

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THE MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **Content Overview**

This chapter examines the history of child maltreatment and the services for abused and neglected children. Such topics as dependence, discipline and child labor are discussed. Early sexual attitudes are traced to the present with a consideration of the origins of the incest taboo.

The chapter also looks at the recent history of helping abused and neglected children, from the writings of such reformers as Swift and Dickens, to the formation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and later, the efforts of C. Henry Kempe.

Finally, the chapter discusses child protection today and the need for training research and more effective media attention.

### **Key Points for the Student to Master**

1. Initially children were the property of their parents who could decide their life, death, or discipline.
2. Poor laws of the 1600s usually grouped children with their parents and did not see them as separate entities.
3. Minority immigrant children may have had largely different experiences from their white counterparts. Each culture seems to carry with it a different set of experiences as their children become integrated into the new culture.
4. In the 1700-1800s, children were disciplined severely and little attention was given to their status.
5. Indenture was a popular form of child labor in the early United States. Indenture also provided an opportunity for children to be abused.
6. Sexual abuse is not a new phenomenon. Female children were often bartered and abused in convents, while pederasty for boys was a common practice in early Greece.
7. There have been numerous explanations for the development of the incest taboo, from biological theories to the fact that incest causes family disruption. Current theories promote a multi-dimensional view.
8. Although reformers such as Dickens and other reformers brought to public attention the issue of child abuse in the 1800s, it was not until 1874 that steps were taken to intervene in maltreatment situations. The case of Mary Ellen gave rise to a myriad of reforms in this intervention.
9. The coining of the term "the battered baby syndrome" by C. Henry Kempe was a result of the discoveries of abuse made by Caffey and his colleagues when they noticed unexplained breaks on x-rays. The use of this term furthered both research and treatment efforts.

10. Several pieces of federal legislation have had an impact on intervention with abused and neglected children. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (1974) was followed by more recent legislation, including the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (1980) and the Family Preservation and Support Services Act (1993).
11. As the rights and welfare of children become more widely debated, child protection agencies are called upon to alter the types of services they provide. More recently, CPS has become more involved in solidifying risk assessment criteria, advocating for child protection teams, and offering more family centered services.

### **Key Words or Phrases**

infanticide

Elizabethan Poor Laws

indenture

Hull House

sexual exploitation

pederasty

Freud

incest taboo

sexual aversion

Charles Dickens

Mary Ellen Wilson

Henry Bergh

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

John Caffey

C. Henry Kempe

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

Battered Baby Syndrome

### **Student Activities for Applied Learning**

#### **Suggestions for Students:**

1. Write to one of the clearinghouses suggested in this chapter to obtain lists of the resources available in child abuse and neglect. Given the number of resources in each area, where does the emphasis lie?
2. Invite an anthropologist to class to speak about the origins of the incest taboo.
3. Obtain a copy of the *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Children and Youth of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare*, U.S. Senate, 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress (from U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, or your local library). Which of the witnesses presented the most viable reasons for an Act to prevent child abuse, and why?
4. Invite a speaker from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Children to outline the history of the movement.
5. Have a lawyer, physician, and social worker join a panel, and analyze the difference in their approaches.

### **Teaching Tips or Exercises**

1. If you use the Newspaper Analysis suggested earlier, you may not want to have a very lengthy discussion of the how the media affects child maltreatment. However, if you choose not to use this assignment you might invite students to do a search of the newspapers and bring in articles. The class can then analyze them based on the questions given in the Newspaper Analysis section. This makes for interesting discussion.
2. Why did it take one hundred years between the case of Mary Ellen, which greatly influenced the intervention in child maltreatment, until laws were passed on a national level to protect children from abuse and neglect? This is interesting to discuss. Help students realize how children are undervalued in this society, especially since they do not vote.

### **Making Use of the Internet**

1. <http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/> Jane Addams is a fascinating individual in the history of the Settlement house movement and Hull House provided many of the leaders of child welfare reform. It might be worth exploring this University of Chicago website with students. There is an interesting timeline and a wealth of biographical information on the Jane Addams-Hull House website. Encouraging students to delve into the life of early reformers makes them more real and can stimulate student's interest in reform and advocacy.
2. Help students to begin their collection of favorites in the area of child welfare. You might have ideas for particular formats that will help them to build a useful resource file for the future. Encouraging them to explore the links given on sites will lead to a wealth of new information.

### **Additional Resources**

1. There have been numerous films made over the years depicting the treatment of children throughout history. Films on child labor, early orphanages and so on might all be appropriate. Titles are available through the various film catalogues suggested in the above section, Finding Other Resources.
2. Film/video: "Childhood in the 20th Century", narrated by David Frost, explores the experience of being a child over the last hundred years and examines the improvements in the lives of children (49 minutes, color). Available from Films for Humanities and Sciences at 1-800-257-5126.

# TEST QUESTIONS

## Multiple Choice Questions

1. Infanticide was practiced in order to
  - a. limit family size
  - b. control for healthy and strong offspring
  - c. as a solution when children were born illegitimately
  - d. to insure the abundance of a particular gender
  - e. all of the above

*Answer: E*

2. The Elizabethan Poor Law provided for children who had families by
  - a. placing them with their families
  - b. separating them and putting them in foster homes
  - c. providing coupons like food stamps
  - d. putting them with relatives while their parents went to the workhouses
  - e. the Quakers had institutions for them

*Answer: A*

3. Indenture was used to
  - a. provide punishment for delinquent children
  - b. provide homes for boys only
  - c. teach children trades
  - d. remove children from abusive parents

*Answer: C*

4. Pederasty refers to:
  - a. the selling of young girls into slavery
  - b. mother's masturbating their sons to increase penis size
  - c. The practice of adult males indoctrinating young boys sexually
  - d. the use of young women who were about to enter the convent by monks
  - e. the use of young girls as prostitutes for wealthy men

*Answer: C*

5. Sigmund Freud began to suspected that the women he treated for hysterical neurosis
- a. had been severely beaten as children
  - b. had been sexually abused by their fathers
  - c. had been in sexual relationships with their brothers
  - d. had received a swift blow to the head as a child
  - e. had been left alone by their mothers for long periods of time

*Answer: B*

6. The taboo of incest was believed to have developed
- a. due to the fear that close inbreeding would produce abnormal offspring
  - b. because people who live together constantly develop a sexual aversion to each other
  - c. because the family cannot tolerate the ambiguity or blurred role definitions brought about by the sexual involvement of family members with each other
  - d. all of the above were theories but the current theory was that it was due to the need for barter among peoples
  - e. none of the above

*Answer: D*

7. Weinberg feels that the incest taboo developed due to social stigma based on
- a. disgust with the participants in incest
  - b. an inner revolution toward the idea of incest
  - c. perception of a disorganized family life
  - d. perception that the participants are mentally or emotionally abnormal
  - e. all of the above

*Answer: E*

8. It was not until \_\_\_\_\_ that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was formed on the model of the \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. 1874; SPCA
  - b. 1876; Biblical Society for Children
  - c. 1956; SPCA
  - d. 1910; SACP
  - e. none of the above

*Answer: A*

9. John Caffey led a group of radiologist to suspect physical abuse in young children because
- a. the early writings of C. Henry Kempe caused him to be suspicious
  - b. the children were wary of adults
  - c. there were numerous calcium deposits around the bones of children
  - d. parents denied that anything had happened to their children
  - e. the children had bruises in various stages of healing

*Answer: C*

10. In the 1960s and 1970s, child protection agencies were feared by some parents as the agency that could “take kids away”. In fact
- a. this was quite true and CPS could remove children with little provocation
  - b. CPS was largely dependent upon the juvenile court to authorize the removal of children
  - c. CPS could only remove children when the parents agreed to their removal
  - d. CPS could place children only if their parents actually abandoned them.

*Answer: B*

11. One study on public opinion and child rearing reported that today the majority of respondents felt that a significant contribution to poor parenting was
- a. that mothers needed to work outside the home
  - b. that fathers are not more involved with children
  - c. that more parents are not married
  - d. that fathers cannot take paternity leave.

*Answer: A*

### **Essay or Discussion Questions**

1. What was the fate of children prior to the late nineteenth century? On what attitudes was this based?
2. Who was Mary Ellen and what influence did she have on the history of intervention on behalf of abuse children?
3. Trace the more recent events in the history of intervening on behalf of abuse and neglected children.