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CHILDREN'S RIGHTS DISCOURSE IN SOUTH KOREA

A Thesis in

Educational Theory and Policy

by

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ABSTRACT

A recent incident of child abuse in a daycare center in the Republic of Korea illuminates the evolution of children's rights discourse in that country and the trend worldwide. A single incident of child abuse resulted in a critical and eruptive reactions in Korea, and the discussions generated a tremendous amount of concerns. These concerns for children, as we will see in this thesis, would never have been expressed in the 1920s, when children's rights discourse occurred for the first time of Korean history. Previous definitions of child abuse and exploitation were different from current definition. Even though children were beaten, this was widely accepted as social norm. The gap between the concerns and the status of children's rights between the 1920s and today seems to be large. How did this change occur? This thesis focuses on the evolution of children's rights discourses in Korea to answer that question. After considering evidence provided from news articles between 1920 and 1989, the views of children and children's rights prior to ratification of the Convention on the Right of the Child may have been affected by a domestic child right movement and the United Nations during and after the international child right movements such as the Pledge to Children's right of 1957, the Declaration on the Right of the Child in 1959 and the announcement of International Year of the Child in 1979. With the combination of the positive impression from the western cultures, and the familiar idea of ensuring children's rights, the discourse in Korea evolved to create a fertile field for the cultivation of ideas about children's rights. By the time the Convention on the Right of the Child was proposed in 1989, Korea was ready to accept the international treaty.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	3
III. METHOD.....	5
Data Collection.....	5
Data Analysis.....	6
IV. FINDINGS and RESULT.....	9
Right to Survival.....	12
Right to Protection.....	16
Right to Development.....	20
Right to Participation.....	26
V. CONCLUSION.....	28

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Discussions of Four Rights of Children in Each Period.....10

Figure 1-2: Discussions of Four Rights of Children in Each Period.....11

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Four Rights Category Coding Scheme8

I. Introduction

A recent incident in a daycare center in the Republic of Korea illuminates the evolution of children's rights discourse in that country and the trend worldwide. In January of 2015, a 4-year old child was slapped by a daycare teacher for an unfinished meal provided at the center. The incident triggered public discussions and debates about child's rights and child abuse issues. As a reporter from an educational newspaper *Veristas Alpha*, described, "Thousands of furious posts in numerous online sites criticized the daycare center and the teacher, and attempted to reveal personal information of the teacher" (Ahn, 2015). As a result, the daycare teacher was arrested, and a law was passed to install closed-circuit televisions in every single daycare center in order to protect children from abuse. This single incident of child abuse resulted in a critical and eruptive reactions in Korea, and the discussions generated a tremendous amount of concerns.

These concerns for children, as we will see in this thesis, would never have been expressed in the 1920s, when children's rights discourse occurred for the first time in Korean history. Previous definitions of child abuse and exploitation were different from current definition. Even though children were beaten, this was widely accepted as social norm. The gap between the concerns and the status of children's rights between the 1920s and today seems to be large. How did this change occur? This thesis focuses on the evolution of children's rights discourses in Korea to answer that question.

To further understand children's rights since 1920s, it is first necessary to review how children were discussed prior to 1920s known as the era of Choseon Dynasty, the empire before changing name to Korea. During the Choseon Dynasty (1392 - 1910), Confucianism was the national philosophy and the prevalent idea for the way of living.

As a part of Confucianism, Filial Piety was the basis for social ethics and child education (Lee, 2003). The initial definition of Filial Piety was that parents sincerely loved and cared for children, and children respected parents (Kim, 2002; POŠKAITĖ, 2014). However, as Confucianism was employed at the beginning of the Choseon Dynasty, Filial Piety was interpreted to mean that children must be respectful and obedient to parents in any circumstances, and parents have a right to control their child's life (Kim, 2002; Gu, 2003; Chungang, 2015). From this perspective, children were considered as properties of parents, and they were rarely viewed as human beings (Lee, 2003). Practices that modern interpretations would term "exploitation" of children were not considered abusive in the Choseon Dynasty. Physical and mental abuses were justified in the name of parenting or teaching, and social support for children not considered. Having proper education was only possible for children from wealthy families. Other children had to spend their days working to contribute to the family economies (Cho, 2011).

While Confucianism was still a prevalent philosophy, modern views of children were slowly employed by several efforts during the later period of the Choseon Dynasty. In 1860, Dong-Hak, a new philosophical study, was founded by Choi, Je-Wu in opposition to the Confucian idea of hierarchical human relationship and also in opposition to western culture. Since the ideology of Dong-Hak was mistakenly associated by the Imperial government with western Christian teaching, Choi named it "Dong-Hak," which means "eastern study" (Cho, 2005). The Fundamental teaching of Dong-Hak claimed that everyone was equal and, therefore, children were viewed as equal to adults. However, Confucianism was still prevalent, and the leaders and practitioners of Dong-Hak were often persecuted (Lee, 2003). In 1905, Dong-Hak changed its name to

Chondogyo, and became a religion under its leader Byung-Hee Son. Teaching of Chondogyo later took an important role for discussions of children's rights in early 1900s.

Attention to children's rights was triggered by groups of child right activists during the Japanese colonial era. Choseon Dynasty was colonized by Japan in 1910, and lost its autonomy until the independence in 1945. Children's rights were first discussed in Korea in the early 1920s. The declaration of Children's Day in 1923 is known as the very first time children's rights were officially discussed in public in Korean history. The declaration was facilitated by child's literature writers and activists, and it was even before the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the first international declaration of children's rights in 1924 (Ahn, 1999; Yoo, 2008; Park, 2013). However, the declaration had no legal authority, nor promise for children's rights, and Japanese government had no responsibility to support the movement.

II. The Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Although children's rights were first discussed over 90 years ago in Korea, how children's status has changed since the first discussion has been rarely studied. The purpose of this thesis is to study changes of views of children and rights of children in Korea since the first discussion of children's rights in 1923. However, since ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) in 1991, many researches have reviewed the status of Korean children's rights, and feasibility of the Korean government's child welfare policies. Since ratification of CRC, the Korean government had implemented the children's welfare law, successfully developed the

child abuse reporting system, and, as a result, child abuse cases have been increasingly reported, and the child mortality rate caused by safety issues has shown a steep negative gradient. Although several child rights issues still exist, children's rights have been increasingly ensured and considered since ratification of the CRC (Jung, 2010; Park, 2010; Park, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2014; Kim et al., 2014). Although there is an abundance of research literatures reviewing children's rights after the ratification of CRC, there is nothing published about the earlier phase. Therefore, this study focuses on changes in views of children and children's rights between 1920 and 1989. Throughout this study, I illustrate how Korean news articles have depicted children and children's rights since 1920s. To examine changes in discussions of children, I focus on the following three questions:

- 1) How were children mentioned in published debates and discussions before ratification of CRC?
- 2) How had the main focuses of children's rights been changed?
- 3) What significant events caused changes in these discussions and in the accepted views of children's rights?

These research questions ground my thesis as I attempt to answer the three questions.

The larger purpose of study is to show the changes of views of children and children's rights between 1920 and 1989.

III. METHOD

I catalogued and analyzed newspaper discussions of children for this thesis. Multimedia sources such as newspapers offer factual information in each time period, and multimedia analysis will provide valid inferences (Riffe, 1998; Jung et al, 2006). A popular South Korean portal website *Naver.com* offers various contents such as forums and online magazines. One of the services provided by *Naver.com* is a newspaper archive. The website offers scanned version of newspapers since 1920, and the contents of each article in the newspapers are separately provided in text form. I selected articles from two Korean major newspapers, *Dong-Ah Il Bo* and *Kyung-Hyang Newspaper*. Both newspapers were founded during an earlier period of Korean history, and they still publish newspapers today. *Dong-Ah Il Bo* was founded in 1920 and published numerous articles to encourage readers to retain Korean nationalism during Japanese colonial era. *Kyung-Hyang Newspaper* was founded in 1946, and it was considered to be one of the most progressive and neutral media. *Dong-Ah Il Bo* was the only available newspaper that covers the time period between 1920 and 1940. Since the Japanese government forcefully closed all the Korean news media publications at the beginning of 1940s, there was no available news article between 1940 and 1946.

Data Collection

At the first stage, I searched articles that contain keywords, Children's Rights (어린이 권리, 아동 권리, 청소년 권리), between 1920 and 1989 in *Dong-Ah Il Bo* and *Kyung-Hyang Newspaper*. I found 655 news articles that contained the search keywords. At the second stage, I read each of 655 articles, and considered their relevance to

children's rights. I found that 531 articles either discussed children's rights in other countries such as England or the U.S. or were irrelevant to children's rights, but listed because the articles contained partial keywords. Therefore, I was left with 123 articles that discussed children's rights in Korea. I do not have information on the total numbers of articles that were published over this time period. Therefore, I cannot estimate the changes in the percentages of the discussions of children that were focused on the four categories of rights. However, my analysis can show the relative proportions of discussions of children's rights that are focused on each right, and can also show the increasing numbers (if not percentages) of mentions of children's rights prior to the CRC.

Data Analysis

To analyze views of children in newspaper articles, I have considered two possible coding schemes. One comes from the work of Sorin (2005) who has suggested 10 images of the child. While analyzing past literatures and empirical studies, Sorin theorized and presented interesting patterns of childhoods, 10 images of children: the innocent child, the noble/savior child, the evil child, the snowballing child, the out of control child, the miniature adult, the adult-in-training, the child as commodity, the child as victim and the agentic child. Sorin concluded that any discrete or combination of 10 images will explain children and their childhood (2005). One possible way of analysis would be to code news articles using Sorin's 10 images of children. Korean children drawn in news articles can be possibly explained by 10 images, and the images would also suggest the roles of parents and society in which also will show how children's rights have changed in South Korea.

An alternative to Sorin's scheme is the four categories of rights of children from the Korean Committee for UNICEF. The Korean Committee for UNICEF had categorized 54 articles of CRC into four rights: to survival, to protection, to development, and to participation. Right to survival, supported by article 2, 3, 4, 6, 24, and 27, includes the rights to enjoy adequate level of life such as rights to live at a safe environment, to take enough food and nutrition and to receive basic healthcare. Right to protection is explained by article 2, 7, 8, 19, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, and 38. They indicate rights to be protected from any form of harms such abuse, neglect, discrimination, violence, torture, conscription, unfair criminal punishment, exploitative labor, drug and sexual abuse. Right to development are suggested by CRC articles 6, 28, 29, and 31, and these are rights to be educated, rest, seek necessary information, enjoy civilized life, and have freedom of thoughts, ethics and religion. Right to participation articulates children's rights to freely express their thoughts and be respected for what they say. Joining an organization or participating in safe and peaceful meetings and gathering are also included in Right to participation which is originated from CRC articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 40 (The Korean Committee for UNICEF). Several studies summarized and explained that the 54 articles in the similar sense such as rights "to a name and nationality; freedom of speech and thoughts; access to healthcare and education; and freedom from exploitation, torture, abuse, and neglect" or "to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard, and to reach their full potential" (Library of Congress, 2010; Blanchfield, 2013; UNICEF, 2014).

While both schemes provide adequate frames for the analysis of children in news articles, I decided to adopt the four categories scheme from the Korean Committee for

UNICEF. My research questions are seeking both the changes in the status of children's rights as well as contemporary views of children. Sorin's 10 images only offer standards for the views of children but not their legal rights while the 4 categories scheme provides clear standards both for children's rights and for the views of children. Therefore, I concluded that 4 categories scheme is more adequate for the purpose of this study.

Table 1. Four Rights Category Coding Scheme

Right to	Definition by The Korean Committee for UNICEF	CRC articles (UNICEF)
SURVIVAL	Rights to enjoy proper level of life such as rights to live at a safe environment, to consume enough food and nutrition and to receive basic healthcare	2.Non-discrimination 3.Best interests of the child 4.Protection of rights 6.Survival and development 24.Health and health services 27.Adequate standard of living
PROTECTION	Rights to be protected from any form of harms such abuse, neglect, discrimination, violence, torture, conscription, unfair criminal punishment, exploitative labor, drug and sexual abuse	2.Best interests of the child 7.Registration, name, nationality, care 8.Preservation of identity 19.Protection from all forms of violence 32.Child labour 33.Drug abuse 34.Sexual exploitation 35.Abduction, sale and trafficking 36.Other forms of exploitation 37.Detention and punishment 38.War and armed conflicts
DEVELOPMENT	Rights to be educated, rest, seek necessary information, enjoy civilized life, and have freedom of thoughts, ethics and religion	6. Survival and development 28.Right to education 29.Goals of education 31.Leisure, play and culture
PARTICIPATION	Rights to freely express their thoughts and be respected for what they say, and joining an organization or participating in safe and peaceful meetings and gathering	12.Respect for the views of the child 13.Freedom of expression 14.Freedom of thought, conscience and religion 15.Freedom of association 16.Right to privacy 17.Access to information; mass media 40.Juvenile justice

123 collected articles were coded based on the coding scheme above. If an article was discussing only about children's right to protection, I coded it as "1" for right to protection on an excel spreadsheet, and coded it as "0" for right to survival, development and participation. If an article discusses more than one right, all the rights discussed were coded 1 while unmentioned rights were coded 0. These coding data was collected and analyzed for results and findings. However, since the numbers of articles collected in each time period are not the same, I am only able to compare the four rights within the same time period. Therefore, the analysis of comparison among four rights focuses on which right caught the most attention in each time period.

IV. Results and Findings

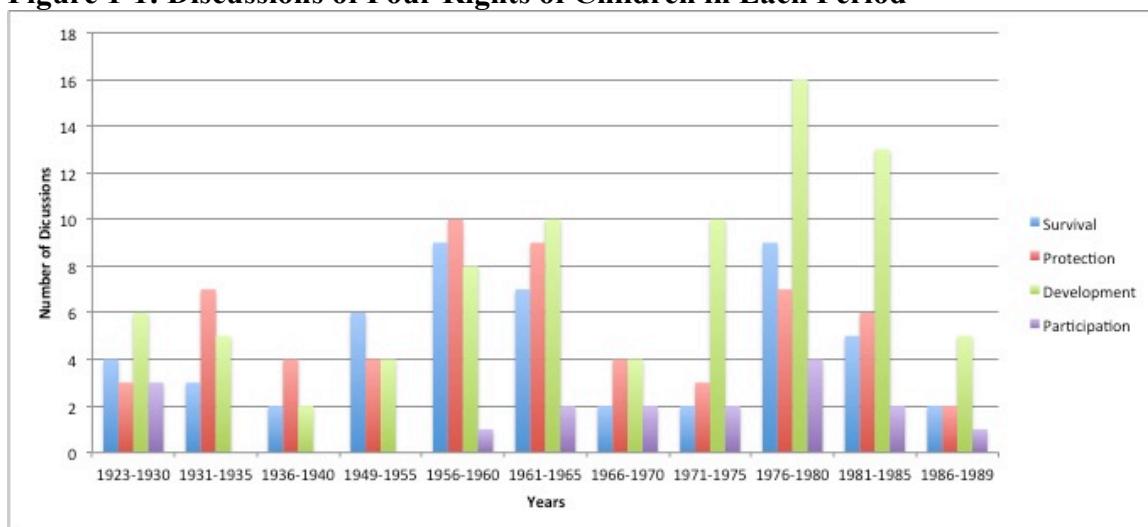
In 1923, Jeong-Hwan Bang, a children's literature writer and an activist, declared the first Children's Day to encourage people to treasure children. Bang was influenced by Chondogyo and his college education in Japan. His family was practitioners of Chondogyo teachings, equality in humanity, and he married to a daughter of the leader of Chondogyo. Bang's college education was placed in Japan where he studied child psychology and literature. Influenced by Chondogyo teaching and the college education, he led a child right movement and worked to ensure children's rights in Korea during Japanese colonial era. The Children's Day declaration was the official beginning of the movement. The Children's Day declaration in May of 1923 encouraged parents and adults,

- 1) not to look down on children. 2) to keep children close to and talk to them frequently. 3) to use respect language to children. 4) to make sure children cut their hair, take bath and have enough clothing. 5) to make sure children have

enough exercise and rest. 6) to take children out sometimes. 7) not to be upset with them, but logically explain to them when advising children. 8) to build facilities for children so they can get together and enjoy their time. 9) to remember that children must be the center of this world, not young adults, not old generations.

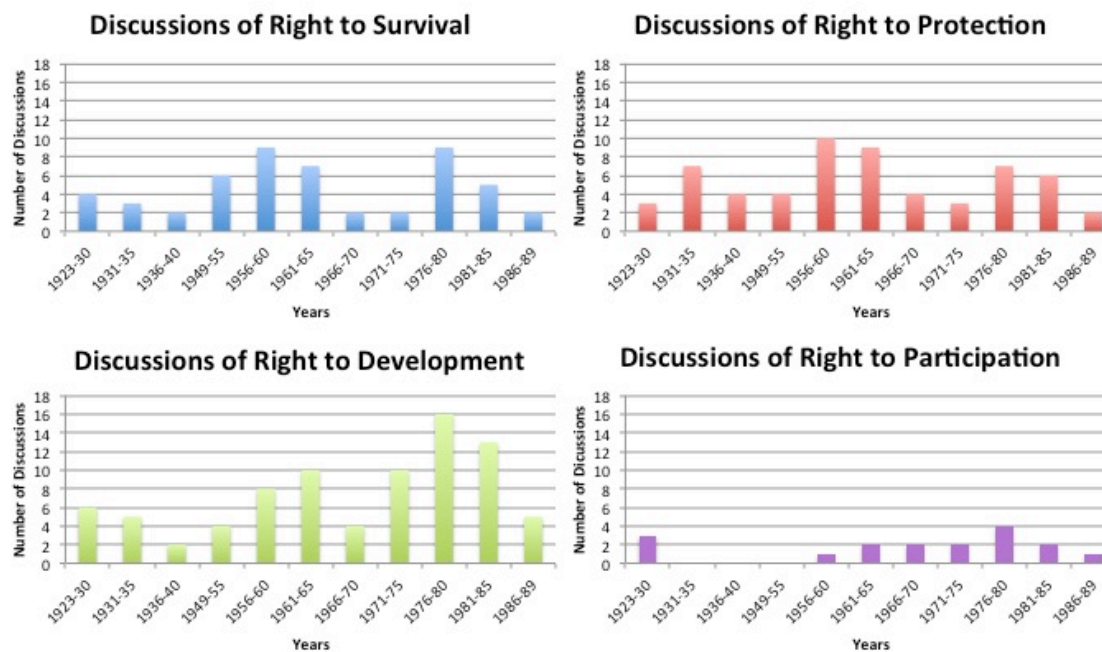
The declaration was involved with all four rights of the children. Right to survival was discussed in 4th and 8th article of this declaration, Right to protection was discussed in 7th article, Right to development was covered in 5th, 6th and 8th article, and Right to participation was covered in 1st, 2nd and 3rd article.

Figure 1-1: Discussions of Four Rights of Children in Each Period



After this declaration, the term “children’s rights” started to appear in newspapers as well as discussions of each of 4 children’s rights. The numbers of rights mentioned in each time period show different patterns. Children’s rights were mentioned nine times between 1923 and 1930 in the articles. Numbers of four rights mentioned in the articles were the least between 1936 and 1940, five times, and the most between 1976 and 1980, 23 times.

Figure 1-2: Discussions of Four Rights of Children in Each Period



Right to Survival was discussed 49 times in 123 news articles between 1920 and 1989.

Right to Survival was increasingly discussed after 1950. It is unsure whether this is meaningful change, but it is worth to look at what happened during this time period.

Discussion of Right to Protection was mentioned in 59 times between 1920 and 1989.

Right to Protection was catching more attention during earlier period, 1930s. Right to

Development in news articles were discussed 83 times. Right to development was

exceedingly more discussed than other rights especially after 1970s. Although the

statistical significance cannot be clarified, it is worth noting that children's Right to

Development was discussed two to three times more between 1970 and 1989. Children's

Right to Participation was discussed 15 times. Children's Right to Participation was not

discussed as many as other rights. To understand changes in children's rights better, I

have analyzed each right separately throughout time period.

1. Right to Survival

When “Children’s Day” was declared in 1923, discussions of children’s Right to Survival focused on the form of lack of living supplies and lack of attention from parents. Parents did not see children as worthy of care and support. Children were generally viewed as miniature adults who had to contribute to family economy. Therefore, children’s right to maintain safety or consume adequate amount nutrition was not the concern for adults. For example, an unattributed article in October of 1926 was posted under the title, “Children I dream of.” This article discussed 5 rights of children: 1) A right to be born from healthy and sanitary parents, 2) A right to wear, eat and rest, 3) A right to be educated and request peaceful family, 4) A right to live as a human, 5) A right to be cared and loved by people as well as protected by the nation. This was neither a declaration nor a policy from Japanese government, but it was an opinion article based on declaration of 1923. This simply reflects that children were not having enough clothe, food, or rest as it appeared in 2nd right of the article while treated something less than human as 4th right of the article stated. Another article in May of 1931 supports the reality of children during this time period. The article argued that “...half of our children die before 10 because of disease. Even if they survive, they have to fight hunger, parasite... they even have to sell themselves to factory owners and live like slaves to survive from hunger...” Children’s rates of mortality (by age 10) were around 50% during this time, and diseases linked to poor sanitation were the major reason, the article explained. Even if they survived, lack of nutrition led them to another danger to survival. The fact that children had to work to survive from hunger explains that the position of children as economic contributor as well. An article also argued in May of 1938 showed children of

age 14 to 15 had to sell candies during night times due to poverty. Lack of support for poor families and children resulted in violation of children's Right to Survival.

Between 1949 and 1955, discussions of children's Right to Survival in news articles appeared more than other rights. The Korean War began in 1950 and ended in 1953. The issue of survival of children had been discussed the most during this time period because numbers of children, as a result of the war, lost their parents. However, the increased attention to children's Right to Survival seemed to be the result of involvement of the United Nations during and after the war. The United Nations supported Republic of Korea against the North Korea during the Korean War, and it was the first involvement of the UN in conflict between nations (Yang, 2010). During the war, the United Nations tried to end the war in peaceful agreement, and provided help for South Korea. An article posted in March of 1952 discussed support for children from the United Nations. The article reported,

“...during the war, a great amount of relief supplies for children was provided by the United Nations, and the extent of support from foreign countries was way more than from the government. Our society does not recognize this reality...children had to roam around harmful places to make money instead of parents...”

The Republic of Korea government did not seem to pay attention to the harsh living conditions of children after the war as the article explained. This reflects that it was not Korean government's effort to show more attention of children's right to survival, but it was the help from the United Nations and other countries for children which led to changes of the view of children. The aftermath of the war caused increase in child crimes as well. An article in 1955 presented statistics researched by Supreme Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Korea. The Supreme Prosecutor's Office argued that 17% of the total

crimes were committed by children between January and March of 1955. The article explained, “Children relying on robbery and burglary to eat is an abnormal phenomenon caused by the war.” The article claimed that the high rate of child crime was the result of lack of attention from the society and the government for children’s Right to Survival after the war.

More news articles related to the Right to Survival appeared during later period of 1950s. Two significant events may have increased the appearances of discussions of Right to Survival in news articles. First, there was the declaration of Pledge to Children’s Rights. Ma Hae-Song wrote an opinion article in 1955 about declaration of children’s rights. Ma was a founding member of the early child movement in 1920s. He was known as a children’s rights activist, and children’s literature writer. In this article, he reviewed the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1924, and encouraged readers “not to beat children, and not to treat them as properties.” He also wrote another article in 1957 about children’s rights, and argued that no facility or ministry bothered to care about children’s rights, and children’s welfare. Ma believed that the lack of support from Koran government were the result of lack of perception of children’s welfare. To resolve lacking perception for children, he claimed that the Pledge to Children’s Rights was necessary. He hope was that a significant declaration would be able to gradually change the perception on the society’s and parents’ views of children, and Ma’s wish came true in 1957. In May 5th of 1957, Pledge to Children’s Rights in Republic of Korea was declared while numbers of children’s literature writers and four national ministers had signed a declaration to encourage the public to ensure children’s rights. The Pledge to Children’s Rights stated,

1) Children need to be respected as human and raised properly as members of society. 2) Children need to be born healthy and educated with true love 3) Enough educational leisure facilities for children must be provided. 4) Children's education or work must not be abusive. 5) Children need to be rescued first when in danger. 6) Children must not be exploited in any circumstances. 7) Hunger, illness, physical and mental illness must be helped. Delinquent children must be edified. Orphans and homeless children need to be aided. 8) Children need be advised to love nature and art, explore science and respect moral principles. 9) Children need to be raised to become citizens to contribute to freedom, peace and culture development of the nation.

Another significant event was the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, defending children and children's universal human rights, was adopted by United Nations General Assembly in 1959 (UNICEF, 2009; Moody, 2015). The Declaration of the Right of the Child became the basis for many articles' discussions of children's Right to Survival. For example, two articles in May of 1963 were discussing Right to Survival while showing children selling gums to make money for food and family finance, and children playing near the dangerous driveways due to lack of playground for children. While criticizing children's poor level of living conditions and lack of facilities for safe playtime, the articles argued that children's Right to Survival must be ensured with the effort of the society and parents as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child stated.

While only a few articles on children's rights appeared to discuss Right to Survival between 1965 and 1975, suddenly a greater proportion of these articles discussed children's Right to Survival between 1976 and 1980. An article reported that, in the meeting held in 1976, the United Nations decided year 1979 as the International Year of the Child, and suggested each country to review their children's welfare, and prepare feasible policies for children by 1979. An article in January of 1979 described,

“the Korean government had accepted the United Nations’ suggestion and made efforts to increase children’s welfare...” The government’s effort had not been discussed until this point. It is possible that the Korean government took an international movement seriously and decided to show care for children because of the benefits that had been received from foreign countries. Also, several articles discussed the international year of the child to encourage readers to learn about children’s rights. From this period to late 1980s, the issues of Right to Survival seemed to expand in several different fields while other discussions were relatively neglected. Most of the articles discussing children’s Right to Survival focused on safety issues. Increasing mortality rate of the school age children caused by car accident was discussed in an article in 1981. Children were often hit by cars while they were on the way to school, and teachers and parents were furious that children’s safety was not ensured. Lack of play ground for pre-school age children was still discussed in 1983. Since children had to play near the streets where many cars and other dangers were easily observed, the article argued that children’s safety should be discussed more. While safety issues were discussed more, discussions of lack of living supplies disappeared at some point, which reflects that children’s living conditions had improved.

2. Right to Protection

Right to Protection was discussed the most between 1931 and 1940 as compared to other rights. During this time period, the conception of child abuse was not well known, and children were often physically punished. An article in July of 1931 showed the prevalent idea of children. The article quoted a parent as saying, “Whether I kill my

child or not, it's up to me. Who dare to question me?" The article explained that this view was not rare in 1931 because parents viewed children as their possessions. Since parents thought they owned their children, it was up to the parents how they used the children. Another article from *Dong-Ah Il bo* described a scene of a child beaten by his father. When the father was asked why his son was punished, the father said, "He refused to work. I was going to beat him to death." The father believed that asking children for labor and giving physical or mental punishment were rightful action because children were born from parents, and parents owned the life of children, the article explained. In February of 1934, Kwak Bok-San, a *Dong-Ah Il Bo* reporter from Tokyo claimed, "Korean parents would not admit that they were abusing children even though they are beating their children, and forcing children to work." Kwak explained that it was because there were no particular standards or law for child abuse. Parents did not know what child abuse was, and the Korean society had no intention to protect children from abusive exploitation. Kwak also reported that after legislation of the Child Abuse Prohibition law in Japan in 1934, Japanese government made an effort to check the child abuse status of Korea as well. As a result of this event, Pyung-Nam province in Korea investigated the cases of child abuse, and it led to numbers of discussions to build more facilities for children's protection. The same types of topics related to Right to Protection were discussed in news articles after the Korean War in 1953. An article in from *Kyung Hyang Newspaper* in May of 1953 discussed child abuse and child labor as still prevalent issues. This article argued, "...in this society where adults teach the young with violence, child abuse is considered normal...the authority of parents justifies this violence ...there are laws to stop animal abuse, but there is no law to protect children from being

abused...children polish shoes or pick pockets on the street to make money for the family...” According to this article, children’s Right to Protection was still often violated by child abuse and child labor.

During late 1950s, the frames for child protection was finally suggested by the Pledge to Children’s Rights in 1957, and the United Nations declaration of the right of the child in 1959. Both declarations were discussed many times in news articles afterwards. The discussions appeared in news articles were focusing on encouraging parents and adults to understand the importance of protecting children from abuse while referencing both declarations. An article in December of 1958 explained, “...the spirit of child protection...and the Pledge to Children’s rights were proclaimed last year, but the practice is still lacking.” Another article in October of 1959 discussed that “the United Nations declaration of the right of the child emphasized that children must be protected from any form of exploitation.” As a result of these frames, the conception of child abuse had expanded. For example, an article in May of 1964 argued that children are abused with poverty and wealth, and love and indifference. “...numbers of children... still had to go work after school to support their family finance...Children from wealthy families...had to begin their days with private tutoring at 5 in the morning.” The article’s argument was that education was an extra burden for children from poor families while education became abusive for children from wealthy families. This argument offered expanded definition of child abuse from physical abuse only to mental and spiritual abuse as well.

In 1970s, child protection movement started to be facilitated by government officials. In December of 1970, Sung, a *Dong-Ah Il Bo* reporter wrote that several

Congress members suggested legislation for a Child Protection law. “The congress members claimed the necessity of the regular meetings with the president to discuss child issues.” The proposal of the congress members reflected increasing concerns for children by governors. However, in spite of the effort to ensure children’s Right to Protection, child abuse and cases of child labor exploitation were still reported. An article in May of 1973 reported, “...numbers of homeless children are living on the street without protection, disabled children are forced to become beggar to make money for their parents, and children who legally work are still treated like slaves by company owners.” In addition to that, a *Dong-Ah Il Bo* article in May of 1977 reported, “...it is so called the Elite Disease that forces children into overwhelming study for satisfaction of parents. Children are framed under parents’ standards without any agency.” The Elite Disease referred to a trend that people only seek to become elites of the society. Especially, people who are well educated were considered to be elites during this period. Parents believed that they could be good parents only if they raised their children to become elites. Therefore, “intense mothering” (Hays, 1996) was often used as rearing strategy, devoting their time, energy and wealth to educate children. However, it was for parents’ satisfaction, not for children’s welfare. The article claimed, “...it is true that more and more people have concerns for children and show care for them...children are still abused by the tyranny of the adults and society.”

During 1980s, several articles described children as victims of neglecting parents. Even though parents spent more finance to children’s education, they did not spend enough attention to children’s protection, but even abused children in several ways. An article in 1980 argued that under the atmosphere of fast growing society, “...a 3-year old

child was bit by a dog and severely hurt because of parents were neglecting the child.” In July of 1981, Kim, Myung-Soo, a Kyung-Hwang Newspaper journalist, reported that five elementary school children were hit by car near the school area, and blamed adults for not fulfilling their duty to protect children. Elementary school aged children walking to school without a guardian was commonly observed during this time, and it was inevitable that children were exposed to numerous dangers on the way to school such as kidnapping, and car accidents. Kim argued, “Parents must watch over their children to protect them from dangers.” Kim’s claim that parents were neglecting children’s safety was also supported by another news article in September of 1981. An elementary school requested parents’ help to resolve frequent car accidents near the school area. “4 out of 5 parents refused to take part in the guiding duty to ensure their children’s safety.” The violation of children’s Right to Protection continued. In 1983, an article reported incidents of murdered children by their fathers. The article described, “...an angry father set the house on the fire and killed 5 children...A father beat his child to teach a lesson, and it resulted in the death of the child...also, a wife ran away from her husband, and the angry husband killed his 3 children...” The article argued that there were too many issues of child protection because adults still viewed children as possessions that they could use to ease their stress and anger. Similar issues continued to appear in the newspaper until end of 1980s before CRC was adopted.

3. Right to Development

The scheme for Right to Development includes children’s leisure, seeking information and freedom of thought and expression in addition to education. Though the

importance of children's leisure and play was briefly mentioned during the Children's Day declaration in 1923, news articles between 1920 and 1940 mostly discussed children's educational opportunities regarding children's Right to Development. Especially, illiteracy due to short of primary education was a big issue during this time period. In October of 1929, an article carried a speech from a 14 year-old farm boy. After attending a few months at a night school, he was able to read, and he realized the importance of education. The farm boy's speech provides evidences of status of children's educational opportunities as well as parents' views of children's Right to Development. "...I worked during day times and went to the night school at night...I do understand that our fathers and brothers were not able to support our education because of the cost...but, how about now? Can you still say you cannot send your children to a free night school? Do you want your descendants to inherit the history of ignorance? ...I am sorry to say this, but we, children, have right to be educated even if our parents say no to that..." Children were important source of labor during daytime. Therefore, even if they were able to provide finance for schools, it is highly possible that parents did not want their children to attend school. Meanwhile, parents did not seem to have faith in education because most of them had no educational opportunity during their childhood, and, as a result, they did not understand the positive impact of education. The farm boy informed that he was illiterate until a few months ago, and gave a hint that most parents were illiterate. High percentages of Koreans did not know how to read during this time period. Oh, Chun-Suk, an educational scholar and a professor at Bo-Sung College, reported, in his article in 1934, that 80% of Korean population was illiterate, and women's illiteracy was over 90%. Oh emphasized, "There is no development for children

without proper education.” As provoking the society, he argued, “...education is the only way to ensure children’s rights, and freedom.”

Meanwhile, after the 1930s, children were viewed as future leaders of the society, and this view was associated with the concerns for children’s development. An article from *Dong-Ah Il Bo* in May of 1938 described, “Without a doubt, children are...the treasure and future of the society. Therefore, the country must strive for children’s healthy development.” As another unattributed article in May argued, “...development of a country depends on the development of children.” This view is similar to the image of children as Adult-in-training. (Sorin, 2005) Children needed to be trained to become healthy and intelligent adults to lead the society and country in the future. This view of children continued after the war. A *Dong-Ah Il Bo* news article carried in March of 1952 discussed that even though the war caused harsh living conditions for everyone, children still needed to be educated to prepare next generation. “Children are treasures of the nation, and main agent of the next generation...therefore, children’s education...must be emphasized.” A news article from *Kyung-Hyang Newspaper* in May of 1953 also argued, “...development of children is directly associated with development of society. Therefore, educating children must be natural duty of humanity.”

Discussions of children’s leisure and play, in addition to education, as a part of Right to Development were started to appear in news articles in later 1950s. 3rd article of the Pledge to children’s rights stated that the proper environment for children’s leisure must be provided. Yoon, Suk-Joong, a child literature writer and a children’s magazine editor, argued in an article in 1957, “This declaration is an important event for the future generations.... The minister of finance must pay attention to this declaration to ensure

children's right to play and study." Children were finally presented as beings who need to enjoy their leisure time. An article in July of 1960 argued, "To be loyal to children's rights to leisure and play," the government should build playgrounds for children's safe leisure time. The United Nations Declaration on the Right of the Child in 1959 also emphasized children's right for the recreational activities as well as education. In March of 1961, Lee, Jong-Ki, a researcher of Children's Culture Research Group, recommended building libraries in every elementary school to better ensure children's right to leisure and education as the United Nations Declaration on the Right of the Child stated. He argued, "Let our poor children enjoy the opportunity to...play and rest as the UN's declaration claimed." Another article in May of 1963 from *Kyung-Hyang Newspaper* referred UN Declaration on the Right of the child to claim that children's development should be considered seriously in any circumstances. The article argued, "Children's education, physical, mental development and leisure must be supported by adults and the society." As importance of children's rest, leisure and play was highlighted, children's education was increasingly viewed as an obstacle to children's Right to Development. An article in May of 1964 argued, "Education became a burden that prevents children from enjoying their social life." Children had to spend majority of their time studying at home before and after school, the article explained. Meanwhile Yoon, Suk-Joong, again, argued in a *Dong-Ah Il Bo* article in May of 1967, "While the slogan of the Children's Day declaration of 1923 was 'Let's not beat our children or exploit them,' today, we shout out, 'Let our children enjoy their leisure time, away from burdening studying!'" In the light of the fact that children's leisure and rest time barely grasped attention before the

declarations, it is preferable to conclude that the shift of main concerns for children's development from education to the leisure was result of the child right movements.

While the same types of discussions from 1960s continued in 1970s, importance of parents, teachers and society on children's Right to Development was discussed additionally. In 1973, an article discussed mothers' role for children's development. "As they are born, children learn and develop their abilities by making contact with their mother... therefore, the importance of mother's influence (on children's development) must be stressed." The article argued that not only mothers, but also fathers and grand parents must think about children's development. Also, a pastor, Cho, Hyang-Nok, in an article in 1976, argued, "Children's development is highly affected by role models because children are likely to assimilate their role models such as teachers and parents." Moreover, the impact of television programs was discussed in 1978. As children were having more access to television, writers agreed that the mass media and children's programs would affect children's development as well. Therefore, news writers argued that quality of children's television programs should be improved for children's healthy development.

The announcement of the International Year of the Child in 1979 provided a chance to review the contemporary issues of children's Right to Development. At the same time, the Declaration on the Right of the Child and the Pledge to Children's Rights were discussed again to stress the meaning of the International year of the Child. In January of 1979, a *Dong-Ah Il Bo* article discussed that "The purpose of the International Year of the Child is to increase children's welfare as it was stated in the Declaration on the Right of the Child...therefore, governments, and private organizations must review

the status of children's welfare to ensure children's physical, mental development.”

Meanwhile, a *Kyung-Hwang Newspaper* in 1979 argued,

“Our Pledge to Children's Rights stated that ‘Adequate environment and facilities must be provided for children's leisure and education.’... However, 70 to 80% of children are suffering from mental illness due to heavy burden of education... our society and all the public organizations must make the best efforts to ensure children's rights to enjoy leisure and recreational activity as these must be recognized as important as education.”

Since the announcement of the International Year of the Child, the government's vigorous activities were observed frequently in news articles. A news article in the January of 1979 announced that the government was planning on several events and policy reviews for children as celebrating the International Year of the Child. The Prime Minister, Choi, asked the public for cooperation to enhance children's welfare while emphasizing the importance of children's education and development, the news article reported. Also, Ministry of Health and Welfare worked to improve previously legislated child welfare law for children's development. An article, in November of 1980, explained that there was no particular regulation and standard for child welfare law, but the Ministry of Health and Welfare was making an effort to make the law practical.

Various issues were discussed during the 1980s, in addition to previous issues. Right to Development for disabled children was discussed in news articles in 1980 and 1981. A new article in December of 1980 argued, “Children with physical or mental disability had a right not to fulfill the duty of compulsory education, and it was used as excuses for the government and the public to avoid making efforts for handicapped children's Right to Development.” The discussions related to the disabled children were occasionally appeared previously. During this time, however, the issue caught more

attention because the announcement of the International Year of the Child reminded mentioning of rights for handicapped children in the Declaration on the Right of the Child in 1959. Overprotection of children was discussed several times in news articles as well. An article in 1980 discussed a mother coming to school everyday for her child and watching over her. Another article in 1981 discussed how parents filtered who their children would hang out with. Another article in 1984 described how children in urban areas spent day and night taking lessons and having private tutoring. All three articles discussed that children were overwhelmed with parents' attention, and how this made it impossible for children to develop their social skills. Also, an article in 1987 argued that these traits of overprotection would lead to children's abnormal behavioral development.

4. Right to participation

Children's Right to Participation was rarely discussed until 1960. However, it received a little attention after 1960. Children's rights to be respected and listened were discussed relatively more than right to freedom of association or expression. Children's Right to Participation in 1960s was discussed against the traditional view of children as properties. A news article in 1963 asserted, "Children should be respected as independent human beings." Because of the prevalent view of children under the idea of filial piety, children were still controlled by parents, and were not respected as humans. A pastor, Lee, Jae-Suk in 1967 confirmed the view, and argued that that viewing children as properties of parents must stop.

The children's right to be listened to by parents was discussed during 1970s. An unattributed article in 1973 argued, "Children must be listened ... because children would

express their needs while asking for allowance.” Also, Lee, Sung Jin, a research leader of the behavioral science research facility, in another article of 1978, explained that parents must listen to children for healthy development children’s agency and confidence to express their thoughts. Cha, Kyung Soo, a professor of Suh Kang University, argued “Children’s education must begin from respecting and listening children.” in an article of 1979.

Between the end of the 1970s and 1980s, articles were reporting that parents were limiting children’s freedom of desire, association and thought. Children were told not to do something rather than to do what they desire. A professor from Seoul National University, Lee, Sung Jin, argued in September of 1979 that the prevalent pattern of parents limiting children’s agency was caused by parents’ desire to raise their children in the way parents were familiar with. In another words, parents did not consider freedom of thought as a children’s right. Another article in 1981 reported the wide spread idea of wealthy parents. Parents decided their children’s friends for them. This was not because children did not know who to associate with, but because parents wanted their children to make associations with worthy friends. Between the early 1980s and 1989, when United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child was adopted, discussion of children’s Right to Participation was not mentioned. As CRC was declared as the international law, a few articles discussed about children’s right to make decisions for their ethical and religious issues as well as freedom of expression.

V. Conclusion

This thesis has documented and discussed how children have been viewed since the 1920s in Korea, and how the main focus of children's rights in the past has changed, based on news accounts prior to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child. Four categories of rights were discussed in this study: Right to Survival, Right to Protection, Right to Development and Right to Participation. Right to Survival, Protection and Development show similar patterns in the number of discussion in news articles. While Right to Participation was discussed relatively less throughout the history, there were small increases of attention after 1959.

During the 1920s, the idea of filial piety was the prevalent philosophy for the parent-child relationship, and children were viewed as the property of parents. Children were often bound through their labors as miniature adults to contribute to family finance and often exploited. During the 1930s, children were viewed as adults-in-training, and future leaders. News articles discussed the importance of children's educational opportunity because children would be future leaders of the country, and children's education was the main factor that would decide the development of future society. However, this did not mean that children were not properties. Most parents and adults still viewed children as their possessions. During and after the Korean War in early 1950s, the United Nations and other foreign countries provided relief goods for children, and Korean society started to see children as beings to protect. The direct contact with western countries influenced the country, and Korean society gradually may have accepted the prevalent western view of children. After 1960s, due to the Pledge to Children's Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Right of the Child,

contradictory views of children can be found. While traditional views of children as properties of parents existed, the idea of children as treasures started to circulate.

Although discussions of physical child abuse decreased, mental abuse due to heavy education and importance of children's leisure time was increasingly discussed. Similar views of children were continuously discussed until the adoption of the CRC in 1989.

Children's Right to Protection was the main focus during 1920s and 30s although other rights were discussed as well. News articles criticized child abuse, child labor and exploitation, and claimed that these were violation of children's Right to Protection. Right after the Korean War in early 1950s, children's Right to Survival caught the most attention. Children's survival was in danger due to the aftermath of the war, and since the United Nations and other countries provided help for Korean children the government, and news media paid more attention to children's Right to Survival. During 1950s and 60s, two significant child's rights movements affected attention to children's Right to Survival, Protection and Development: the declaration of Pledge to Children's Rights in 1957, and the United Nations Declaration on the Right of the Child in 1959. After each declaration, there was increased discussion of children's Right to Survival, Protection and Development relative to other rights. We do not know whether this was caused by an increasing number of articles about children generally. Numerous articles discussed children's rights according to both declarations. After 1970, discussions of children's Right to Development received the most attention. Children's education as well as leisure, rest, and play times were discussed in many news articles in terms of Right to Development. Discussions of children's rights in news articles also increased after the period of 1976 and 1980. The increased attention to children's rights was due to the

announcement of the International Year of the Child. The Republic of Korea accepted the United Nations suggestions to make official and systematic improvements for cultivation of better environment for children.

In conclusion, after considering evidence provided in this thesis, the views of children and children's rights prior to 1990 may have been affected by a domestic child right movement and the United Nations during and after the international child right movements such as the Pledge to Children's right of 1957, the Declaration on the Right of the Child in 1959 and the announcement of International Year of the Child in 1979. The support from the United Nations after the Korean War was the beginning of acceptance of western ideas about children's rights. The aid from the United Nations and other western countries left positive impressions during and after the Korean War. As Korean society became familiar with the western views of children, Republic of Korea became more open to influence of the international child's movement. However, this receptiveness had been also caused by events before the Declaration on the Right of the Child. Before the international movement, Korea started a movement within the country, the Pledge to Children's right. The Pledge to Children's right was a meaningful event for two reasons. First, it suggested relatively clear standards for the children's rights and the views of children. Before this declaration, there were no standards for parents and adults to refer to when they reared children. However, since the official pledge was announced, people were able to refer to the standards to make judgments of their views of children. Second, it was the first declaration for children in Korea that the government was involved. Four national ministers from the Korean government supported and participated this declaration, and the declaration was empowered by the governmental

involvement. The Pledge to Children's rights contributed to acceptance of the Declaration on the Right of the Child when it was announced only 2 years after the Pledge to Children's right. The content of the Declaration on the Right of the Child was almost the same as the Pledge. Therefore, when the Declaration on the Right of the Child was announced, it was easy to connect and to understand in terms of prior Korean movements. With the combination of the positive impression from the western cultures, and the familiar idea of ensuring children's rights, the discourse in Korea evolved to create a fertile field for the cultivation of ideas about children's rights. By the time the Convention on the Right of the Child was proposed in 1989, Korea was ready to accept the international treaty.

A future challenge for researchers is to explore the weight of domestic and international child movements. In the Republic of Korea, both domestic and international child movements suggested the same views of children and standards for children's rights, and the combination of both movements resulted in positive influence on evolution of children's rights. However, there are many questions still unaddressed by this thesis. Was the evolution of children's rights possible without earlier child protection movements? What if a domestic child movement and an international movement had embraced different views of children? While such questions remain, at least we know the outcomes in the case of the ROK, where there was agreement between insiders and outsiders.

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