain a positive self-perception as a mother.

Stevens (2001) argues that some women's temperamental dispositions such as motherliness and devotedness make them to be willing to sacrifice themselves for their children's education through homeschooling. As described previously, however, the homeschooling mothers I interviewed state that they were not born with temperamentally better nature to become enduring and nurturing mothers. So-Hyön's mother is skeptical of the idea that parents naturally love their children. She questioned the authenticity of motherhood. To become a better parent and to be able to love their own children, they need to be disciplined. In other words, learning and self-discipline transform them into a different type of mother. In addition, mothers should not passively respond to their children's needs; rather, they should be able to actively control them to discipline their children for their healthy development.

The Absence of Fathers

In Yong-Ch'öl's homeschool, his father is the home educator for his mother who is pursuing Ph.D. degree in Germany. I also heard that there are other homeschooling families in which fathers, who are unemployed or have more flexible work schedule, are main home

educators for their working wives. In most families I studied, however, mothers take a full responsibility for their children's education and fathers are almost non-existent. Ye-Ŭn's mother complains,

Does my husband help me? No! But it works better if he does... All day I have to grapple my children. When my husband comes home in the evening and says "What is this mess?," it really makes me so angry that I want to quit homeschooling and other chores.

Many homeschooling mothers share such experiences of being frustrated with their busy husbands. They understand their husband's work situations, but expect a little bit more of emotional supports from their husbands. Chae-Min's mother comments:

I've heard that many homeschooling families have problems. In the case of home schools in which fathers are not supportive, the problems are hard to resolve... We spend entire day preparing classes. We understand that our husbands also work all day outside, but we often feel sore [about that our husbands are not helping us]. Compared with other mothers, I am sort of fortunate because my husband tries to help me. He checks if our children are doing well. He takes care of calculating the reward and penalty points and he leads family worship service.

In the early stage of homeschooling, many families struggle due to fathers' indifference. Due to the dominant maternal role in homeschooling, fathers have problems in finding their places at homeschooling. Chi-Hye's father sacrifices part of his work for his children and teaches ice-hockey on every Saturday to a group of homeschoolers along with his three children. Kyŏng-Hŭi's father teaches children math and science. He occasionally leads a discussion after reading certain books. As their homeschooling experience matures and their children grow up, however, fathers' attitudes change and their involvement with their children's education and lives increases.

Beliefs on Children

Unschooling and Christian homeschooling begin from two opposing views on human nature. As discussed in chapter 1, many progressive educational thinkers, including John Holt,

believe in a child's natural proclivity for learning. Most South Korean unschooling parents deeply trust their children's potential for self-directed autonomous learning.⁹ These parents do not think the discipline is necessary for their children. Hyön-Su's mother believes that Hyön-Su deserves more unrestricted freedom to unlock his potential. Su-Chöng's mother even deplors that her children are still trapped in the computer games that they are unable to enjoy freedom.

Christian homeschooling is based on the dualistic ideas of human nature: (1) Because children are created in God's image, they are worthy of love and (2) because children are born with the sinful nature, they need discipline under the appropriate authorities (Stevens 2001:65). South Korean Christian homeschooling mothers are aware of the importance of discipline, but none of them mentioned a child's sinful nature. They always maintained a positive view on children's potentials for moral and academic development. They occasionally expressed their admiration about their children's spiritual sensitivity and eagerness to correct their bad habits. Regarding the importance of teaching her children self-control through discipline, Chae-Min's mother remarks,

Some people seem to misunderstand what children should be like. Children are supposed to be disciplined... If parents leave their children to themselves and let them do whatever they want, they never learn how to control themselves. Then, they cannot become peacemakers but only cause problems... I believe that self-control is the most important. Children often overreact when they get scolded... I always tell my children, "You should be able to control yourself... God did not create you like that" When my children get angry and raise their voice, they are punished.

She makes sure that her children understand God's expectations toward their way of life and plans for their future. By emphasizing God's perfect intension for her children, she encourages them to achieve higher standards in morality and good behavior. When she scolds her sons, she

⁹ Some parents have a strong conviction about their children's capability, but others believe that their children might have such a capability.

uses God's authority to correct their wrongful behaviors. Discipline based on the authority of Bible signifies God's ultimate authority over the family. Therefore, Ye-Ŭn's parents do not scold their teenage children. They just wait for the right Bible verses to come up in their family Bible study. In most cases, their children find out the lessons from the given verses by themselves and confess their decision to correct their behaviors when they share their thoughts about them.

Learning

In terms of the subjects of learning, unschooling can be characterized as its emphasis on critical thinking and humanity courses while Christian homeschooling as Bible-based curricula and character development. Each family employs its unique pedagogic approach and individualized curriculum, which are more tailored to their children. But most Korean homeschooling mothers commonly emphasize the importance of learning. They concentrate on their children's learning progress. They do not compare their children with other children in school. They try to be satisfied with the process of learning, not the outcome of it. Homeschooling mothers redefine learning in the context of real life. In most Christian homeschooling families, children have their own shares of the household chores. In Sŭl-Ki's homeschool, a nine-year-old Sŭl-Ki and a seven-year-old Chun-Ki are responsible for cleaning the bathroom. Sŭl-Ki's mother boasts of their cleaning by saying, "This seems a little dirty and messy, but this is all my children do." She praises her children for their trying. Some parents emphasize civil education through volunteering opportunities. Chi-Hye's entire family visits an orphanage every other weekend to help chores and babysit. Chin-Sŏp volunteers for an NGO and participates in various activities related to the ecological movement.

Emphasis on the child's academic achievements characterizes Korean homeschoolers.

Most young homeschooling children look satisfied with learning with their mothers. As they grow up, however, they go through the same anxieties and agonies for their own future. They cannot be free from instinctual comparison with other successful persons and they long for the successful life and the entrance to the prestigious colleges at the age of 18.

Family

Most homeschooling mothers were concerned that competitive school environment could cause serious impacts on their children's healthy emotional development. Home is not perfect, but it provides a safe niche in which young children can be free from morally and academically deteriorating school. Homeschooling brings about drastic changes in lifestyle. Homeschoolers have more choices in controlling their own life. Their sense of isolation is often easily overcome because their world freely expands to other worlds through the internet and other social networks. In this process, there is a difference: teenaged unschoolers are more child-directed whereas Christian homeschoolers are more parent-initiated. Homeschooling gives children a new possibility of building up a new kind of relationships and a new lifestyle.

Homeschooling mothers I have met dream of an ordinary family life. Without being bothered by what other mothers do or how they should raise their children, they want to rebuild the family and equip their children with a competitive edge. The weekly family council in Chin-Söp's family is not only a process to teach responsibility but also a channel for parents and children get together and share their concerns. Daily morning services in most Christian homeschooling families promote children's faith and positive personalities. These meetings help all the family members also contribute to enhancing their sense of belonging. This way, children learn participation in group and take responsibility. Homeschooling contributes to promoting

family-centered values and enhancing the harmony within a family. This family-centered lifestyle is often considered a benefit originally unexpected. In terms of the utility of education they provide at home, homeschooling mothers may conduct dangerous experiments with their children's futures, but they are sure about the one thing: they give their children freedom and a love of learning.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

Throughout Korean history, a number of grand narratives¹ have defined the meanings of motherhood and governed childrearing practices. The instrumental model of motherhood is politically manipulated. Cultural politics have utilized motherhood as a way to enhance social harmony and increase national wealth. Narratives and politics have encouraged self-sacrifice among mothers and channeled their desire for self-realization toward their children's successful lives. The increasing importance of education drives South Korean mothers into a competitive cultural arena—the field of education. In this educational landscape, maternal intervention has become a new norm for children's educational success, and oversolicitousness has become a dominant characteristic of South Korean mothers.

Zeal for children's education in Today's South Korea is an outgrowth of the competitive nature of market economies, a mobility-centered Korean culture, and the ideology of motherhood. These mothers appear to be highly agentic and seem to act based on their desire for social recognition and improved circumstances under patriarchal gender ideology and challenging socioeconomic conditions. These factors allow mothers to redirect their personal desires to successful childrearing. Because of the ideological constraints revolving around gender roles and the ideal of motherhood, as well as socioeconomic limitations, mothers are committed to their children's educational successes. They are vicariously gratified though their children's achievements and expect their children to be able to attain even higher goals.

¹ These narratives include the Confucian idealization of women's chastity and feminine virtues, the "wise-mother-benevolent-wife" ideology, the patriotic mothers of Japanese wartime rule, the image of "frugal wife," and the "education fever" syndrome.

Homeschooling mothers are apparently mothers who are committed to their children's education. In terms of their devotion to their children's education, the differences between homeschooling mothers and manager mothers seem insignificant. In certain ways and to certain degrees, all South Korean mothers are engaged in their children's education. Some might argue that homeschooling mothers represent a slight variation from oversolicitous mothers with undue fervor for children's education. It may be true. As seen in Chapter Four, some parents strategically choose homeschooling as an educational shortcut for admission to prestigious high schools. When they opt for homeschooling, many unschooling and Christian homeschooling parents also have pedagogic excellence and academic advantages of homeschooling in their minds. As described in previous chapters, however, homeschooling mothers often undergo life-altering experiences that modify their beliefs in childhood and learning, as well as their own self-concept. With different visions of learning and the futures of their children, these homeschooling mothers reject the conventional roles the majority of South Korean mothers assume as educational solicitors and bring the meaning of motherhood into question. In this chapter, I discuss the main characteristics of South Korean homeschooling mothers, and analyze the meanings of homeschooling as a pedagogical practice and as a childrearing practice.

Education Mothers vs. Homeschooling Mothers

Education Mothers

Despite cross-cultural diversities in the concepts of childhood and motherhood, mothers commonly perceive that their selves are interconnected with their young children's lives. Western cultures conceptualize child development as a lineal process, from absolute dependence on caretaker to independence. On the other hand, a Confucian and collectivistic culture attaches

greater importance to parent-child interdependence. While European American mothers promote the child's self-esteem, Chinese mothers foster a close, enduring mother-child relationship (Chao 1995; Chao & Tseng 2002). According to Kim and Choi (1994), children "are not encouraged to assert their own ideas" and "are not perceived as separate beings to deal with, to discipline, or to converse with rationality" (244). In other words, within the dependent relationship with their parents, children are not treated as individual human beings. Their needs and desires are largely neglected while filial piety is traditionally reinforced. Children's existence is submerged in the collective familial identity. They are considered as potential assets to bring glory to the family. When it comes to mother-child relationships, mothers in East Asia have a strong sense of identity inseparable from their children for a lifetime, and see their children as their split selves (Lebra 1986). Mothers and their children are psychologically enmeshed. Such a fused identity encourages mothers to perceive their devotion and protection for their children as self-preservation.

Deeply rooted in the interdependent model of the self, South Korean mothers believe that their children's desire is related to, and even parallel, with their own. They enact their selves through constant symbiotic relationships with their children and often project their dreams on their children's lives. Driven by their competitive spirits, these mothers' desire for recognition is expressed through their children's educational achievements (and their own consumption). Complaining that their children do not even know what they want, South Korean mothers claim that finding the right goals for their children and guiding them in the right direction are their primary parental duties. They compete with other mothers to secure their children's educational successes and advantages in the society. Despite their significant devotion to their children's education, Korean mothers are generally insensitive to their children's emotional demands and

do not empathically respond to them (Kim & Choi 1994:242; Yun 2002:20-21).² Failing to see their children's needs for maternal care/protection, they compel their children to win competitions. Instead of pursuing their own personal development, South Korean mothers control or dominate their children and seek vicarious gratification in their children's achievements (Cho Hae-Joang 1995, 2002; Chung Byung-Ho 2001; Kim & Choi 1994).

In addition to the cultural model of mothering, the discourse on education is another factor that shapes South Korean mothers' mothering styles. In a discursive space full of myths of social mobility and the crucial role of educational background, mothers' anxieties are elevated and their concerns hardly transcend others' evaluations. Childrearing strategies and the ideas of proper mothering are continuously swayed by the external influences such as ever-changing trends of pedagogy and unstable educational policies. Mothers are losing their sovereignty over how to raise their children and what to infuse into them. The sovereignty of mothering is yielded to other experts. Mothers cannot decide what is best for their children. They accommodate the "gaze of others" in their mothering experiences and let other professionals determine their styles and goals of childrearing. To such external authority figures, they voluntarily give up their rights over their children's development and education.

Anxieties caused by private educational businesses, an unstable education system, and fear of even harsher competition in the global market turn South Korean mothers into more dominating figures. Kim and Choi (1994) characterize Korean patterns of childrearing as marked

² According to Lebra (1994), empathy "refers to the ability and willingness to feel what others are feeling, to vicariously experience the pleasure or pain that they are undergoing, and to help them satisfy their wishes" (262). Being able to refrain from their own impulsive feelings and behaviors and caring more about others' feelings are an important part of the socialization process among Japanese children. South Korean mothers are not sensitive to their children's needs, but they emphasize their children's sensitivity to what they expect and feel in the line of filial piety (Kim & Choi 1994:242).

by “leniency and devotion” and by “[s]ituational whims, rather than any particular principle of the mothers, have been described as the norm” (241). Controlling children gradually becomes a difficult task as they grow up. Korean mothers who are unstintingly indulgent with their children in some situations turn into controlling mothers in other situations involving with study and test results. A mother of a 13-year-old boy in a middle school, Ch’ang-Hyōn says:

Since my son began to go to the nearby *hagwōn*, the squabbles have become a lot less frequent, which used to end up with raising voices. Because we don’t see each other any more, we don’t have time for arguments. Rather, I feel pity for him when he returns home utterly worn out.

She wants to maintain a good relationship with her son, but she also knows that somebody has to force him to concentrate on his school work. Caught between the contradictory roles of a benign supporter and a harsh punisher, Ch’ang-Hyōn’s mother decides to rely on private after-school programs for his study.³ Thanks to private after-school programs, this mother can avoid nagging her child to study and, at the same time, achieve her goal of bettering her child’s grades.

In terms of maternal intervention in children’s education, each mother’s standpoint is not the same because of already unequal distributions of capital (economic, social, and cultural capitals). Socioeconomic stratification deepens and causes schisms among mothers: by differences in capital at first and by their children’s educational outcomes as the class structure is reproduced. Such deep divisions make it hard for women to cooperate with each other to fight against unjust socioeconomic circumstances. Just as mothers in the previous era were classified hierarchically, so contemporary mothers are ranked by their husband’s socioeconomic status and

³ Instructors at *hagwōn* force students to study hard to get better scores at school exams. Operating on the market logic, the private educational programs recruit more students when they can successfully meet parents’ obvious demands for the better educational outcomes. To do so, they even use corporal punishments and force students to stay until they finish all the work they had to do at *hagwōn*. When the exam week is a month away, the instructors call their students in to study at *hagwōn* on Sunday.

children's academic standings. And just like their predecessors, contemporary South Korean mothers' statuses draw on their husbands' and even their sons' in their later lives. For their own survival, vicarious gratification through their children's educational achievements is inevitable. To middle-class stay-at-home mothers, children represent the only channel for their own desires, and children's successes are the only way to gain a sense of achievement. Korean education mothers naturally become manipulative strategists, who mobilize limited resources to maximize their children's academic outcomes. Children's performances at school determine their mothers' statuses and identities, and their educational achievements reward their mothers' commitment.

In this context, maternal domination is easily disguised as maternal love. Most South Korean parents of school-aged children commonly share sympathetic attitudes towards their children's school life filled with chronic stresses from exams and supplementary courses at *hagwŏn*. They overlook how much their children struggle. Instead of trying to find a solution, these education mothers actively intervene in their children's education for the wellbeing of their children. As a result, they often use their children as proxies who fight for them and transform their nuclear families into sites from which they can obtain social recognition and power. These mothers are dominant figures in their nuclear families (Hoffman 1995). Since occasional harsh exercises of maternal power often draw upon the father's authority, the mother's power increases in proportion to the degrees of paternal authority (e.g., Chŏn's mother in Chapter Two). These mothers sacrifice intimacy with their children to gain social recognition and risk their children's healthy development to save face.

Homeschooling Mothers

Homeschooling mothers aspire to achieve individualistic dreams of success through their

children. Unschooling mothers are not only resistant to the current educational politics and materialistic youth culture, but also critical about other oversolicitous education mothers. They want to raise their children based on their own philosophy in order to promote their children's creativity and individuality. They criticize education mothers' overcontrol of their children's education as being "oppressive" and "destroying their children's natural abilities." Some even blamed oversolicitous mothers for paralyzing the school system by making their children learn school curriculum in advance at *hagwŏn* and fostering teachers' favoritism by giving bribes. Homeschooling mothers pointed out that other education mothers overlook that, to some degree, they might deprive their children of chances to explore themselves in order to discover what they want and limit their children's desires in the name of maternal guidance. Christian homeschooling mothers are concerned that maternal fervor for children's education destroys the traditional family and its values. Homeschooling mothers believe that homeschooling is the way to protect their families from all the negative problems associated with "education fever," such as children's early study-abroad (*chogi yukak*) and wild goose families (*kirŏgi kajok*), and to provide quality education to their children. Therefore, Chin-Sŏp's mother at the workshop said, "Let's make our home schools better so that we do not have to send our children abroad for study" and So-Hyŏn's mother states, "Why do we need to send our children to foreign countries even though we can have all the resources [missionaries from America and Bible-based curricula] here"

Homeschooling mothers differentiate themselves from other mothers in goals and methods in educating children, and challenge instrumental motherhood. They tend to make more emotional investment in their children's development and thus shape a strong attachment toward their children. The more responsibilities mothers take, the stronger their sense of achievement

becomes. Protective of their children's delicate selves, they make every effort to suit their children's unique needs and tastes in their homeschooling experiences. Based on the improved and more intimate mother-child relationships, these mothers gradually gain a positive self-perception as mothers. They are critical of the current educational system that gives up imbuing children with values and useful knowledge and of mothers who give up the patient work of preservative love and resort to domination to control their children. Borrowing from Ruddick (1989), homeschooling mothers are "reflective mothers," who realize the inauthenticity of dominating mothers and need to restore their nurturance and preservative love (115). They think through the traditional educational practices and try to provide what is best for their children. These mothers reject motherhood as an institution and focus on their own experiences. To them, motherhood is not an oppressive ideology, but a source of joy.

Table 4 summarizes the differences among different types of South Korean mothers. Education mothers are other-oriented in that they tend to conceive of their self-worth as determined by others' evaluations. Due to the collectivistic cultural orientation, education mothers are sensitive to the gaze of others and competitive to encourage their children who are their social extension to achieve higher goals (Shin Kyöng-Ah 1999; Shim Yöng-Hüi 1999). The authoritarian control based on nonnegotiable parental authority and filial piety marks childrearing practices of conventional educational mothers in South Korea. Homeschooling as an extended mother-child relationship signifies adoption of new styles of mothering: permissive and authoritative. Unschooling mothers who trust their own children's natural ability to grow assume a permissive attitude to encourage their children's more intrinsic motivation for learning. Christian homeschooling mothers, on the other hand, seemed to employ a very authoritarian control emphasizing parental authority and strict discipline, but I also notice that they allow

increasing autonomy as children earn trust from parents, marking an “authoritative” control according to Baumrind’s typology. After the strict discipline of obedience and character development, Christian homeschooling mothers who originally restrained their love convey affection and foster autonomy based on more trustful relationships.

Table 4. A comparative chart among “manager” mothers, unschooling mothers, and Christian homeschooling mothers.

	Education Mothers	Homeschooling Mothers	
		Unschooling	Christian
Characteristics	Other-oriented Competitive	Child-led	God-centered Reflexive
Curricula	Schooling w/ after- school programs	Expansion of Learning opportunities	“School-at-home”
Motivation	Exogenous motivation	Endogenous motivation	Habituation/ Internalization
Goal Learning	Achievement	Joy of learning Happiness	Glory of God
Mother’ role	Academic managers	Guides	Educators/ Empathic mothers
Concept of Children	Family asset	Natural learners	Objects of discipline → Companions
Parenting Style	Authoritarian	Permissive Communicative	Authoritative

Maternal Goals: Individualism

As described in Chapter One, South Korean mothers are never homogenous in terms of their degrees of educational intervention and qualities of support for children’s learning. Table 5 shows the responses to the question, “What is the most important goal in educating children?” and is based on a poll with 1,200 respondents, aged 19 to 65. According to this research, a majority of South Korean parents expect that school education places more emphasis on individual happiness and morality than collectivistic goals such as producing competent members of the society. These data suggest that the old educational model of raising the

“obedient and smart child” (*maljaldūtggo kongbu chalthanūn ai*) who can contribute to the nation’s development is being replaced by a new model of fostering an individual’s life-living skills and happiness.⁴

Table 5. The Goals of Educating Children

Categories	First choice	First-second choice
• Helping students live a happy life ⁵ in the future	20.6	34.7
• Raising a virtuous man	20.4	29.7
• Laying a foundation for successful life	17.1	31.6
• Equipping students with skills and knowledge for decent occupations	12.3	28.3
• Developing skills to cope with the everyday challenges in life	9.8	27.3
• Training a capable citizen	7.5	16.4
• Training a Talented man for the nation's development	6.0	14.9
• Training a responsible citizen for the society	3.7	8.7
• Raising a leader of the society	1.5	4.8
• Training a worker who can improve social conditions	1.1	3.7

(Kim& Kim 2006:79)

Maternal goals in homeschooling families vary. Each mother conceptualizes a unique model of mothering based on her interpretations of the social worlds and her evaluations of her child’s distinctive disposition. Promoting autonomy, individuality, and independence was the most salient theme in Korean homeschooling parents’ narratives.⁶ Many unschooling parents

⁴ During my fieldwork, I came across various maternal wishes including desires for raising “a financially self-reliant man” (*Nūngnyōgitnūn saram*), “a global leader equipped with knowledge and good characters” (*Kugjejōk kamgagūljinin chidoja*), and “a child loving others” (*sarangi manūn ai*).

⁵ This quantitative research does not provide what “a happy life” means. Based on my interviews and informal conversation with many South Korean parents, I discovered that many of them associate “happiness” with the comprehensive, subjective state of individual well-being, including economic power, good health, harmonious social relationships, and life without constraints.

⁶ This is in line with Holt’s view on the value of individuality. He believes that it is natural to see a child as an individual not as a social being (Stevens 2001: 379-380).

started their home education because they worried that their children's idiosyncratic qualities collapsed in a group-oriented school system and uniform curriculum. The traditional pedagogy promotes a learner's passivity without taking into account his or her individual differences. Peer competition makes the majority of students become a foil for a few successful students instead of stimulating students' desire for success. Some worried that their children may internalize the negative aspects of socialization and have low self-esteem through teachers' corporal punishments and comments causing shame. They claimed that their homeschooling was aimed at raising their children as responsible and independent citizens, capable of preparing their own futures. They prioritize the discovery of their children's talents and their maximization over teaching general subjects to pass the qualification exams.

Christian homeschooling parents, unlike forebears who emphasized a collective and church-based religious life, envision a different way of religious life based on the new concept of personhood. They were critical about church pastors who neglected teaching the importance of family life⁷ and church-goers who routinized religious life without developing moral maturity. They emphasized becoming mature Christians who balance family, faith, and work. Raising children was given as a temporary stewardship from God. In the interactions with their children, therefore, Christian homeschooling mothers tried to be empathic to their children's needs and treated them with more respect. Children were not only somebody they needed to discipline but also companions of their spiritual journey. Christian homeschooling parents cherished their children's idiosyncratic characteristics as God's gifts. An individual's peculiar qualities are not only God's creation but also His blessing because they offer him or her great advantages in

⁷ Until recently, most church leaders have emphasized individual's salvation and God's material blessings (Seo Jeong-Min 2003). Therefore, the commitment to the church is stressed but family and adequate parental roles were often laid aside.

living in a society. Ye-Ŭn's father claimed his right to educate his three children by saying, "It is our duty as a parent to find a child's talent and to help him or her to develop it. Who knows our children better than us?" Understanding children and discovering their talents are the most important parental duties. Because of the importance of each child's uniqueness, Christian homeschooling mothers organize curricula tailored for their children's needs. Following this line of thought, Christian homeschoolers reinterpret the meaning of independence as one's ability to build a one-on-one relationship with God and to live through the secular world based on unshakable faith.

Homeschooling mothers' emphasis on their children's individuality is easily noticed in their way of describing their children. They compare the differences among their children in terms of their favorite kind of activities, habits, and tendencies. The discovery of differences among their children is used to provide each child with more specialized curriculum. Encouraging the child's self-esteem is of pedagogic importance in homeschooling.⁸ Many homeschooling mothers detest competitive school environments, which had evaluated their children based solely on exam scores. Even after starting homeschooling, these mothers still felt obliged to protect their children from getting disheartened by being compared with others. Chi-Ch'öl's father told me how hard it was to organize a course in conjunction with other homeschooling mothers: "Everybody wants different courses. Basically, they want a course their children are very good at. Who depresses their children's spirits?" This remark suggests that homeschooling mothers are very sensitive to their children's self-esteem which might be wounded in the conjunctive courses (*kongdong suǒp*), in which they might be compared with other

⁸ If one is good at something, he or she is more likely to do it better. When one enjoys doing something, learning activities can bring better outcomes. Even though one likes to do, he or she may lose spirits to pursue his or her personal interests because he or she is not as good as somebody else. In the end, he or she may become passive in pursuing his or her interests.

children and have a sense of feeling behind. A group of Christian homeschooling families have a weekly meeting in which each child takes turns to present what he or she did in the previous week. All parents and children give enthusiastic encouragement to the presenter. Another group of Christian homeschooling families have such a chance through monthly AWANA meetings. In these meetings, parents cheer children's furthering of their learning and promote children's social skills and positive self-concepts.

Most homeschoolers attach great importance to learning even though the goal of learning and the meanings of achievement or success might differ from the ones education mothers have. Academic excellence, as some of my interviewees' children show, is part of the benefits from homeschooling, whether intended or unexpected. Pedagogic flexibility attracts more and more parents to join in the movement. Unschooling mothers value autonomous learning in which children study spontaneously through free exploration of their own interests and curiosities. These mothers deeply trust their children as independent beings and natural learners, and encourage their children's endogenous motivation. Mothers even wait until their children's hidden autonomy comes out and they discover what they want to do with their lives. These unschooling mothers, however, do not think that all children are ready for autonomous learning. They see their children's preparedness and capability for self-controlled learning as special talents. In her study of Japanese education mothers, Anne Allison (1996) found independence

is not the ability or inclination to chart one's own course and act without the help of others, but rather the ability to internalize certain habits of self-maintenance that are expected of students (139).

In a similar way, unschooling mothers value their children's intellectual independence. Without trying to control their children, however, they provide active guidance through a variety of learning programs with other mothers. Even Christian homeschooling parents who apparently

emphasize moral discipline and parent-guided learning expect that their children ultimately can control themselves and develop their talents without being controlled by any kinds of distracting elements such as peer-pressures and materialistic cultures presented in the media. The goal of discipline is to make children habituate themselves to what they are supposed to do. In addition, the children's autonomy gradually increases based on their parents' positive evaluation of their performances.⁹

Homeschooling mothers choose individualism and craft their and their children's individualistic selves through homeschooling practices. Individualism among South Korean homeschooling families is stimulated by new senses of the self: creative self and moral self. Drawing on the rediscovery of individuality of a child and a mother, homeschooling experiences establish more egalitarian and intimate mother-child relationships. Non-oppressive home environments foster smooth parent-child communication, which in turn, contributed to promoting a child's autonomy and self-esteem. At the same time, the extensive time mothers can share with their children allows them to find more personal problems of their children. Since mothers' own flaws are openly exposed to their children, becoming a role model for their children was emotionally stressful to them. However, it gives them opportunities for moral growth. Through family-centered educational practice, they have a strong sense of family-based identity.

⁹ Overall, homeschooling provides optimal environments for the intergenerational value transmission. A number of developmental psychologists argue that parental warmth and repeated encouragements for the positive traits play a crucial role in children's value internalization. Children are more willingly to accept the values their parents impose (Grusec 1997; Peterson & Hann 1999). Such a voluntary compliance fosters children's autonomy. Among my interviewees, religious affiliations are key factor determining which values parents want to transmit to their children. Both unschooling mothers and Christian homeschooling mothers value independence and autonomy. These are not what they experienced, but these qualities they believe more suitable for the globalizing society and will increase their children's happiness.

Since the internet-based communication is the new channel to expand their social networks, they develop a new type of community in which they can support other homeschoolers and gain advice. Through various types of public service and volunteerism, they also learn to value the community-based life and share a sense of duty for the society.¹⁰ Such participation in volunteering activities and communicative skills based on strong family unity can become the basis for social activities and democratic citizenship (Arai 1999). Many unschooling parents emphasize philosophy/humanity education for their children's formation of critical thinking.

Homeschooling and Its Modernity: Counter-Recycling in Childrearing

East Asian countries were modernized based on an authoritarian political structure and state-initiated industrialization (Martinelli 2005). In South Korea, the collective state-centered ideals played a powerful role as an ideological constraint and intervened in people's everyday processes of decision-making. South Koreans, especially parents in "the 386 generation," were educated to sacrifice individual freedoms and rights for the society's collective values and interests. Their awareness of alternative lifestyles and the rationality of individualism empowers them to resist the traditionality of their lives and cultures. Motherhood and maternal work bring significant transformations in a woman's life and her self-conception. An individual woman's subjective position and her social perception can make differences in her mothering experiences. Modernization in South Korea has not only improved the materialistic conditions of people's lives, but also brought about a significant transformation in psycho-cultural foundations for their perception of self-identity and choices over pluralistic lifestyles. Due to today's transnational circumstances in which information and experiences about efficient parenting techniques are

¹⁰ Some Christian homeschooling groups, who identify themselves as "frontiers," express their strong desire to contribute to the society by producing competent and moral Christians.

continuously exchanged, contemporary Korean mothers can envision new perspectives on motherhood and mothering practices. Individualism has become a theoretical basis for a new pattern of childrearing.

Mothers recycle their own experiences of being mothered. Due in part to the fact that young South Korean mothers were benefited from their own mothers' intervention in their education or just "caught between mother's yoksim [desire] and self-realization," they feel obliged to do everything they can do for their children's educational achievement (Cho Hae-Joang 2002:178). They expect that their somewhat blind investment for their children will be rewarded by the reproduction of their middle class status in their children's generation. Among homeschooling mothers, on the other hand, mothering practice is not just a replica of their experiences with their mothers. Mothering is a reflexive work. These mothers continuously look back to their own childhood and experiences of being mothered. They even try to learn proper mothering from what they think are their parents' mistakes. Their past experiences and their expectation for their children's future compete in their minds as they decide on the best way to educate their children. Takie Lebra (1984) calls a type of reversed mothering as "counter-recycling." This reversed or counter-recycled childrearing is the most conspicuous characteristic which marks South Korean homeschooling mothers' educational philosophy and parenting.

As discussed in Chapter Four, mothers' own experiences in schools and their ways to remember those school days were crucial motives for the South Korean homeschooling movement. Under the authoritarian political regime, they went through coercive schools with learning based on rote-memorization and outcome-centered evaluations in which their individuality and autonomy were not respected under imperious teachers. Their parents were strict and emotionally distant. The ways my informants remember their parents are generally

negative. Homeschooling mothers attempt counter-recycling of their schooling experiences through homeschooling. Their critical reflection of their experiences leads them to respect their children's uniqueness and individualities and to stress autonomy and creativity in their homeschooling pedagogy. At the same time, they want to build their families based on warm and intimate parent-child relationships. Because of their eagerness for new types of relationships, they counter-recycle their experience of being mothered and realize a new ideal of family through homeschooling.

Many mothers, including Sök-Chun's mother, are eager to give their children freedom they never had. Hyön-Su's mother wants her son to become self-confident and self-assertive. Growing up under a competitive success-oriented mother who was obsessed with her achievements, Chin-Söp's mother tries not to compare her two sons with anybody else and encourages them to do what they enjoy in their lives. Chae-Min's mother had a father who was a believer but not a good role model for his children. She desires to raise her children to become morally mature Christians and expects her husband to be part of their children's lives. Su-Pin's father had an alcoholic father who was neglectful of his children. Since So-Hyön's mother remembers her father as workaholic and emotionally distant, she deeply desires her husband to become a more warm and attentive father to her children.

It is a difficult process to envision and adopt an alternative type of childrearing and education, especially for someone who grew up under authoritarian parents in a totalitarian regime. Homeschooling mothers contest the traditional practices of childrearing and schooling. They reject passivity in traditional motherhood. Rather than resorting to traditional wisdom and conventional childrearing practices of other-oriented mothers, homeschooling mothers aggressively seek an alternative lifestyle and learning opportunity for their children by consulting

books and professional advice. These mothers who assume most of the educator's responsibility discipline themselves to become homeschooling mothers. In the case of homeschooling mothers, maternal work is demanding and comprehensive. Homeschooling experiences enhance the mother-child relationship.

Anthony Giddens (1991) emphasizes the importance of a "pure relationship" based on trust and intimacy in an increasingly impersonalized modern world. Jessica Benjamin (1989) points out that the "continual, dynamic, evolving balance of the two" leads to "the ultimate gratification of being in attunement with another person" (25, 27). Homeschooling contributes to reconstructing mother-child relationships. Mother-child intimacy is the emotional reward that can compensate for homeschooling mothers' commitment to their children's learning. It brings parents increased understanding about their children and helps them overcome overcontrolling attitudes toward them. And this intimate and attuned mother-child relationship becomes a context for mothers' self-realization and gratification.

Globalization of Progressive Pedagogy

Most nation states in modern industrialized societies organize educational systems and provide children at certain ages with educational instruction. Mass-education is the result of modernization, linked to new demands on skilled workers. Education is a way to produce human capital, which contributes to increasing productivity and economic competitiveness (Schultz 1961). Most parents view education as a vehicle for upward social mobility. The degrees of parental interest and intervention vary by parents' educational backgrounds and socio-economic statuses. They expect quality education for their children. The modern educational system and general expectations of schooling are products of "the globalization of school organization"

(Spring 2006).

Neoliberalism permeates deeply into people's everyday lives. In the field of education, it transforms schools into corporations operating on market-oriented logic. Schools need to provide quality service (i.e., effective teaching) and give educational consumers more choices (i.e., specialized programs) in order to maximize students' chances for higher educational achievements and social successes. Curricula are drawn up based on practicability of the subjects and teachers are evaluated by their pedagogic effectiveness. Short-term outcomes based on test scores have become a standard to evaluate the quality of teaching. National examinations and state-controlled curricula are designed to provide well-qualified future workers (Spring 2006:207-211). Exams serve to measure children's competences and aptitudes in the name of providing them with guidance. They create a competitive learning climate in which individual students struggle for survival. Such pressures cause many social problems such as bullying, violence, and resistance to attending school. Regardless of students' psychological welfare, the education system is crafted into an instrument for the development of national economy to cope with rapidly changing socioeconomic environments.

South Korean parents perceive school education to be behind a rapidly changing global society. Creativity and individuality are now valued more than conformity to the organization.¹¹

¹¹ This is also observed in contemporary Japanese society (Spring 2006; Watanabe 2004). The plan for the seventh curricula reform was released in 1996 and put into full operation in 2000. This reform is modeled after the "open classroom" of the 1970s. Considering the current revival of educational conservatism through the No Left Child Behind Act, the globalization of modern education is bidirectional. Thanks to the seventh reform, elementary school students are greatly benefited under this new system. They have no exams at school and they can enjoy more hands-on experience (e.g., visiting museum) with their parents outside school by submitting proof of participating in educational activities. When they enter middle school, however, they have to face frustrating realities: strictly organized curriculum and a series of exams. Around this time, the alternative school movement was booming and an increasing number of students left the school system and joined the homeschooling movement.

To improve the quality of education and its competitiveness in the globalized society, they urgently want the government to formulate a future-oriented and more revolutionary blueprint for educational reform. The Seventh Curricula Reform in the mid 1990s aimed at promoting students' autonomy (*chayul*) and creativity (*ch'angŭi*) and offered learner-centered (*haksŭppjjajungsim*) curricula. The neoliberalization of the education system and the mismatch between the inflated parental expectation for liberal education and social realities of credentialism and competitive job markets confused South Korean parents.

Globalization and market-driven capitalism lead the world to enter a new phase of human history. Globalization accelerates the flow of information and value system as well as expansion of modern institutions, and results in drastic cultural changes in many developing countries. The cultural meaning system, including the cultural model of self, is undergoing rapid transformation through hybridization, selection, adoption, and renunciation. Globalization contributes to worldwide interdependence, but does not dissolve the state-centered nationalistic sentiment. It stimulates competition among nations and prompts inequalities based on economic exploitation and political domination. In the chaotic period of national economy caused by the 1997 financial crisis in Asia, South Koreans became keenly aware of the power of globalization and their discontent with the pre-modern educational system reached at the peak. The increasing sense of economic crisis heated up "education fever" and aroused parental anxieties. Consequently, South Korean parents' expenditure on private education increased even during financially troubled times. Alternative education captivated many parents as a way to foster children's creativity. Homeschooling appeared as one of the educational options to some South Korean parents.

The homeschooling movement in South Korea was a result of the influx of information about the progressive pedagogies of Rudolf Steiner, Paulo Freire, and many other experimental

educators such as Everett Reimer, John Holt, and A. S. Neill. The rise of Protestant Fundamentalism¹² among South Korean Christian homeschoolers are due to the cultural diffusion from the U.S. via their contacts with American missionaries. Because of South Korean Christians' strong demands for an alternative way of educating children, the first homeschooling conference was held in South Korea. It is no exaggeration to say that the South Korean Christian homeschooling movement was motivated and fueled by American Christian homeschoolers. South Korean Christian homeschooling mothers were eager to learn parenting skills from American homeschooling mothers. Chae-Min's mother even traveled to the U.S. to visit several American homeschooling families and learn homeschooling from them. Some South Korean Christian homeschooling parents, however, oppose the leading role American missionaries assume in the homeschooling movements, but to various degrees they deeply share American missionaries' antagonistic sentiments toward secular cultures. Most Christian homeschooling mothers take precautions against increasingly secularizing trends in the society, such as materialism, humanism, and evolutionism in school curricula. To cope with increasingly confusing social environments and to protect their children from such secular influences, home is the only safe niche where they can settle. As they feel more strongly challenged by the secular influences, they need to solidify and enhance their fundamentalist beliefs to cope with their negative elements.

¹² Gallagher (2003) characterizes Christian fundamentalism as moral absolutism, biblical literalism, and rejection to the secular culture. Most Korean Christian homeschooling families share such values and emphasize faith-centered family life based on the father's spiritual leadership. Some Korean Christian homeschooling parents reject the fundamentalist's extreme division between the godly and the secular. They think that their children should gradually become exposed to secular culture and curricula according to their developments. The different beliefs often cause conflicts. For example, I heard that an American fundamentalist missionary got angry at the contemporary worship style at one of the churches because he perceived it secular.

I argue that the growing cultural phenomenon of homeschooling is a result of a new wave of globalization, which I call “the globalization of progressive pedagogy.” Since a limited number of parents can consider educational alternatives for their children’s learning, the impact of this globalization might be limited. Homeschooling, which was chosen as pedagogy, has transformed mothers themselves into responsible and caring educators. Because this experimental pedagogy is deeply rooted in Western individualism, their adoption brings about significant changes in maternal beliefs in childhood and proper mothering.¹³ Homeschooling mothers consider these new pedagogies as a breakthrough from the traditionality that haunts the future of children. Because mothers’ exemplary behaviors are essential in Christian homeschooling, mothers experience moral transformations. Homeschooling mothers not only embrace progressive pedagogy but also the painful work of transforming themselves through their practices of childrearing. In considering these holistic transformations in maternal beliefs and lifestyles among homeschooling families, however, the meaning of this new wave should not be discounted.

Problems and Limitations of Homeschooling in South Korea

The public is suspicious and worried that homeschooled children miss crucial parts of the school experience, i.e., socializing with peers, conforming to the social harmony, and lacking social skills, including a way to compete with peers. Homeschooled children enjoy socializing

¹³ Capitalist modes of lifestyle and modernization processes involving division of labor based on class and gender transformed traditional social agency into a more interest-conscious individual. Yoon Tae-Rim (1994) argues that the modern education system in South Korea infuse Western individualism into its people. In the state-initiated industrialization period, schools indoctrinated collective values such as individual sacrifice for the wealthy nation. Individualism has been adopted on very superficial levels. In modern Korea, individualistic values emerge, but sociocentric values still prevail in people’s everyday life.

with other children in diverse age groups through a variety of support networks. Homeschooling parents call their protective home-based learning environment a “greenhouse.” Homeschooled children are isolated from mainstream cultures for an extended period of time and they are trained in artificial environments surrounded by a very homogenous group of people with similar values. Due to the lack of a longitudinal study of the development of homeschooled children, we do not have clear picture about the effect of their differential socialization on their emotional maturation and the process of reintegration into the diverse, complex social world. They might have problems in dealing with in-group and inter-group conflicts. Potential problems are often overshadowed by the positive media flash on the educational outcomes of a few successful homeschoolers. However, homeschooling as an educational alternative has a certain limitations.

Class Reproduction

Homeschooling is not an educational option which is available to anyone who wants it. To teach children at home, parents or mothers in particular should have a certain amount of cultural and economic capital to invest in their children. Most homeschooling families I interviewed were not affluent families, but they are college educated at least, i.e. cultural capital. They have jobs, the knowledge, and skills of which are closely connected with children’s education. They have social capital, through which they can help their children expand their learning possibility. Homeschooling and its support networks contribute to expanding such social networks particularly for children’s learning. In this sense, these homeschooling families are in the advantageous social position to reproduce their status and to maximize their children’s well-being and chances for upward social mobility. At the same time, they can protect their children from the deteriorating effects of uniform learning environments. However, overemphasis on their

own children's welfare without participating in the school reform which benefits more children's wellbeing might turn these homeschooling families into a "new hegemonic bloc" (Apple 2000). In this case, homeschooling contributes to enhancing social stratification and depriving fair opportunities from other schooled children.

Opportunistic Homeschooling

Homeschooling, learning in a comfortable environment with parents' close attention and more customized curricula, has pedagogic advantages. In addition, ubiquitous private learning centers with quality instructors and the free supplementary instructions aired by the Educational Broadcasting System in South Korea also offer favorable learning environments to homeschoolers. Therefore, homeschooling is effective in improving student's academic skills and achieving higher educational goals. While interviewing homeschooling parents, I heard about many cases which can hardly fit the homeschooling I understand. There are children who take lessons at the *hagwŏn* their father owned instead of attending school. A child finished six-year-long middle and high school education within only two years by passing qualification exams. A mother wants to homeschool her daughter because her daughter can save time and focus on practicing the piano for an arts and music high school (*yesul kodŭnghaggyo*). A group of parents prepare their children for colleges in the U.S. through homeschooling. For homeschooling to be recognized as an educational choice, it should be legalized. Homeschooling can be easily misguided and misunderstood without implementation of detailed regulations and support plan of the government. Growing numbers of parents would take full advantages of homeschooling as an educational shortcut or an elite education will increase. The laissez-faire perspective in education makes these parents vulnerable to abuse their power to maximize their

children's individual utility and academic acceleration.

Contents of Learning

The second problematic element in homeschooling is the curricula. Some homeschoolers extensively use the curricula imported from the U.S., most of which are constructed based on very conservative Christian faiths and the textbooks are composed of biblical content (Stevens 2001). Because children do not have any critical faculty, what they learn is crucial for them to prepare their future lives. If they acquire only Bible-based knowledge and a Christian world-view, they may grow up to be narrow-minded persons. For example, some textbooks used by many Christian homeschoolers explicitly state that Islam is a false religion and the Muslim are enemies. Such partial contents of textbooks may lead young students to become prejudiced. Later, they may have problems understanding people who have different faiths and thoughts from themselves.

Some mothers are amazed by the integrated homeschooling curricula imported from the U.S. It is hard to determine what should be the minimum requirements for homeschooling curricula because there is no social consensus about them and what we know about them is largely something arbitrarily regulated by the government. Because homeschooling is practiced inside of very private place, it is exposed to a variety of potential problems. Pedagogic flexibility and advantages in time-management can be abused to induce better educational outcomes. Some parents consider homeschooling as a fast track to the higher educational achievements. Other parents see homeschooling as a chance to study with more English-centered education with the U.S. curricula. There are homeschooling parents who even try to build schools on their own to educate their children to be more competitive. Their extensive dependence on the curricula

imported from the U.S. could cause cultural conflicts with non-homeschoolers.

Parents' Problem

Growing numbers of parents choose homeschooling as a second best alternative. Even though they are not ready for teaching their children, many parents choose homeschooling for their children who fail to gain admission to alternative schools or who maladjust to the school system. For instance, Ch'ang-Hun's father's impetuous decision to homeschool a high school freshman devastated his wife who was not ready. The mothers' deep sense of shame about her son stopped her from asking for help. After the several-month-long conflicts, Ch'ang-Hun came to enroll *hagwŏn* full-time instead of school.

Some homeschooling parents believe blindly in progressive pedagogy and interest-based learning. In some cases, these parents neglect the fundamental basis of academic development. Some homeschooling mothers are preoccupied with the popular myth that progressive pedagogy of homeschooling would enhance their children's creativity and autonomy. They expect their children to get voluntarily involved with learning and become happy if homeschooled.¹⁴ They often struggle with the reality that their children do not show any interest in discovering what they want to do. Some homeschooling mothers are deeply concerned about overprotective parent's arbitrary decision for homeschooling without considering what their children really want. They believe that school provides better environments for certain types of students who need a larger group of students to develop their full potentials (e.g., a child talented for sports, a child with leadership, etc.).

¹⁴ This idea is reproduced at homeschooling conferences to attract more families.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

As the myth of social mobility through educational success captures most South Korean middle-class parents, family has become a site for the reproduction of class-based lifestyles and mothers have become key agents in class perpetuation and advancement. In this dissertation, I have examined historically shifting styles of motherhood and childrearing practices in South Korea. Cultural politics control women's reproduction and motherhood, oppress their desires as individuals, and redirect them to successful childrearing. Due to the institutionalized discrimination of women's participation in and contributions to society, women have struggled to gain recognition and self-realization. In such socially oppressive circumstances, they cannot help indulging voluntarily in motherhood because their children's successes are the only way to secure their own statuses within their families and society at large and to realize meaning in their lives. Throughout history, the essence of Korean women's motherhood lies in its instrumentality.

In a collectivistic society, a child is not an independent being but a social extension of his or her parent. Due to the cultural emphasis on the mother-child interdependence, a mother's self and her child's self overlap and their identities are fused like the one. A mother's desire for self-preservation means her child's self-effacement. The mutuality and intersubjectivity are collapsed. Mothers are easily attracted to project their unrealized dreams on their children and gain a sense of achievement from their children's successes. In addition, the "other-oriented" psychology in Korean culture makes people evaluate their own self-worth based on others' perspectives. The success of mothering is measured largely by a child's educational achievement. Mothers struggle to meet the standards of "good" mothers implicitly or explicitly provided through hegemonic

discourse on adequate maternal roles.

Since educational success is seen as the main avenue for class mobility, South Korean mothers exercise tremendous power over their children's education as "academic managers." Their feeling that their children might fall behind others in the competition provokes deep anxieties, which are in turn transferred to their children. As more and more mothers thrust themselves into the competition for limited educational resources, the symbolic values of the resources increase and the struggle for existence becomes acute. For the wellbeing of their children and their future job security, these anxious mothers seek after various sources to provide their children with better educational opportunities. They listen to a variety of ideas from so-called professionals, including tutors and *hagwŏn* instructors. Swayed by their opinions, more and more mothers relinquish many of their rights over their children's education. Children are burdened with even heavier expectations from their mothers, but they passively internalize their mothers' desires at least until they reach puberty. Due in part to the increasing importance of maternal intervention in children's education and increasing value of their successes, South Korean education mothers make substantial investments of financial and psychological resources in their children's academic successes. Various forms of capital (cultural, economic, and psychological capital) are reinvested on their children for their class mobility.

School education infuses growing children with collective values and culturally accepted ways of thinking, and justifies the system's control over students' everyday lives. Educational activities at conventional schools revolve around the traditional model of the interdependent self (e.g. curricula, class activity, teacher-student relationship, pedagogic approach, concept of learning, etc). An individual student is rarely treated as a sensitive emotional being. Shame is often utilized to promote students' academic discipline and desire for social acceptability.

Schooling is a process to eliminate each child's idiosyncratic characteristics and make students submit to authority. Sacrificing students' individualities for the common interests of the society is taken for granted.

The majority of South Korean parents concede that schools are the only place for their children to prepare for their future. They believe that competition stimulates and helps young minds to develop their potentials. In other words, as human capital children should be capable of coping with increasingly harsh international competition and contributing to national economic development. In the late 1990s, the public discourse on deteriorating educational conditions in school, media coverage on school violence, and the financial crisis and subsequent reorganization of economic and financial infrastructures caused great alarm among South Korean parents. Increasing numbers of Korean parents have realized that schools are failing to protect children from the negative social influences and to prepare them for rapidly changing socioeconomic circumstances. They are discontent with oppressive learning environments and unproductive school education. They want to protect their children from unproductive learning environments with out-of-date uniform school curricula and authoritarian pedagogy. To increase their children's competitiveness in a global society, some parents encourage their children to pursue highly competitive private elite schools or to study abroad to equip them with a competitive edge in a global society.

The introduction of Western values and capitalistic mode of life has been transforming Korean society into a more individualistic society. Individualism and collectivism are given as a choice. In the mid-1990s, the discourse emphasizing individuality and creativity as cardinal traits for knowledge-based society entered into the educational landscape in South Korea. Growing

numbers of South Korean parents accuse the uniform, rigid school system of discouraging children's creativity and its collective culture of eroding their potentials. They criticize authoritarian teachers and coercive learning environments, with learning based on tests and rote-memorization and with limited choice about what to study. They sympathize with their children who are utterly worn-out from schooling and additional private after-school programs. Increasing numbers of mothers reject such traditional and collectivistic ideologies and choose individualistic views of self and pattern of childrearing to promote children's autonomy and individuality. They expect their children to be active agents or autonomous individuals and worry that their children's idiosyncratic qualities are submerged in the collectivistic learning environments. Many of these parents choose alternative schools for their children.

Parents of children who experienced the possibilities of alternative programs through Cooperative Childcare and the liberalized "student-centered" public elementary education aggressively seek out alternative learning opportunities. While a growing number of parents opt for alternative schools, some want to take more responsibility for their children's education. Despite its illegal status, therefore, a growing number of parents denounce the apparently aggravating educational system and claim their right to supervise their children's learning outside the school system.

My ethnographic research shows that the motives of homeschooling vary from indignation at immoral teachers who play favorites, to enthusiasm for teaching the Christian worldview. There are so many motives for homeschooling and each family has a different vision about homeschooling. The most commonly shared motives among Korean homeschooling parents are a wish for their children to have autonomous learning opportunities and a desire to bring out their children's unique talents. They question the meaning of materialistic success in

life and focus on their children's true happiness. They consider their children's escape from the existing school system and choosing homeschooling as a way of expressing their love toward their children. Unschooling and Christian homeschooling are built upon the different premises on the concept of the child and the nature of learning.

Almost all Korean mothers show strong interests in their children's education and believe that their intervention can improve their children's chances for educational achievement. Considering nation-wide obsession in education, homeschooling mothers may be seen as just one of such a kind. Education mothers, so-called "academic manager," are those who conform more to traditional self-sacrificial motherhood. They devote themselves entirely to the role of the competitive success-oriented solicitor and manage their children's afterschool activities. They are caught up with the traditional model of the interdependent self. Failing to view their children as independent human beings, these mothers try to control their children as if they are part of themselves. They irreflexively try to find the meaning of their lives from their children's successful lives.

Homeschooling mothers are those who increasingly adopt Western ideals of individualistic personhood and employ them to their childrearing practices. They contest the conventionally accepted meaning of motherhood and upgrade its meaning based on their elevated status as a home educator and improved mother-child bond. When it comes to their educational practices and lifestyles, homeschooling families show a colorful rainbow. Each family has a different goal and unique practice. In an unschooling family, the mother is the one who is willing to take a radical step for her children. She was the one who dealt with school teachers and watched her child's struggles. Her resistance toward the school system leads to her decision for

unschooling. A typical Christian homeschooling family starts homeschooling based on the husband-wife agreement. Some mothers resist the idea of homeschooling because it burdens her with additional duties. Homeschooling transforms family life entirely. As fathers get increasingly involved with children's home-based education, the families experience enriched family-centered lifestyle.

Mothers are principal agents in organizing homeschooling curricula and pedagogy. As home educators, they are deeply involved in their children's learning process. Homeschooling truly empowers mothers to assume more responsibilities in their children's learning and everyday practices. The success of homeschooling depends on mothers' commitment and mother-child attunement. Mothers are their children's best friends, nurturers, and attentive, often strict educators. Educational responsibilities, which were initially felt as very challenging and burdensome, make homeschooling mothers think over their children's emotional demands and the real meaning of becoming good mothers. My interviewees joyfully complained that time is not enough to accommodate all their children's interests and things they wanted to do at home with their children. Thanks to these mothers' enthusiasm, children enjoy flexible schedules and religious/liberal curricula tailored to their needs. Homeschooling contributes to reconstructing mother-child relationships and reconceptualizing the cultural meaning of Korean motherhood.

Both unschooling and Christian homeschooling strengthen and enrich the intimate mother-child relationship. Two different types of homeschooling, however, demonstrate distinctive characteristics. (1) Unschooling focuses on liberal child-initiated pedagogy and alternative lifestyles. Adopting permissive attitudes, unschooling mothers enjoy the improved qualities in the relationship with their children and their children's enhanced self-esteem. Since

mothers, with a few exceptions, have full responsibility in educating their children, they feel pressured to provide their children with *better* educational opportunities. In addition, the gap between their own educational backgrounds and their new expectations on their children's self-directed learning makes them confused and diffident. (2) Christian homeschooling emphasizes spiritual discipline and moral maturity. Christian homeschooling mothers prioritize character development and the restoration of healthy parent-child relationships over academic progress.

Mothers' temperamental characteristics make certain mothers become more supportive to and more actively involved with their children's learning at home. Unschooling mothers are self-reliant and individualistic women who used to be and currently are working mothers. Christian homeschooling mothers, on the other hand, experience radical transformations in their lifestyles and their self-concepts while being home educators. Newly-acquired identities as home-based educators make these mothers have a sense of separateness from their children and realize their own independent selves. They originally began homeschooling as a way to educate their children, but they later recognized it as a chance for their own spiritual growth and intellectual development. They experienced homeschooling as a door to discover their independent selves. At the same time, Christian homeschoolers revitalize father-centered family lives. Fathers have the ultimate responsibility for homeschooling. Fathers need to become sensitive to understand and respond to their children's needs, and respect their children's uniqueness and individuality as God-given qualities. Due to their role as a breadwinner, however, mothers play the primary roles in spiritual discipline and home education. Christian homeschooling parents value equal partnership in managing the household.

Unlike many education mothers who still seek self-actualization through their children's achievements, homeschooling mothers value their symbiotic relationship with their children.

Despite their burdensome responsibilities, homeschooling mothers enjoy their own independence and enhanced relationships with their children. In turn, these emotional rewards generate stronger maternal commitment. They cherish the time they can share with their children and build a new home and school together. Home provides the safe developmental niche for children. Their continuous interactions with their mothers through learning activities and their mothers' positive responses help the homeschooled children formulate their positive self-identity and enhance self-esteem. Children's intellectual independence, which South Korean homeschooling mothers value most highly, can develop in the mother-child intimacy as well as under their mothers' careful supervision. Mothers become the "safe base" for their children's further exploration and independent lives. The mothers also gain positive self-perception through the deep intimacy they achieve with their children. The intersubjectivity a mother and her child achieve empowers the mother's sense of self. Also, mother-led homeschooling causes more equal power distribution between mothers and fathers. As a result, homeschooling increases mothers' satisfaction as a mother. The stronger mother-child relationship attained by homeschooling contributes to the sense of family-togetherness and a certain level of security from the negative influences of society.

In this dissertation, I focus on four main factors that disrupted the landscape of education in South Korea and caused the expansion of homeschooling: (1) morally and academically deteriorating school environments, (2) the acceptance of an individualistic view of the self, (3) counter-recycling of mothering experiences, and (4) the globalization of progressive pedagogy. All these elements stimulate the needs for dialectical synthesis of traditional practices and Western individualism in childrearing practices and education, and lead to holistic

transformations in their lifestyles. Along with their anti-school sentiment and individualistic vision of their children's learning, homeschooling parents share negative memories about their parents. The image of a father they remember was a distant and neglectful figure who was an alcoholic, workaholic, or womanizer. Their mothers were self-sacrificial but achievement-oriented, overly ambitious education mothers. They reject such negative models of parenthood as well as the way they were raised. They wish to build better relationships with their children and achieve greater intimacy with their children than their parents tried to do.

Homeschooling as an educational practice is a type of progressive pedagogy, which values liberal learning environment and students' autonomy in learning. The meaning of learning expands its horizon into real life experiences. Unschooling mothers actively adopt this new approach to cultivate their children's creativity and academic independence. Christian homeschooling mothers assume religiously fundamentalist approach in organizing curricula and disciplining their children, but they deeply trust their children's potential and increasingly allow more autonomy to their children. Independence is valued among Christian homeschooling. It is a capability not only to take care of oneself without becoming a burden to anyone or causing anyone troubles, but also have a one-on-one relationship with God and maintain religious life without depending on other believers. Since all these new educational philosophies and practices are introduced from the West via books or contacts, it is clear that the current homeschooling movement in South Korea is a result of a new wave of globalization.

The dialectical dynamics between human agency and cultural environment have transformed cultural meanings of motherhood and adequate styles of mothering. In a world that is rapidly and constantly changing, homeschooling mothers need a place to lay a foundation for

their lives. Family has gradually become a strategic unit which buffers external pressures for adaptation and prepare its members to cope with rapid social changes. Despite the common criticism against homeschooling as depriving children of socialization opportunities, it functions as promoting the intimate mother-child relationship and importance of family. Most homeschooling parents agree that “family togetherness” and a family-centered lifestyle are essential parts of their education. Parents want to share their values with their children, to spend more time with their children, and to have more intimate relationships with their children. Such family “togetherness” can bring harmonious conditions to their everyday lives, which serve as sources of vitality. Consequently, this can give both parents and children emotional stability, a form of psychological capital.

In a rapidly changing and increasingly impersonalized society, home becomes a symbolic place people anchor their emotion to. Homeschooling in a South Korean cultural context is more than pedagogy. It conspicuously challenges the state-run educational system. It is also a cultural phenomenon based on one generation's reflexivity of the nation's historically oppressive past and its resistance. Homeschooling families create new lifestyles and achieve new levels of maternal support to their children's learning and lives. The stronger mother-child relationship attained by homeschooling contributes to a sense of family-togetherness and a certain level of security from the negative influences of society. Homeschooling offers chances to communicate with other families who are consistent with their assumptions of life, philosophies of education and religiosity.

In a still collectivistic society valuing interdependence, homeschooling signifies the adoption of Western individualism and the rationalism. Homeschooling mothers question the authenticity of motherhood. Homeschooling mothers contest the traditional model of other-

oriented mothering and reorient themselves in the individualistic cultural framework. Homeschooling mothers discover their own selves in the interactions with their children and reorient their lives based on the intimacy with their children. In the process, they rediscover their selves. Borrowing from the words of Giddens (1991, 1994), homeschooling in a way is “the reflexive project of self.”

In summary, homeschooling mothers resist externally forced bureaucratic regulations limiting their children’s potential and take advantage of already-owned in-family resources and expansion of their own social networks to benefit their children’s intellectual and emotional growth. To them, family is a bulwark from a larger society, by which they try to accelerate their children’s emotional, intellectual development. Family is a site of resistance toward hegemonic definitions of childhood, appropriate mothering, and education. Mothers discover their separate selves along with the protective nature of motherhood. Changes of cultural meanings of person and the self make these mothers contest the hegemonic model of mothering and instrumental motherhood and re-focus on their children’s needs. Homeschooling is an unfinished project of modernity. It continuously modifies its pedagogy and curriculum based on intimacy and trust. Additional elements enrich homeschooling experiences and the potentials of children and mothers/educators. In the dynamic interactions with the outside modern world, homeschooling as a lifestyle will continue to evolve, as will the mother-child relationship.

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APPENDIX

A. BACKGROUNDS OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	R	Age	Occupation	Spouse's Occupation	Child	Educational Trajectories (As of Summer 2007)
Chae-Min	M	early-40s	Homemaker (Music)	Pastor	2S	Public School Christian homeschooling (3 years)
Chae-Sŏ	M	mid-40s	Homemaker	Not known	[1S] 1D	Elementary School (Homeschooling) Handicapped
Ch'ang-Hun	M	mid-40s	Company employee	Company employee	1S [1D]	Public High School Outschooling Full-time <i>hagwŏn</i> students
Chi-Ch'ŏl	F	mid-40s	<i>Hagwŏn</i> (English instructor)	<i>Hagwŏn</i> (Math instructor)	2S	Public middle school Unschooling (2 years) Private high school
Chi-Hye	M	Mid-40s	Homemaker/ Ph. D. Student	Professor	2D 1S	Christian homeschooling (7 years)
Chin-Sŏp	M	Mid-40s	Teacher	Teacher <i>Hagwŏn</i>	2S	Elementary School Unschooling (4 years)
Chi-Su	M	Mid-30s	Piano Instructor	Company employee	2S	Christian Homeschooling (Christian Homeschooling: kindergarten)
Chi-Yŏn	M	late-30s	English Instructor		1D	Elementary School Unschooling (1 ½ years)
	F	Mid-40s	Self-employed		1S	
Chun-Ha	M	early-40s	Homemaker	Company employee	1S 1D	Group homeschooling Christian Homeschooling (3 years)
Ha-Chŏng	M	mid-40s	Company Employees	Company Employed	1D [1D]	Elementary School Unschooling
Ha-Chun	M	late-30s	Homemaker (Interpreter)	Small Business	1S	Elementary School (1 year) Christian Homeschooling
Hye-Yun	M	Mid-40s	Homemaker		2D 1S	Elementary school in U.S. Elem. school in S. Korea Calvert correspondence prog. Christian homeschooling
	F	Late 40s	Professor			
Hyŏn-Su's	M	mid-40s	English Tutor	Small Business	1S	Elementary School Unschooling (3 years)

Kyŏng-Ch'ŏl	F	Late-40s	Small Business		1S 1D	Public school Group Homeschooling (2 years)
	M	Mid-40s	Homemaker			
Kyŏng-Hŭi	M	mid-40s	Homemaker (<i>Hagwŏn</i>)	Small Business	1D 1S	Middle school Unschooling
Min-Chu	F	Late 30s	Company employee		1S 1D	Christian Homeschooling (Kindergarten)
	M	Mid-30s	Homemaker			
Pŏm-Su	F	mid-40s	Small Business		1S [1D]	Alternative middle school Outschooling (2 years) Study abroad
	M	early-40s	Homemaker			
Sang-Hun	F	mid-40s	<i>Hagwŏn</i> (English)	Homemaker	1D 2S	Elementary school Christian Homeschooling (4 years)
So-Hyŏn	F	mid-40s	Pastor		1D 1S	Christian Homeschooling (3 years)
	M	late-30s	Homemaker (English Instructor)			
Sŏk-Chun	M	Late-40s	<i>Hagwŏn</i> English	teacher	1S	Elementary school Homeschooling (3 years) Alternative School in US
Sŏn-Kyŏng	M	late-30s	Homemaker (Math Tutor)	Company employee	1D [1S]	Middle school Unschooling (2 years)
Su-Chŏng	M	mid-40s	Homemaker	Not Known	1D 1S	Group Homeschooling (2 years)
Su-Ha	M	mid-40s	Teacher	Not Known	1D [1S]	Public elementary school Alternative middle school (Unschooling)
Sŭl-Ki	F	early-40s	Translator		2D	Christian Homeschooling (4 years)
	M	Early-40s	Homemaker		2S	
Su-Pin	F	late-40s	Pastor		1D 1S	Elementary School Christian Homeschooling (6 months)
	M	early-40s	Homemaker (Elementary Teacher)			
Ŭn-Ha	M	late-30s	Homemaker	Company employee	2S 1D	Christian homeschooling *Kindergarten level
Woo-Chin	M	mid-40s	Homemaker	Not Known	2S	Middle School Unschooling (1 ½ years) Public High School

Ye-Ŭn	F	mid-40s	<i>Hagwŏn</i> /Math instructor		1S	Elementary School Unschooling (5 years)
	M	early-40s	Homemaker			
Yong-Ch'ŏl	F	mid-40s	Researcher (Ph. D.)	Ph. D. Student	1S	Elementary School in US Unschooling (8 years)
Yŏng-Su	M	early-50s	Homemaker	Small Business	2S 1D	Unschooling/Self-study
Yun-Chu	M	late-30s	Homemaker		1D	Cooperative Childcare (Christian Homeschooling)
	F	mid-40s	Small Business			

M: Mother, F: Father; D: Daughter, S: Son
 (Job)=previous job; [D/S]: schooled child
 (Christian homeschooling/Unschooling): under consideration