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The Experience of Korean American First Born or Only Sons in the United States: Privilege or Burden?

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Summary: Qualitative interviews were conducted to examine the dynamics of gender roles, tradition, culture, and parental expectations, often influenced by Confucian values, of Korean American first-born or only sons. Theories of stress, identity, and acculturation may inform how gender and status affect outlook on life, relationships, duties, career, and mental and physical health. **Method:** 47 Korean Americans, ages 18-40, of whom 35 were first-born or only sons, were interviewed. For corroborative data, 12 siblings (five younger brothers and seven sisters) were also interviewed. A semi-structured, open-ended, 25 question guide was used for interviews which were then recorded and transcribed. **Results:** Common themes emerged. First-born or only sons had privileges (e.g. more attention and respect) but there were stressors, burdens, sibling conflict, and duties tied to their roles. Traditional Korean cultural expectations were contrasted with "American" equivalents observed by participants in their non-Korean peers. Some perceived their role burdens as outweighing their privileges. Despite these burdens, however, many Korean American males were proud of the accomplishments that resulted from the pressure. They appreciated their parents' hard work to provide and to support their education and felt obligated to repay them by caring for them in old age. They also learned the value of family loyalty to care for family members. Some expressed gratitude for parents having high academic and career standards. **Conclusions:** Dynamics of tradition, culture, parental expectations, respondents' realization, acknowledgment, and acceptance of roles, are important to understand for the overall health of Korean American first-born or only sons and their families. Roles include privileges and burdens. Yet, among immigrant families, role expectations can result in a clash between traditional Korean values and American values in terms of what sons want and what parents expect. Given high expectations of first-born sons, an imbalance in the dynamics of burden/pressure vs. privilege/support may create stress. However, burdens and expectations can be mediated by status, respect, privilege, achieving success and pride when fulfilling parental expectations. This study highlights how assimilation and acculturation may be complicated among second generation immigrants when expectations of the old country are different from the new.

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Preface

I was one of four daughters in a Korean family. We immigrated to the United States when I was six years old. There was no surprise about the higher than average number of children in my family. When other Koreans found out that there were four daughters, they assumed correctly that my parents were hoping for a son to be born. As each hope died with the birth of a girl, there still remained the wish for a son. I grew up hearing my parents and relatives talk about the deficit of not having a son in our family. Thus I was left with a question: What is special about being a son, and specifically being a first born or only son?

There seemed to be expectations placed on first born or only sons in Korean families. Sons, as I was told, provided status, financial help, protection, and future old age insurance for their parents. Sons were a source of pride. However, in my observation, I wasn't sure the status placed on sons came with such great rewards for sons. My assumption seemed validated with the years of mental health work with individuals and families including Korean Americans. In comparison to some other ethnic groups, Korean Americans were less likely to utilize mental health services. Further, when they finally arrived at a mental health clinic or setting, Korean American males, and specifically first born or only sons, came in with severe mental health issues and symptoms. Once they came in for the initial evaluation or emergency psychiatric services, most never returned for consistent treatment.

This apparent paradox of status and attention given to first born or only sons, and the difficulties they seemed to experience, was something I wanted to understand better. Whether their health or mental health was directly or indirectly related to their status and roles caught my attention and served as an inspiration for this study. It appeared, in my limited observation, that first born or only sons were given more privileges, status, expectations, and burdens than their younger male siblings and female siblings. However, I could not assume this was true or how these manifested in Korean American first born or only sons' lives in the United States with the backdrop of immigration, acculturation, and assimilation. Therefore, to capture their stories and experiences, I conducted qualitative research.

Korean Americans, as other ethnic groups who come to the United States, have to absorb and incorporate aspects of American culture in order to make a living and thrive. The process of assimilating to a new set of customs, values, languages, and ideals can be difficult and take time. It can cause problems in adjustment and family dynamics. For Korean American first born or

only sons, a clash of two cultures in relation to the expectations of first born or only sons may exist. There may be conflicts due to the divergent cultural expectations for Korean American first born or only sons versus non- Korean American first born or only sons in America. Therefore, how did these possible conflicts manifest in Korean American first born or only sons researched in this study, their families, and the larger Korean American community?

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Introduction and Statement of the Problem

This study explored what it meant to be the first born or only son of Korean American parents in America. Is being a first born or only son a problem for Korean American males? Does being a first born or only son affect Korean American males, Korean American families, and Korean American communities in America? Furthermore, when Koreans immigrate to the United States, do the same privileges and burdens apply to Korean American first born or only sons?

I chose to study this population of Korean American males and role status because I wanted to understand the impact of the preference for first born or only sons in Korean American culture. This preference originates from Confucianism where such an ideology influenced hierarchical roles within the family. Confucian values include moral responsibility given to individuals with higher status such as parents, eldest sons, and teachers (Yang & Rosenblatt, 2000).

In Korea's history, privileges and preferences for sons comes with burdens and expectations. Males are more valued than females in Korean society. But do the values of privileges and burdens remain the same for Korean American first born or only sons in America? What did the preferences for first born or only sons mean for first born or only sons? To hear the range and themes of experiences of this group, I sought to obtain individual stories with an inductive and qualitative inquiry.

What is the context for the value of having sons in Korean culture? Traditionally, the first born sons or only sons were a sign of prosperity and financial security of the family. They also carried the weight of passing on the family name. Korea has historically been a country whose privileges belonged mostly to men.

In the United States, as Koreans immigrated, parents may have held onto these values of honoring their first born or only sons and placed traditional expectations on them. Korean parents' expectations of first born or only sons have been commonly understood within Korean American culture, to be high. Their status could have both privileges and burdens. Role status can translate to preferential treatment, privileges, and opportunities. At the same time, roles and status could also entail burdensome obligations and stress. Depending on the types of burdens and individual ways of coping, roles may affect emotional and physical states despite their

privileges. Therefore, this study was aimed at understanding both burdens and privileges based on the unique status and role of first born son in Korean American families.

The term "privilege" in relation to Korean American first born or only sons, provides benefits such as psychological, status, or financial gains. An example may be that first born or only sons receive more resources for their education as a higher priority than his siblings, or the inheritance of assets or the family business due to his role status and gender. Another example of privilege may entail praise, encouragement, attention, and other emotional benefits. These can lead to increased self-confidence or self-efficacy, and support and motivation to succeed.

"Burden" may be defined as a stressor that may cause emotional or physical strain or harm. Examples of burdens for first born or only sons may include the pressure to succeed in academics and/or careers, or financially caring for parents in older age. Stress can lead to health problems, difficulty in relationships, use of substances such as alcohol and nicotine, and struggles with attaining educational or career endeavors.

The process of acculturation and immigration may be a factor in manifestations of stress from role burdens. This may be attributed to the clash of what parents in a new country (America) might expect of Korean American sons, given values from the old country (Korea) versus cultural norms in the United States.

Conflicts and strain can arise when role duties are assigned. Growing up as a first born or only son in America, while also being raised with Korean and Korean American values, can create a possible clash of cultures. Korean American first born or only sons may have difficulty negotiating two possibly different cultural norms and expectations in relation to fulfilling expected roles. Based on this clash of two cultures and possible divergent role expectations, Korean American first born or only sons may experience strain in negotiating roles.

Role strain can be experienced when oldest brothers or only brothers, while receiving more attention and respect, are also expected to achieve in career and academic aspirations. Their siblings, on the other hand, may not be expected to achieve at similar higher levels expected of first born or only sons. Though siblings might not receive the same attention and status as their older or only brothers, they may not have the same responsibilities, burdens, and pressures as their oldest or only brothers.

Historically, in Korea, first born or only sons were designated to receive more resources and power than siblings. But these privileges came with duties and burdens. First born or only

sons in America no longer receive the same comparable traditional privileges of land, money, opportunities, and other major advantages as practiced in Korean culture. This is due to both first born or only sons and siblings being equally able to achieve status and privilege. Siblings can attend good colleges and succeed if they work hard despite not receiving the same privileges of respect and status as their older or only brothers. Regardless of privileges, siblings have opportunities to take out loans, receive scholarships, or make an income to finance their degrees if their parents chose to invest more in their older brothers or only brothers. Siblings being raised in America are not prevented from taking and benefiting from opportunities similar to those given to their older brothers or only brothers as was the case in the past in Korea. Due to increased economic growth, both first born sons and their siblings are provided with similar resources for education. Therefore, receiving the benefits of being a first born or an only son is now obsolete. The status and privilege of being the first born or only son no longer translates to similar inheritances of valuables, status, and power, as was the case in historical Korea.

In summary, this research seeks to understand how role status affects the overall well-being of Korean Americans and Korean American families. There may also be subsequent implications for public health concerns for Korean Americans and their families.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study is to understand the deeper themes as related to roles in the context of immigration and being Korean American first born or only sons. Roles can inherently include burdens and privileges. They can be both stressful and rewarding.

This research aimed to gain understanding about how Korean American male roles affect one's overall well-being. It is an exploration of how roles affect the Korean American male emotionally, physically, and the ability to fulfill academic and career aspirations. This research explored the spectrum of the Korean American male's roles, status, parental upbringing, tradition, values, stressors, and other influences. What kinds of burdens did they experience? Did his high status privileges buffer those stressors? What were the consequences of role burdens/privileges on health, mental health, academic success, career achievements, and interpersonal relationships? Are there public health issues to keep in mind in educating those who work with Korean American families about being in the role of a first born or only son?

Korean Americans

Korean Americans: Korean History, Culture, Tradition, and Values

A major aspect of Korea's history includes the social and hierarchical order maintained by Confucian principles for 5,000 years. Confucianism began to shape Korea when it entered between 57 B.C. - A.D. 688. Its values were adopted into the core of Korean national identity during the Chosun Dynasty (1392 to 1910) by way of the Korean government (Min, 2008). Confucianism provided the Korean government with a "social, political, and economic philosophy" (Min, 2008, p. 23). Its principles encompassed "morals, ethics, social order, and even spiritual devotion" (Hurh, 1998, p. 16). Moreover, the hierarchy of Confucian beliefs can be broken down into major categories of social relationships and their patterns of authority as related to "hierarchy, age, and gender" (Slote & De Vos, 1998, p. 133).

Another dimension of Confucian beliefs spells out the roles and duties of individuals. Rank has a long history in Korean society. It started with the first clans and then ingrained further into the culture via the rich tradition within Confucian values. Koreans idealized titles and rank because only those with titles and status were respected and had power (De Mente, 2004). Consequently, due to this history in Korean culture, one's rank is taken seriously both in business and in family relationships. Just as is common in Korean business etiquette, where harmony and interaction can only occur after a pecking order of statuses are established, a similar hierarchy exists in families (De Mente, 2004).

One of the major duties outlined in Confucian beliefs that Koreans have upheld, is the expectation that having the rank of being the first born or only son entails caring for parents in old age. The oldest son was expected to live with his parents after marriage, to support them financially, and ensure their physical well-being (Min, 2008). According to Yang & Rosenblatt (2000), it is shameful for family members to neglect those they are responsible for and especially their elders.

Another major facet of Korean culture and history influencing Korean Americans is that, in alignment with Confucian ideals and harmony, Koreans are expected to follow norms such as social and economic class, education level, and birth order. For centuries, rigid differences established between the "common people and the ruling upper class" called "*yangban*" existed.

The *yangban* status was associated with "inherited prestige" (Palais, 1995, p. 419). Being openly jealous of those in higher classes was not allowed. Subsequently, people repressed feelings of anger and envy towards those of the higher classes (De Mente, 2004, p. 93). Korea kept a ruling class of elites for many dynasties despite incorporating "leveling effects" on this social structure through the development of civil service examinations (Palais, 1995, p. 420).

Today, Confucian ideals of rigid groups of social and economic class are archaic. Koreans today, both in Korea, and in the United States, more frequently derive their self-esteem from their education, professional skills, and success, rather than by being "obedient drones" (De Mente, 2004, p.94). Immigrant families in the United States typically struggle to earn a living and to adapt to their environment to achieve the American dream. Korean Americans from the older first-generation, spent their whole lives in America pursuing what they called "*anjong*" for themselves and their children. *Anjong* symbolizes security and stability (Park, 1997).

As instituted by Confucius in China, civil service examinations in Korea allowed top scholars to gain privileges of status and power despite not having *yanban* lineage. Scholarship and achievement, therefore, became a direct path to higher rank by outperforming peers. This exam was based on merit. If one scored well, one would be a part of the leadership or ruling class. Therefore, even those in the lower classes who were not born into royalty, could elevate their status through these tests. Such a tradition enabled Koreans to believe that hard work was the only way to raise one's status in life. This notion has been perpetuated for centuries. Koreans place a high value education and careers that will help elevate social and economic status.

Another related aspect that may influence Korean American immigrant parents to place high standards on education in the United States is that in Korea it is more difficult for applicants to gain acceptance into college than in the United States due to a limited number of colleges. In 2003, there were 4084 total colleges and universities in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2003). In comparison, South Korea had 447 colleges and universities around the same time (www.studyinkorea.go.kr/). Demographically, the population in the United States was 313 million in July 2011 (www.cia.gov). In South Korea in July 2011, there were 48.7 million Koreans (www.cia.gov). Proportional to the respective population counts and the smaller number of colleges and universities, it is more difficult to gain entrance into a college in South Korea (Choe, 2007).

Lastly, the value of education is reflected in the number of Asian Americans with college and graduate degrees. Asian Americans, according to the United States Census Bureau in 2000, had the highest rates of graduating college and/or graduate programs at 44% while 26% of Caucasians completed college or graduate school. The national average of graduating college and beyond of all races was 25% (United States Census Bureau, 2002).

Korean Americans in the United States

Koreans came to the United States as laborers since 1902. From that wave of immigration, the Korean-American population grew rapidly throughout the twentieth century (Kim, 1997). Korean Americans are a newer but increasingly growing immigrant group to the United States. The influx of Korean Americans came in the wave between 1970 and 1990, where the Korean American population increased from 70,000 to 800,000 (Hurh, 1998).

Korean American immigrants are a fast growing Asian American subgroup in the United States (Kim, Han, Shin, Kim, & Lee, 2005). In 2008, there were 1.61 million Korean Americans in the United States (2008 American Community Survey, http://factfinder.census.gov). In 2000, there were 1.1 million Korean Americans in the United States (Barnes & Bennett, 2002). In total, there were 313 million people in the United States in July 2011 (www.cia.gov). Of the 313 million people in the United States, 4.3% (13,459,000) were Asian American. According to Census 2000 (United States Census Bureau, 2000). New York had the 2nd highest number of Korean Americans after California. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Koreans residing in the United States increased by 35% (United States Census Bureau, 2000; 1990). In New York City, the Korean American population also continues to grow. In one year between 1999 and 2000, the number of Korean Americans grew by 30%. In 1999, there were 69,718 Korean Americans and by 2000, there were 90,896 Korean Americans (Asian American Federation, 2004).

In some states, the concentration of Korean Americans is higher proportionally in relation to nationwide statistics. For example, in New York State, they represent 11.5% (or 120,172 Korean Americans) of the 1,044,976 individuals residing in NY. In New York City, there are 90,896 Korean Americans. Korean Americans are the third largest Asian group in NYC (Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center, 2004). Of the 90,896 Korean Americans in NYC, 71,907 or 79% are foreign-born. Since most Korean Americans in NYC are

foreign-born, it is not surprising that 40 percent or 29,454 individuals have "limited English proficiency" (speaks English "not well" or "not at all") (Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center, 2004).

Despite the current numbers, Korean Americans have been empirically studied only recently starting in 1976 (Hurh & Kim, 1982). Additionally, there is a dearth of research on the general health and mental health of Korean Americans. Some research on Korean Americans have studied stressors of their immigration experiences contributing to problems such as family violence, alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, alienation of older persons, marital and intergenerational conflicts, and mental disorders (Hurh & Kim, 1990). The experience of role status in Korean American first born or only sons has not been researched in depth. Therefore, this study focuses on capturing their experiences through a qualitative method of inquiry to learn about the dynamics of first born or only sons.

Korean Americans and Health

Manifestations of Stress in Korean Americans: Nicotine and Alcohol Use?

Role expectations can create role stress. In particular, role expectations for Korean American first born or only sons may impact health and mental health. As mentioned before, the process of acculturation and assimilation can add burdens to Korean American families. As the process of adapting to the new world gets interwoven with the clash of two cultures (Korean and American), first born or only sons may turn to coping with potential conflicts in negative ways. This can include detrimental habits to one's health such as drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes.

McCubbin, Needle, & Wilson (1985) conducted a study of 505 families with adolescents between the ages of 12 and 13 to understand the risk factors involved in alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use. Negative influences of adolescent-family stressors and strains were linked to adolescent health risk behaviors of "cigarette smoking, liquor drinking, and marijuana smoking" (McCubbin, Needle, & Wilson, 1985, p. 51). Moreover, Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, and Blyth (1987) and DeWit, Adlaf, Offord, and Ogborne (2000), found that transitions in pre-and early adolescence (ages 11-14) in the formation of self-concept within social and psychological development, changes related to puberty, and entering high school, were risk factors in an

increased use and/or abuse of alcohol if alcohol was initiated during this period. Researchers found that these transitions related to physiological changes and entering high school during this vulnerable period (ages 11-14) constituted a source of "acute anxiety and stress" that gave rise to a range of academic and behavioral problems (DeWit, Adlaf, Offord, & Ogborne, 2000, p. 749).

Exploring manifestations of stress (e.g. alcohol abuse and cigarette use) in Koreans Americans is difficult in that there is generalized research on the umbrella group of Asian Americans but not enough information on Asian American subgroups. One noteworthy sector of Asian Americans for this study is the subgroup of Korean Americans. It would be helpful to know the reasons for evidence-based, higher than average rates of use or abuse of nicotine and/or alcohol, as compared to other Asian Americans and non-Asian Americans.

This study did not inquire about a direct correlation between nicotine and alcohol use/abuse in Korean American first born or only sons, and role expectations. However, possible role strain resulting from acculturation conflicts might be one of the psychosocial factors involved in high rates of substance use or abuse for Korean American males in general.

There is a concern regarding Korean American males and cigarette smoking because Korean American males have higher smoking rates (27% to 39%) as compared to Korean American women (3.8% to 8.5%), and the United States population (23.1%) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997; Kim et al., 2000; Ma, Shive, Tan, & Toubbeh, 2002; National Center for Health Statistics, 2003). Koreans Americans in New York State smoked cigarettes at a prevalence rate of 19.9% (Guinness World Records, 2008, p. 70). Furthermore, in Korea, according to the Korean National Health Ministry survey (2006), Korean males smoked cigarettes at a rate of 50% while only 3% of Korean women smoked (Gallup Korea Report, 2006). According to the OECD's (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Health Data Report, (2011), it was found that in 2009, South Korea had the second highest rate of smokers among OECD countries at 25.6% of the population. The gender disparity still continues in South Korea with 44% of men smoking daily (OECD average was 22.3%) and 7% of women smoking daily.

Despite the reported high incidence of nicotine use, Korean Americans comprise a group that receives little attention in smoking cessation research. Yet, as noted above, Korean American males had elevated smoking rates as compared with the general United States population, as well as with other Asian American ethnic groups (Ma, Fang, & Knauer et al.,

2006, p. 1776). In a study conducted with 100 adult Korean Americans where 98.9% of the respondents were male, 72.7% self-reported that they smoked regularly, and 61% stated they were heavy smokers (Ma, Fang, & Knauer et al., 2006, pp. 1776, 1778). In comparison to Korean Americans, Chinese Americans smoked cigarettes at the rate of 5% (Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), 2006). Chinese Americans, on the other hand, are less likely to abuse alcohol in comparison to other Asian groups such as Koreans (Chi et al., 1989; Sue et al., 1985).

The majority of the literature gave reasons why Korean Americans had high rates of smoking. Studies found that there were established cultural norms for nicotine use/abuse for Korean Americans. Such norms can attribute to higher rates of cigarette use/abuse (Ma, Fang, & Knauer et al., 2006). Research revealed psychosocial variables that seemed to play a role in smoking rates (Ma, Fang, & Knauer et al., 2006). A noteworthy psychosocial variable contributing to higher nicotine use/abuse included the common understanding that smoking was a part of the social fiber of gaining acceptance into a social group (Ma, Fang, & Knauer et al., 2006).

Moreover, the study conducted by Ma, Fang, & Knauer et al. (2006) found that smoking in Korean American males was viewed as a social behavior of conformity and bound by social pressures. There were strong cultural pressures that were deeply rooted in Korean culture for Korean men to engage in the "social practice" of smoking (Ma, Fang, & Knauer et al., 2006, p. 1777). Similar to these findings, a qualitative study was conducted with Korean American male smokers supporting previous findings that smoking is a common social medium (Kim, Son, & Nam, 2005a).

Social practices and mediums are understandable factors likely to contribute to smoking in Korean males. However, key psychosocial variables need to be explored further to understand the social norm and pressures of smoking behaviors among Korean American males. The limitation in the aforementioned research studies regarding prevalence rates for cigarette smoking included conducting quantitative research; not qualitative research. Quantitative studies attempted to research why Korean American males smoked at higher rates. However, the answers were limited, defined by researchers, and did not go beyond participants checking off factors that could have been broadly interpreted. Given this limitation, it was difficult to find explanations for higher rates of smoking in Korean American males versus Korean American

females, and also in comparison to other Asian Americans, and the general United States population.

With regards to acculturation and smoking prevalence, studies have shown that levels of acculturation were associated with smoking prevalence among Korean Americans (Hofstetter et al., 2004; Juon, Kim, Han, Ryu, & Han, 2003). The more Korean American men were acculturated, the higher the likelihood for Korean American males to quit smoking. The less acculturated Korean American males were, the more likely they were to smoke (Hofstetter et al., 2004). It is difficult to know exactly what the research found because the in-depth reasons why Korean American males smoked less the more they were acculturated, were not noted. We cannot assume that higher levels of acculturation for Korean American first born or only sons translated to them smoking less. Qualitative studies were not conducted to help explain what factors contributed to perceptions of acculturation and the prevalence of smoking rates.

One quantitative study that studied smoking abstinence in Korean American males had noteworthy findings. Participants were asked to note when they (Korean American males) were most likely to be tempted to smoke a cigarette. Respondents' answers were identified with factors associated with "Tempting Situation Factors." Results showed that higher correlation factors that contributed to being tempted to smoke included: "when you feel tense or anxious, when you are upset or in a bad mood, and when you face a crisis or a stressful life event" (Kim, S., Kim, S-H., & Gulick, 2009, p. 127). Yet, a major limitation of the study's design was that answers were not further explored through qualitative inquires. What were stressful life events, crisis situations, and what made respondents feel tense or anxious, or upset them or put them in a bad mood? What factors contributed to participants' subjective experiences that tempted them to smoke cigarettes at higher rates than other groups? If this study had included a qualitative inquiry, could the higher rates of nicotine have been better explained? It would be helpful to explore sources of stress, anxiety, and bad moods that might have been attributed, in part, to the dynamics of role conflicts within role expectations for Korean American first born or only sons.

Role expectations can create role stress. Greater stress can be experienced when expectations from both Korean and American cultures conflict. This is an issue of acculturation where the expectations of the old culture do not fit in the environment of the new culture. In particular, could the cultural clash in role expectations cause stress to cause Korean American

first born or only sons to contribute smoking to cope? Within the process of acculturation by Koreans in America, role expectations might be emphasized, held onto, or let go.

Acculturation is defined by the exchange and process of adapted levels of socialization and contact by a cultural group, of the new adopted culture. Some of the original patterns of the cultural group may change given contact of the new culture. However, the group continues to keep some patterns which may keep the group distinct from other groups. With this adaptive process, there is an inevitable change of group identity. This change may create a tension between the old and new cultures (www.sociologyguide.com). In the context of Korean American first born or only sons, acculturation can entail having to adapt to their parents' role expectations that have been kept from the old culture (Korea) and the current culture in which they are growing up (America). As a result, the level of acculturation for Korean American males may have created a conflict based on the clash of two cultures: Korean and American. This conflict may have extended to manifestations of stress in Korean American males through the use of nicotine and alcohol at higher rates.

Another common manifestation of stress is alcohol use or abuse. Drinking norms and attitudes can be attributed to higher rates of alcohol abuse in Korean Americans (Galvan & Caetano, 2003). Korean Americans grow up in a drinking culture. What seems to ensue, given this cultural medium of drinking norms, is a high prevalence of alcohol abuse in Korean Americans. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found that 27% of Korean Americans reported binge drinking at least once per month. Korean Americans binge drank at a higher rate than other Asian Americans who binge drank a rate of 9% (The Health of Immigrants in New York City, 2006). Chinese Americans are less likely to abuse alcohol in comparison to other Asian groups such as Koreans (Chi et al., 1989; Sue et al., 1985). Korean Americans also drank at a higher rate than the general New York City population (19%) who engaged in binge drinking (New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2005). However, as delineated in the limitations of research for cigarette smoking in Korean American males, it would also be helpful to understand the underlying reasons for higher rates of alcohol use in Korean American males. Quantitative studies are limited and cannot explain why Korean American males might turn to drinking alcohol to cope with stress, if that is the case. Moreover, the process of acculturation needs further exploration to understand the dynamics affecting manifestations of stress in first born or only sons.

Depression in Korean Americans and Highest in Korean American Males?

Stress can manifest as depression. Among different cultural groups, there may be differences in how stress manifests. In a study of Asian and Caucasian college students, Marsella, Kinzie, & Gordon (1973) found that there were ethnic differences in symptoms and signs of depression. Asians with depression had gastrointestinal problems such as bad appetite, indigestion, gas, and belches. On the other hand, Caucasians who were depressed had the urge to eat even when they were not hungry (Lee & Zane, 1998). Therefore, within the Asian American subgroup of Korean Americans and Korean American males, what is the prevalence and factors that contribute to Koreans suffering depression?

Attention needs to be paid to detect and treat depression in Korean Americans (Kim, Han, Shin, Kim, & Lee, 2005). Depression in the Korean American community needs more research because, as compared with other groups, Korean immigrants had the highest prevalence of depression at 14.4 % (Kuo, 1984). More recently, another study corroborated these findings. Kim (1993) showed that the prevalence of depression was higher among Korean Americans than other Asian Americans subgroups; and rates of depression were highest among Korean American males. In comparison, the average degree of depression among Korean immigrants was higher than Caucasian Americans' levels of depression (Hurh & Kim, 1990).

Despite findings from research on high rates of depression in Korean American males, this problem has not yet been studied in depth. Qualitative studies focusing on depression as related to role experiences of Korean American first born or only sons may need to be conducted. How might the process and factors of immigration contribute to stress and resulting depression in Korean American males?

Additionally, despite noted high prevalence rates of depression among Korean immigrants, few studies have explored the subjective experience or the meaning of depression in Korean Americans. The beliefs of Korean immigrants regarding the causes of depression, the varied expressions of depression, and their perceptions of stress-inducing situations, might be different from non-Koreans in the US. Although it would be ideal to look at findings on Korean American males and depression with possible factors of immigration influencing depression rates, a general study on Korean Americans is helpful to understand some dynamics influencing depression.

To understand the meaning of depression in Korean Americans, a qualitative study was conducted (Shin, 2010). A total of 57 participants (15 males and 42 females) whose ages ranged from 18-76 years, took part in a focus group or an in-depth interview. Respondents were recruited solely on the basis of answering "yes" to the question of whether one experienced depression since immigrating to the United States from Korea (Shin, 2010, p. 74). In Shin's study (2010), a major theme that emerged as shared by participants, was a sense of an "unbalanced self" as a meaning of depression, resulting from the process of immigration (Shin, 2010, p. 73). Respondents explained that the "unbalanced self" resulted from three factors: "external stressors, medical problems, and punishment for wrongdoing" (Shin, 2010, p. 76). Of particular note was the voice of a 45 year old male who felt guilty for not staying in Korea where, as the oldest son, he was obligated to take care of his parents. Although Shin's (2010) study did not focus on the experience of the role of the first born or only son, this excerpt depicts a possible contributing factor of this respondent's depression as an aspect of his "unbalanced self." The participant in Shin's research (2010) believed he was being punished with depression as a result of wrongdoing for not caring for his parents in Korea after immigrating to the United States. Drawing from Shin's (2010) qualitative study, the following quote illustrates that even though his parents died, he still believed that his parents were "angry" with him:

> I left my country 10 years ago … I abandoned my duty as the oldest son in my family. I could not take care of my parents in Korea because I was so busy trying to survive here. I always thought I would be a good son when I had economic stability. However, they … passed away a couple of years ago. They are angry at me about my shirking my duty as their offspring. Everything is tangled up inside of me. I know how I can make myself suffer. Maybe I have to pay a price for my wrong conduct (Shin, 2010, p. 76).

Depression, in Shin's (2010) study, was highlighted by situational factors related to immigration. Rather than attribute depressive symptoms to internal psychological states, they were seen as a "characteristic of their immigrant situation" (Shin, 2010, p. 76). For example, respondents talked about working 12 hours per day and not taking vacations in order to make a living. Depression was perceived as a characteristic of conditions caused by being immigrants in a new country. Stressful situations were noted as originating causes of their depression (Shin,

2010). Notions of the American dream seemed distant once they realized the hard work involved in many of their stages of adapting to a new culture and language.

Researchers have noted the fragility of recently arrived Korean immigrants' psychological well-being. There is evidence, although fragmentary, that the psychological well-being of Korean immigrants is less than optimal. Hurh and Kim (1990) described the high levels of stressful experiences reported. In another study of Asian Americans (Kuo, 1984), Korean immigrants reported higher levels of depressive symptoms than did Filipino, Japanese, or Chinese immigrants.

Various factors may contribute to Korean immigrants' rates of depression such as being recent immigrants, being employed in jobs that are lower in status despite higher educational background, limited English language proficiency, and having a higher concentration of operating small businesses in low income locations that have higher risk of crime (Hurh & Kim, 1985, p. 703).

A study conducted in Chicago by Hurh and Kim (1990) sought to understand patterns in Korean American male mental health. The research included 334 males and found that 86.2% (288 Korean respondents) were employed. Based on self-reported scales, Hurh and Kim (1990) found that the most significant variable that accounted for mental health patterns of Korean males was job satisfaction. The researchers explained this association in reflection of Korean males being breadwinners within the traditional gender role ideology in Korean families. In contrast, 288 female respondents were asked the same questions (Hurh and Kim, 1990). Results from this study showed that Korean women's mental health was more associated with family related factors than to occupational variables. Therefore, Korean American males may have experienced more stress and resulting feelings of depression if they were not satisfied with their jobs.

Lastly, an ethnographic study conducted by Lee (1998) highlighted a non-Korean female's observation of how Korean American sons were expected to achieve in comparison to daughters. A Jewish American female in Lee's (1998) study grew up in a part of New Jersey with a high concentration of Korean Americans. She had Korean American friends and was familiar with aspects of Korean American culture. In regard to Korean American males, she pointed out that Korean American parents emphasized their sons to achieve: "One of my friends' parents were proud of their daughter, but they always wanted their sons to achieve" (Lee, 1998, p.

85). Consequently, it may be helpful to understand whether higher expectations placed on Korean males may contribute in part, to stress and symptoms of depression.

In sum, depression in Korean Americans, and in particular, Korean American males, as influenced by immigration, acculturation, and role expectations, may need to be explored as a dynamic affecting overall health and mental health.

Suicide Rates are Among the Highest in Koreans

Korean American rates of suicide cannot be determined at this time by the United States Census (2011) data due to non-specific ethnic and racial groupings. According to the United States Census count, Asian American and Asian Pacific Islander males had a rate of 9.0 suicides per 100,000 in 2007. For Asian American and Asian Pacific Islander females, the rate was 3.5 per 100,000 (United States Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2011, p. 94). Therefore, it is difficult to extrapolate whether Korean Americans versus other Asian American groups had higher rates of suicide.

As specific rates of Korean American suicide is not determinable at this time, statistics for suicide rates in Korea (versus statistics for Korean Americans in the United States) were found. According to the WHO (World Health Organization) worldwide suicide statistics, South Koreans rank 19th in the world for suicide while the United States ranks 46th (World Health Organization, International Suicide Rates, 2003). In 2005, Korean males had a rate of 33.0 suicides per 100,000 people while Korean women had a rate of 16.5 suicides per 100,000 people. This increase in suicide rate seems substantial given that in 1986, Korean males had a rate of 13.3 per 100,000 while Korean females had 4.9 per 100,000. Comparatively, in 2005, the WHO reported statistics for suicide rates in the United States: 17.7 for males and 4.5 for females (World Health Organization, 2011).

Among the 30 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, suicide rates in Korea are increasing. Male rates almost doubled from 12 deaths per 100,000 people in 1990, to 21.5 in 2006. The OECD average for the other countries is 18 suicides per 100,000 deaths. The rate for Korean females (13 per 100,000) is the highest among OECD countries. According to the OECD, the rise of suicides is attributed in part, to the economic downturn and the fading tradition of the family support base for the elderly (OECD,

Country statistical profile: Korea 2010, p. 2). In comparison, the United States had about one-half the rate of Korea with a suicide rate of 10.1 deaths per 100,000 people in 2006 (OECD, Country statistical profile: United States 2010, p. 2).

The rate of increase in suicide rates in South Korea was 98% in men (from 15.3 to 30.3 per 100,000) and 124% in women (from 5.8 to 13.0 per 100,000). For both men and women, the increase in suicide rates was higher among the group aged under 45 (Kwon, J.W., Chun, H., & Cho, S.I., 2009, p. 3). In 2004, among the 30 OECD countries, South Korea was 2nd after Japan in suicide rates.

Suicide statistics in Korea can be studied to understand the age groups most at risk and to gain a sense of the ages and stages of one's life that may be stressful. Current research indicates that suicides increased among Korean senior citizens who were not fully prepared for older age and not supported financially by their offspring (Korean National Statistical Office: Statistics on the Cause of Death, 2008). In 2006, the World Health Organization found that the rates of suicide per 100,000 drastically increased with advancing age in South Korea. Women ages 55-64 had a suicide rate of 16.0 per 100,000 and males had a suicide rate of 61.5. As women grew older between the ages 65-74, 32.4 out of 100,000 killed themselves. Men in the same age category died of suicide at the rate of 95.9 per 100.000. Women ages 75 and up died by suicide at a rate of 70.3 while men who were 75 and older completed suicide at a rate of 154.8 (World Health Organization, Korea, 2011). In comparison, rates of suicide per 100,000 Americans in the United States (2006), women ages 55-64, had a suicide rate of 6.1 per 100,000 and males had a suicide rate of 22.1. As women grew older between the ages 65-74, 4.0 out of 100,000 killed themselves. Men in the same age category died of suicide at the rate of 22.7 per 100.000. Women ages 75 and up died by suicide at a rate of 4.0 per 100,000 while men who were 75 and older completed suicide at a rate of 37.8 (World Health Organization, 2011).

Overall, the elderly over 65 years of age in Korea historically and currently, showed the highest suicide rates (World Health Organization, 2009). In looking deeper into these figures, such rates in South Korea can be seen by observing social issues. Specifically, suicides increased among Korean senior citizens who were not fully prepared for older age and not supported financially by their offspring (Korean National Statistical Office: Statistics on the Cause of Death, 2008). The elderly South Korean population may no longer have the same traditional support systems in place as historically expected of the first born or only sons caring

for them in older age. Thus, rather than be a burden, perhaps they decided to take their own lives?

Given the previously noted social issues of the elderly in Korea, questions arise about Korean elderly in America. Financial status can influence expectations by parents for first born or only sons to take care of them after retirement. The financial picture of Korean Americans living in poverty may help to illustrate the possible continued expectations and ideals placed on sons. In New York City, there were 15,002 Korean Americans (or 17% of the Korean Americans in NYC) who lived below the poverty line in 2000. Moreover, and perhaps relevant for this study, 28 percent of the Korean elderly population lived in poverty in 2000. This exceeds the poverty rate of the elderly in NYC overall, which is 18 percent (Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center, 2004). Therefore, this figure raised various questions. One question, as related to this study, is whether Korean American first born or only sons are no longer accepting the responsibilities of caring for their parents in older age.

Literature Review

Understanding the Korean American Male: Constellation of Roles and Status

Pearlin (1989) frames his understanding of an individual's roles and experiences as a "constellation" (p. 241). This concept infers a complex, recursive, dynamic, constantly changing and interacting patterns of stressors comprised of "events and strains" (Pearlin, 1989, p. 241). Additionally, he writes that buffers such as social support and coping can combat stress and limit the "number, severity, and diffusion of stressors in these constellations" (Pearlin, 1989, p. 241). Pearlin urges that we let go of the notion of producing outcomes and clear answers. With this perspective, we can be open to understanding various facets of the "constellation."

Similarly, this research focused inductively on what Korean American males experienced in their roles. Units of analysis such as "roles" and the "social world" as explained in Lofland and Lofland (1995), were examined in Korean American first born or only sons. The goal of this study was to find out what Korean American males experienced in the context of their evolving social constellations and to distinguish the various components that constitute those constellations. For example, from infancy to adulthood, what makes up the constellation of an individual? What are the specific characteristics of family members, cultural experiences,

relatives, friends, health issues, genetics, environment, economic resources, and personalities that contribute to how being a Korean American male is experienced? How can we understand how each of these connect, clash, and interact with each other?

Gender roles have specific significance. Lorber (1994) explains that gender is a frame for social institutions. Gender establishes patterns of expectations and social processes. Further, John Money, a psychoendocrinologist founder of the Gender Identity Clinic (1966), coined "gender role" (1955) and "gender identity" (1966) to describe gender identity states as expressed through culturally dictated gender roles such as language, clothing, behavior, and other symbols (Money, 1994, p. 163). Money stated that "gender role" describes all that a person says or does to disclose oneself as having the status of being a boy or a man; a girl or a woman.

In Korean males, understanding the significance of gender roles is important in understanding social constellations, particularly given Confucian gender specific roles. Such roles have become a part of their social realm where there are certain expectations and where positions of status are based on gender. Confucian values include a higher level of moral responsibility given to individuals with higher status such as parents, eldest sons, and teachers (Yang & Rosenblatt, 2000).

Role status in Korean American males must first be understood within the context of how the Korean American self is created. Cooley (1902, 1983) developed the concept of the "looking glass self" and Mead (1934) the concept of the "I" and the "Me" negotiation, which reflected the dialogue of the internal individual impulse with the perspective of society. Both conceptualized that the "self" was created as a result of how others reacted to the individual and how this shaped the individual. In other words, an individual's perception of him or herself, results from internalization of how others perceive that person (Yeung & Martin, 2003). The construction of the Korean male "self" is thus created in reaction to their roles and how their culture and families who have adopted these aspects, have shaped their roles.

Korean American children growing up in the United States experience identity and cultural clashes when they have conflicting ideals with their parents while being in two worlds. This is illustrated with the experience of the 1.5 or 2nd generation of Korean Americans growing up in the United States. The 1.5 generation is a concept that began in the early 1970s by a Korean American reporter, Charles Kim, to describe immigrant children who were not of either the 1st or 2nd generation. Being of the 1st generation signifies that one was born in Korea. Thus

technically, those of the 1.5 generation are of the 1st generation because they were born in Korea. However, because of their age at the time of immigration, their experiences are different from their parents' (Danico, 2004, pp.1,4). Despite being born in Korea, living in America can entail a vastly different experience of their selfhood. Variations of social, economic, and cultural experiences permeate the 1.5 generation (Danico, 2004, p.2). Given that children of 1st generation parents were raised in the United States for a majority or all of their lives, Korean American children may have adapted to and adopted some American values and cultural norms that may differ from Korean values and norms.

As part of the formation of the Korean American male's sense of self in the context of his dual cultural context and traditional family expectations, perceptions of himself included being able to fulfill parental hopes. One of the major hopes and expectations of parents have been similar to striving to increase their social and economic position through civil service exams in Korea's past.

In America, as immigrants, Korean Americans work hard to increase social and economic levels through achieving high levels of education and employment. Korean American parents, like other new immigrants, have had to work long hours and sometimes for little pay. Park (1997) found that some first-generation Korean Americans were able to work in careers that were comparable to their education and training levels prior to 1965. However, many who immigrated after 1965, experienced downward mobility and language deficits affecting job acquisition, regardless of their levels of education and job skills. Possibly influencing this trend was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act of 1965), that removed previous discrimination against Asian immigration. This law may have resulted in an influx of Koreans immigrating to America with a broader range of skills and educational levels. Therefore, it could follow that Korean Americans with less transferable knowledge and skills in America worked many hours to build their new lives. Thus, there is an understandable reason for immigrant parents to pressure their children to succeed.

Parents may place high expectations on their offspring when they want to prevent them from facing the same barriers and struggles of immigration. Some parents hope to provide a better life for themselves and their children. Resulting from the stressors inherent in the process of immigration, Korean American parents were likely faced with barriers of language, acculturation, and financial issues. Such stressors in turn, may have fueled expectations placed

on sons, traditionally the most valuable offspring, due to burdens experienced in the process of immigration.

The goal of immigrant offspring to achieve higher levels of social and economic status is logical. Yet, immigrant parents may be pressuring their children to succeed in comparison to groups who have been previously established and settled in the United States, without realizing possible consequences.

For Korean American males of first born or only status, the constellation of pressures, expectations by parents and the larger Korean cultural community, and their own desire to achieve a sense of mastery over certain milestones may be combined to create potential conflicts and lowered self-confidence. Merton (1964, p. 264) posited that "comparison with the achievements of specified others" may lead to " … self-depreciation, to a sense of personal inadequacy." Merton talks about what we can see that constitute part of the constellation of how Korean American male identity is formed. Merton states there are reference groups where the group or different groups provide comparisons with who the individual can evaluate oneself.

Korean Americans, as Hurh and Kim (1990) assert, have many reference groups. They can be other Korean immigrants residing in the United States, Koreans living in Korea, or other ethnic groups who have immigrated at earlier stages. Hurh and Kim (1990) found that more than 80 percent of participants with people they compared themselves to, believed "they were entitled to achieve what their comparison persons already achieved." They also found that the ethnicity of the persons made little difference in this finding (Hurh & Kim, 1990, p. 470). Therefore, one can assume that Korean parents may have expectations of their children to achieve certain goals. Many immigrant parents may be expecting that their children will achieve what their comparison persons or groups have achieved without looking at the various aspects of contexts in one's constellation.

What is Stress?

Roles can produce stress and stress can be inherent in roles. Historically, the concept of stress, as discovered by Hans Selye in 1935, was described as an organism in a state of adapting and responding to its environment (Selye, 1978). Selye further assessed that stress included a physiological reaction to environmental aspects. Viner (1999) notes that when Selye introduced the role of stress in physiological reactions, most in the scientific field did not agree and did not

recognize stress as a fact. Stress was not tested through hypotheses testing because it was not observable or measurable.

Currently, the concept of stress has a broader meaning as posited by Pearlin in explaining stress with a wide range of both effects and breadth. Stress is not only experienced physiologically through specific events or long standing stressors. It can be also measured in response to a process over time, including events and strains (Pearlin, 1989). Pearlin summarizes three "domains of the stress process: stressors, stress mediators, and stress outcomes" (Pearlin, 1989, p. 241).

Factors that help us understand how stress manifests include: the exposure to and meaning of stressors, buffer to stress (e.g. access to mediators), and what many studies have highlighted (i.e. psychological, physical, and behavioral manifestations of stress) (Pearlin, 1989). Buffers or mediators of coping and social support are evaluated as to how they decrease the breadth and depth of stressors in one's life (Pearlin, 1989).

To understand and evaluate influences on coping, we need to see the context of an event, the people involved, how events or stressors are appraised, and one's demographics (e.g. age and gender). The context and how events are appraised are most important factors. Appraising stress events can be subjective (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Thus, we need to look at various factors that influence how individuals cope with stress.

Sometimes, stress does not need to just be about coping and buffers. It can also be understood as negative experiences that have positive outcomes that one gains and learns from. These are called "carry-overs" from stress experiences (Thoits, 1995, p. 53). There can be a range of mediating factors and coping mechanisms that allow for buffering of stressors that end up becoming positive events.

When the outcomes of stress are not all negative, we can understand this concept further through Thoits, who introduced the framework of "identity-relevant" stressors (Thoits, 1991, p. 101). One's identity is comprised of how one sees oneself within his/her role, such as being a child, friend, or employee. Identity-relevant stressors threaten or enhance an identity that one values. "Carry-overs" from stress originating from a role or domain such as work stress influencing one's personal life negatively can be part of the identity process (Thoits, 1995, p. 57). Within one's identity in his/her role, stress can vary based on one's social status (Thoits, 1991). Yet, given the inequality of resources in a social group, higher-status individuals can be

more exposed to "identity-enhancing" experiences and lower-status individuals can be more exposed to "identity-threatening" stressors (Thoits, 1991, p. 106).

In summary, understanding the meaning and how the stress process in the life course is experienced, is important. We cannot understand stress solely as an "immediate response to a stimulus" (Pearlin, 2010, p. 207). Rather, we need to see stress as "rooted in social and experiential conditions" (Pearlin, 2010, p. 207). Overall health and social contexts change over time. Therefore, in order to understand the manifestations of stress, we need to look at the origins and consequences of stress along a continuum in the life course as "being embedded in a process" (Pearlin, 2010, p. 207). This process also includes one's social status, role(s) in various domains, appraisal of stress events, buffers and mediators, positive outcomes that can result from negative experiences, and understanding that there are identity related stressors that can enhance one's identity.

How Does Stress Affect Health?

In the past, stress was not seen to have a role in how our immune systems functioned. Research by McEwen, Lasley, E.N., and Lasley, E. (2002) explained that stress protects in acute conditions. But when activated over a period of time, it can cause damage and speed up the disease process. Chronic stress can cause health problems such as cardiovascular diseases, disorders of the immune system, and afflictions of the mind (McEwen, Lasley, E. N., & Lasley, E., 2002). Therefore, stress can lead to physical and mental health concerns.

Stress is not only a contributing factor in health but is also linked as a by-product of strain resulting from power relationships and social institutions that together contribute to the meaning of stress (Donnelly & Long, 2003). For Korean first born or only sons, positions of status in their families can be a source of chronic stress resulting from the social institutions of their families**.** Role stress can have negative effects such as poor health, strains on relationships, and psychological distress**.**

The social construction of illness helps frame how social factors shape our understanding of health, illness, and healing (Brown, 1995). Brown also notes that the initial social discovery of an individual's burdens such as potentially experienced by Korean first born or only sons, can recursively affect social construction. Such Korean social constructions within tradition can place stress and illness on Korean males. Consequently, to comprehend the roles of Korean

males, there needs to be a sociology of understanding manifestations of stress to one's health based on complex factors that can contribute to a Korean male's experience.

Formation of the Self: Cognitive, Psychosexual, and Psychosocial Stage Theories and Social Learning Theory

The formation of one's identity and personality is complex. There are established theories that assist in understanding individuals through cognitive, psychosexual, and psychosocial stage theories, and through social learning theories of personality formation. Jean Piaget provided a framework for how human beings assimilate and accommodate new information through stages within cognitive development. Furthermore, psychosexual theories posited by Sigmund Freud, psychosocial theories identified by Erik Erikson, and social learning theory by Albert Bandura, can help to understand how certain forces shape individual identity.

As part of cognitive development, assimilation, in Piaget's theory, occurs when people are exposed to new information and understand it by referencing prior gained knowledge. When one accommodates new information, it encompasses taking in one's environment and new information and changing past learned schemas to incorporate the new information (Piaget, 1983). Assimilation and accommodation takes place throughout each of the four stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor (infants gain knowledge of their world by experiencing it with their senses), pre-operational (a child learns concepts, is able to reason, and to represent objects with language and images), concrete operational (a child begins to use logic), and formal operational (abstract thinking with logic, draw conclusions, and apply these to other situations) (Santrock, 2008).

Additionally, as part of the umbrella of cognitive development, Piaget's theory of moral development outline an individual's ability to distinguish stages of moral presentations starting at age seven where both internal and external aspects of moral judgments are made based on one's stage (Piaget, 1948). More specifically, for example, during the first stage of *objective morality,* individuals judge the severity of their negative actions based on material or external damages observed. Then, during the second stage of moral development, termed *subjective morality*, individuals judge their actions based on intent rather than the external or material consequences (Piaget, 1948). In sum, Piaget's theoretical base provides a sense of how both one's internally

subjective and externally experienced world influence how moral development, within one's character and personality, is formed.

Freud's psychosexual developmental stages provide an understanding of how an individual's identity is shaped by *libido* that develops in five stages: oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital. Freud's basis of his theory posited that a child experienced anxiety if his/her sexual drive was not fulfilled during any of the stages. If the anxiety continued, it may turn into a neurosis in adulthood (Freud, 1938).

Erikson's psychosocial stages of development focus on the interaction of society and culture on the individual. Erikson identified eight stages of personality development encompassing infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. These stages occur in relation to social interactions and environmental factors (Erikson, 1963). Erikson believed that each stage of interaction provides an opportunity for enhancing one's psychological strength. When there are deficits along the various stages of psychosocial development, according to Erikson, there can be maladaptive tendencies and behaviors resulting from a lack of mastery of each stage of development.

Bandura's social learning theory posits an individual's imitation of others' behaviors resulting in personality development (Bandura, 1963). Observations of behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others influence individual identity and actions (Bandura, 1963). Bandura's studies exhibited how children learn from observing others whether it was in watching a parent in front of them or seeing others through media or the environment (Bandura, 1963). Further, individuals are more likely to adopt a model of behavior if the model is similar to the observer and has admired status, and if the behavior has functional value (Burger, 2000). Piaget's, Freud's, Erikson's, and Bandura's theories help explain aspects of personality and identity formation with frameworks of the cognitive, psychosexual, psychosocial, and social learning along the life cycle. However, there are deficits in understanding identity development given the clash of cultural influences and differences experienced by the research participants in this study. The influence of roles within the range of ethnicities and cultures living within another environment with other ethnic groups and cultures can also be incorporated in the individual from birth to late adulthood. Therefore, additional sociological theories of the self and identity were incorporated to understand the complicated breadth and depth of individual development with a broader context.

Theories of the First Born or Only Son Experience: Role Theory, Identity Theory, Expectation States, and Stress Theory

To supplement the above stated theories, the following sociological theories help provide a further look at identity development and role structures within a broader context. As stated previously, the formation of one's identity is complex. The process is interactive and incorporates simultaneous factors of race, gender, culture, ethnicity, social position, economic status, stressors, family dynamics, birth order, and personality, among other influences that form one's identity. In particular, these theories provide insight to understand what it means to be a Korean American first born or only son in the ways that they address the interaction of the environment that influences identity and role development.

To understand roles, one needs to see the multidimensional aspects of roles. According to sociologist Robert K. Merton (1957), one's life includes stages where one holds simultaneous and various roles. Individuals can hold multiple social positions and statuses at the same time in various realms understood as *"role-sets"* (Merton, 1957, p. 111). These are called *"status-sets"* (Merton, 1957, p. 111). For example, people are in different sets of spheres such as professor, doctor, father, son, pastor, and democratic party member.

Merton also asserted that there are two *social mechanisms* that define *role-sets* (Merton, 1957, June, p. 113). The first *social mechanism* reveals that various statuses are relative in their levels of importance (Merton, 1957, June, p. 113). Some cultures may emphasize certain aspects and expectations of roles while others may not highlight the same dimensions of roles. For example, the oldest daughter may be the most responsible to take care of a family for one culture while another believes that only the sons should be responsible for caring for the family. It depends on the dynamics of each culture and heritage to understand the ascribed values of a role's relative importance of status. Therefore, certain statuses may be given more prestige than others. There may be many factors influencing status in each role as well. But the general notion is that status is relative and differently ascribed according to individuals in their families and communities-at-large. Second, there are power differences of those in the *role-set.* A mechanism to stabilize the *role-set* is through delineating power and authority. Power, in Merton's theoretical context, consists of the ability to impose decisions despite opposition from others. Authority, in the framework of Merton's theory of a *role-set,* is the "culturally

legitimized organization of power" (Merton, 1957, June, p. 113). In other words, different cultures may have their own individual hierarchies and power structures that ascribe levels of power and authority.

In addition to being ascribed relative levels of authority and power, roles can be burdensome. Goode (1960) coined the term *"role overload"* which explains that one lacks the time, energy, and resources to fulfill the demands of the role (p. 483). Further, "*role conflict"* takes place when there is a discrepancy between the expectations of one's various roles. When considered together, both *role overload* and *role conflict* can contribute to *"role strain"* when unable to meet role expectations (Goode, 1960, p. 483).

With regard to stress and the effect of stress on health, as stated previously, roles, and in particular, *role strain* can produce mental and physical health issues. In various cultures where there are both work and structured family roles, there can be stress leading to *role strain.* Consequently, psychological and physical health problems may result (Aryee, 1993; Lai, 1995; Matusi, Oshsawa, & Onglatco, 1995).

To further outline one's trajectory of one's role and identity, the concept of *"master status"* is outlined. Master status, coined by E.C. Hughes (1943), encompasses the most salient characteristics of an individual within a social position. Master status denotes an ascribed social position that is a main component of the foundation of one's identity. For example, some master statuses are: gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, economic level, education, and roles such as being a mother, a child, or someone who is unemployed. If an individual believes that his or her master status is primarily one of being a mother first and secondarily, an athlete, the individual may behave in a way that focuses more on aspects of being a mother versus being an athlete. Consequently, the master status of an individual may also influence how he or she interacts and behaves with others as well as how others relate and interact with him or her.

Identity is also understood with the concept of *"expectation states." Expectation states*, as theorized by Ridgeway (1991), reveals how identity experiences and structures can be understood through race and gender as independent status values. One's self-worth can be viewed in the context of race and gender (Ridgeway, 1991, p. 367). Attributes such as gender and race are rarely understood independently. Instead, there are many interactive and simultaneous socially significant attributes assumed with gender and race. Additionally, there are beliefs that offer these characteristics status value (Ridgeway, 1991, p. 368-369). For

example, there are many dynamics of race that influence how one's identity is assessed by the outside world. Equally, there are many dynamics of gender that also determine how one's identity is seen and shaped. There are subjective, historical, geographical, political, cultural, economic, and environmental influences that help ascribe *expectations states.*

Identity is also comprised of *"identity-relevant"* stressors that threaten or enhance an identity that one values (Thoits, 1991, p.101). Identity-relevant stressors can help appraise stress events along the continuum of one's life course. Aspects of role identities can impact health and mental health when one's ability to enact aspects of their roles is impaired. *Identity-relevant* experiences may be notable predictors of mental health well-being and psychological distress (Thoits, 1991, p. 106). Within one's role identity, stress can vary based on one's social status (Thoits, 1991). Social status is attributed differently in different individuals based on many factors of one's context. Therefore, it is helpful to understand how one's context can influence one's sense of identity and self-worth rather than attribute a general understanding of how to assume the effects of *identity-relevant* stressors. For example, when there are *identity-relevant* stressors of not being able to meet the demands of one's role as a father in a culture where fathers must provide financial support, there can be resulting distress in physical and mental health. This would be seen as an *identity-irrelevant* stressor if the culture places high value on a father being able to provide financially for his family. However, in another culture, a father's social status may not depend on how much the father can provide financially for the family. Rather, a father's emotional support and ability to provide a family with non-material resources, may be more valued in another culture.

Another part of the identity process entails *"carry-overs"* from stress originating from a role or domain such as work stress influencing one's personal life negatively (Thoits, 1995, p. 57). For example, a single mother working full-time as an accountant may experience work stress during tax season when there is a high volume of taxes to be filed. The stress of processing many tax returns may *carry-over* or affect her personal life in a negative way to increase stress at home as a parent of young children who need to eat dinner and get ready for school the next day. Therefore the two domains of work and personal life may intersect and cause complex exacerbated stress levels. Moreover, it is important to understand the consequences of the sequences of various domain "spillovers" for both the short and long term (Thoits, 1995, p. 57).

As for longer term consequences of *carry-overs* of stress from one domain to another, there may be a benefit over time in experiencing stressors, even if in the short term, they may seem negative and difficult (Thoits, 1995). For instance, a husband may experience financial hardship due to losing one's job. Consequently, this may affect the relationship at home with his wife due to less financial means and possible inability to contribute to the rent. However, in the long run, if the couple is still together, this hardship might have made their marriage stronger in that they struggled through a difficult time but were able to endure it and move past it. During the process, there might be *carry-overs* of stress but these *carry-overs* may have strengthened the relationship that would otherwise not have been made better without the spillovers of stress between the domains. Therefore, buffering the negative impact of *identity-threatening* stressors can be *identity-enhancing* events (Thoits, 1991). Additionally, higher-status individuals are more exposed to *identity-enhancing* experiences and lower-status individuals are more exposed to *identity-threatening* stressors (Thoits, 1991, p. 106). For example, the eldest daughter can have a positive role attributed to one's identity such as being designated as the leader of a family while the youngest child may have *identity-threatening* stressors such as not being taken seriously due to age (Thoits, 1991).

To understand the role of stress in master status and expectation states in the context of role identity, it is important to conceptualize that the self consists of various "discrete identities" such as family, political, and occupational identities, which are incorporated parts of the self (Stryker, 1968, p. 559). Stress in one's role in relation to master status can be a major influence in one's well-being due to how much the status is a part of the individual's overall being and how one sees himself/herself and how one interacts with his/her world.

As revealed through various theorists, identity is complex and differentiated. One's identity is made of diverse "parts" within family role performance (Stryker, 1968, p. 559). Stryker hypothesized that one's hierarchical position and role performance are tied to one's identity. The more commitment ascribed to an identity or more "extensive … or intensive the network of relationships" one has due to a "given identity … the higher … the identity in the salience hierarchy" (Stryker, 1968, p. 561). However, when "role expectations are incongruent" the individual's identity may be "confused" and subsequently lower the status of the identity in the hierarchy (Stryker, 1968, pp. 562-563). For example, if a parent ascribes a certain role to a

son of being the head of household when the father is not around, and the son is unable to fulfill this role, his identity status might be lowered in the family.

Thoits (1991, 1995), similar to Stryker, also posited that there are many dimensions within one's identity. The primary characteristic(s) identifying an individual can include both negative and positive aspects regardless of stress in one's role or domain. When individuals have one or more role identities, this can increase self-esteem, self-concept, and psychological health (Thoits, 1991, p. 105). For example, if one's self-esteem is decreased when not being able to fulfill certain role duties as a helper at the family business, the same individual's self-worth can be enhanced and increased again when the individual is able to excel in the role of a good older sister who can babysit her younger brother while their mother is at work. The more ways that one can succeed in life through various domains and roles, the more one has to fall back on when certain roles or domains are not carried out successfully in their or others' eyes.

In summary, the above stated theories of identity and role formation assist in providing the underlying complexity of an individual in a family context with various unique characteristics. It is important to look at these differential factors in order to accurately assess one's role and the effects of one's role in the personal and larger context of the family and community.

How Theories Relate to Korean American First Born or Only Sons

The master status ascribed to Korean American first born or only sons as being the sons with more privilege and burden, may be experienced differently for each individual in this status. However, in Korean culture, there are specific role duties and expectations attributed to first born or only sons. Therefore, given the role expectations that are passed along, in part, from generations of Confucian ethics, the Korean American first born or only son, in his master status, may experience being in the role of a leader, being financially responsible for the family if the father could not, and taking care of his siblings and parents.

Merton (1957, June) asserts that the trajectory of one's life includes stages where one holds simultaneous multiple roles and social positions. A Korean American first born or only son's *role-set* can further described by *status-set* where the son can be associated with many social statuses (Merton, 1957, June, p. 111). For example, a Korean American first born or only

son can be a brother, husband, brother-in-law, student, professional, mediator for the family, surrogate caregiver for siblings, a role model for cousins and siblings, and a leader for the family. For the Korean male, there are social structures in place within Korean culture emphasized by parents and Korean history that include certain expectations.

As Merton stated, there are two *social mechanisms* that define *role-sets* (Merton, 1957, June, p. 113). First, various statuses are relative in their levels of importance (Merton, 1957, June, p. 113). Some non-Korean cultures may not emphasize the role of a first born or only son as much as Koreans. But for Korean American parents, the role of the first born or only son may be valued at a higher level due to factors such as Confucianism and economic opportunities given to Korean males versus Korean females, in their perception and possibly reality. For instance, if Korean American parents observed that higher paying jobs and more employment opportunities were given to males, parents may value having sons more than daughters due to the expectation that sons will provide better for the family financially. Second, there are power differences of those in the *role-set.* A mechanism to stabilize the *role-set* is through delineating power and authority. Power, in Merton's theoretical context, consists of the ability to impose decisions despite opposition from others. Authority, in the framework of Merton's theory of *role-set*, is the culturally influenced organization of power (Merton, 1957, June). Therefore, within Korean culture, there are cultural expectations and norms that influence how Korean American first born or only children are raised and perceived.

Stryker's, Thoits', and Ridgeway's theoretical frameworks can also help elaborate on the research question of how Korean American first born or only sons experience their roles and also whether or not they experience their roles as burdens or privileges or both. Further, regardless of inherent cultural stressors and expectations they may face, there are also buffers that may alleviate role burdens and pressures.

Identity-relevant stressors can provide Korean American first born or only sons with concepts of themselves in relation to the social roles they have been ascribed. For example, Korean American first born or only sons can have identity-relevant experiences that can both threaten or enhance their identities. For instance, if a Korean American first born or only son is expected to work for financial support for the family as something that is specific to the culture of his family, he may experience *identity-relevant* stressors if he is unable to work to provide money for his family. Yet for a non-Korean American first born or only son, there may not be

this experience of an *identity-relevant* stressor due to not being expected to financially support the family.

Korean American first born or only sons' identity structures or rankings may vary by their social and family status. Non-Korean American first born or only sons (i.e. younger male siblings or female siblings) who may be regarded as lower-status family members, may be exposed to more identity-threatening stressors while their higher-status older brothers/only brothers may experience more identity-enhancing experiences (Thoits, 1991, p.104). In other words, due to younger siblings and female siblings in Korean American families not receiving the same status as the first born or only sons, those who are not first born or only sons can experience *identity-threatening* stressors such as lower self-esteem due to being given less attention and status.

Further development of identity theory encompasses "influence hierarchies" which help explain social interactions where some individuals have characteristics that influence others. Influence takes place when one with lower-status yields to one with higher-status (Keister & Cornwell, 2008, p. 5). The research of Berger and other scholars explain how individuals defer to those they perceive as more competent. This in turn, allows the competent individual to have influence (Berger et al., 1972; Berger et al.,1977). There are two status characteristics that influence identity: "visible" and "obscure" characteristics (Keister & Cornwell, 2008, p. 5). These help to formulate an elite status state that is "specific" or overtly ascribed and "diffuse" or inferred by assumptions of capacities by those in higher status (Keister & Cornwell, 2008, p. 7). For Korean American first born or only sons, visible and obscure characteristics of identity might entail being the point person to coordinate and practice traditional practices during family gatherings. Additionally, there may also be the expected role of being surrogate parents for their siblings and being treated with more respect by siblings and relatives. Lastly, the assumed or obscure characteristics attributed to Korean American first born or only sons may be that they are smarter, more responsible, and more able to be leaders in their families. Given these assumptions, more expectations may be placed on the first born or only son in a Korean family.

Korean American first born or only sons may have received "*status cues"* as "indicators, markers, or identifiers" which define various statuses and tasks (Berger & Zelditch, p. 104). These indicators can have influence on their identities and how others behave towards them. Therefore, Korean American first born or only sons' identities may be described by the influence

exerted by the visible/specific and obscure/diffuse characteristics attributed to their gender, culture, and hierarchically specific family roles.

In addition to influence hierarchies and characteristics marking one's status, within the complex identity processes and structures, there may be buffers tied to the roles of Korean American first born or only sons. Regardless of possible stressors of being in a higher status and inherent role expectations within Korean culture, role-identities may provide a sense of meaning and purpose (Thoits, 1983). Yet, if Korean American first born or only sons fail to meet role expectations, their sense of self-worth may decrease while fulfilling their role identities may increase self-esteem (Thoits, 1991, p. 105).

Other buffers tied to roles that may seem burdensome are noteworthy in relation to Korean American first born or only sons. In fact, there may be distinct "reward expectations" in status situations (Berger & Zelditch, 1998, p.121). Identity-relevant aspects of his role may entail various positive benefits despite associated responsibilities. However, stress can be experienced by Korean American first born or only sons when and if they may not be able to meet expectations of their roles. As stated previously, incongruent role expectations may "confuse" the individual's identity and subsequently lower the status of the identity in the hierarchy (Stryker, 1968, pp. 562-563). Their identities may be tied to their master status roles and hence cause stress when not fulfilling role duties. The expectation of filial piety by Korean sons to be dutiful to their parents, can contribute to role stress and decreased identity status. Kim et al., (October, 1991) writes that eldest Korean sons might have to balance their responsibilities of taking care of their own families with caring for their parents in old age. One major problem in Korean immigrant families is that elderly parents have not become proficient in the English language or culture and cannot easily find paid work. With these circumstances, Korean American parents become dependent on their children for financial support. Therefore, the first born or only sons would be the designated individuals to take on the primary role of providing financial support. If they cannot fulfill this expectation, it may have negative effects on sons maintaining a sense of self-confidence tied to identity.

At present there is a broader interpretation of how a master status role can be viewed. Identity theory states that there is a recursive process in how the "relation of social structures to identities influences the process of self-verification" and "the process of self-verification creates and sustains social structures" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 284). In other words, there is a

feedback loop of understanding and explaining how social structures affect one's sense of self and how the self affects social behaviors (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). In relation to Korean American first born or only sons, this feedback process can help to explain how their master status roles influence their individual sense of self while this sense of self perpetuates their roles within their family structures. If this process takes place, stressors tied into the burdens of their roles may not seem like burdens. Instead, they may simply seem to be a part of the verification of self, and in turn, form and maintain their identities within the family structures as parts of their reality. It can be something that is an accepted aspect of their roles that may not have negative attributes associated with these roles.

Another current development of identity theory includes a broader perspective. For example, the following factors also comprise one's identity: "ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, class, age … (dis)ability, both separately and as they intersect … geographic and virtual space and struggles based on "social inequalities, nationalisms, and social movements" (Howard, 2000, p. 367). With this in mind, identities and roles of Korean American first born or only sons can be understood within a wider range where there can be more complex parts to identity formation and how they are able to negotiate their roles within this larger context. For example, factors such as gender and race (i.e. being a Korean male and specifically a first born or only son) can contribute to characteristics that offer status value (Ridgeway, 1991). For the Korean American family, the combination of being Korean and a first born or only son comes with it privilege, status, power, and authority. But it also can come with burdens and stress as related to culturally relevant expectations.

In sum, stress tied to role expectations may not cause negative effects overall, for the Korean American first born or only son, with respect to expectations within this role. This may be due, in part, to the hierarchical position (i.e. being given high family status being a Korean first born or only son) inherent in the role, making his identity buffered by the large base of relationships that may have a positive effect on his identity and self-esteem. In turn, his role performance, as connected to this network of relationships, may also benefit and be congruent with the expectations of his high status role. Alternatively, if his role performance is not congruent with expectations, he may experience a lowered self-concept and identity. If he cannot fulfill role expectations along with success in educational or professional achievements, Korean American first born or only sons may experience lowered self-esteem.

Overall, due to the value ascribed to his status within the hierarchy and the identity-relevant attributes such as rewards tied to this role, stress may not seem like a major experience of the Korean American male first born son when his sense of self is verified and validated by role expectations and family structures. Furthermore, there is a broader context where there are more influences than being Korean or the first born son or only son. Rather, there is more to the internal process and recursive interaction of the attributes ascribed to this role and the formation of identity. There are multiple external and environmental aspects such as culture, class, age, abilities and disabilities, geography, social inequality, and social movements that all intersect to influence identity.

Methodology

What did Korean American first born or only sons say about their experiences of these roles? Respondents were chosen based on their status as a first born or as an only son. For consistency, I did not interview individuals who were only children due to specific dynamics associated with being an only child, which could have confounded the results.

I elicited the experiences of Korean American first born or only sons and allowed each respondent tell his own story. I acquired data through the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory, a method of comparative analysis that systematically obtains and analyzes social research, attempts to discover theory from data. Instead of verifying a preconceived theory, generating grounded theory is a way of getting to an empirically-based theory that draws upon experiences as articulated by participants. Grounded theory, although not based on logical deduction from assumptions, is based on induction from the articulated experiences of the participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As interviews took place, the interview questions changed from different themes and subthemes that emerged from the data naturally. I added some questions and asked details about other questions in the semi-structured interview guide. Given this process of adapting my questions to emerging themes, I had to be flexible during the process of data collection until repetition of data occurred. The natural ending point to data collection occurred when there was "data saturation" (Byrne, 2001). For example, I was able to see a pattern of similar stories of privilege and burdens while listening to each interview.

Lofland and Lofland (1995) conceptualized how to frame a qualitative and inductive research inquiry through asking: "What is this thing I see before me?" This conceptualization makes it possible to see that the problem to be studied should have no preconceived notions. My role was to discover what naturally came out of the inquiry itself without leading questions.

Responses by the respondents were guided by probes during the interview to gain more details and clarification that captured respondents' experiences (Polit & Hungler, 1997). For example, in order to gain more information or clarity about a topic, I asked questions such as, "What was that like for you?" or "Can you explain what you mean by that so I can better understand what you are saying?"

Respondents were told that their interviews would be digitally recorded with a voice recorder before the interview started. For confidentiality, participants were told that the digital files would be destroyed one year after the data was analyzed.

The Qualitative Paradigm

The qualitative research paradigm was chosen for this study versus quantitative research because there was a need for hearing personal voices of experiences, and the need to find contextually rich stories - stories with depth - that went beyond checklists, likert scales, and thoughts in boxes. To obtain respondents' personal stories and experiences, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted.

Qualitative Data Analysis

To conduct qualitative data analysis, transcription of data into accurate documents to analyze from was completed. For privacy, after the data were transcribed, I changed each respondent's name and demographics to prevent their identities from being revealed.

Subsequently, after having each transcription typed verbatim, I read each interview to find themes. I also listened to each of the digital voice files of participants from which transcriptions were taken to hear the tones of voice used to deliver what was said, as well as to review the transcriptions for accuracy. After this process, I re-read the transcriptions to verify and to discover more primary and secondary themes.

Once primary and secondary themes were found, I searched interview transcriptions to select excerpts to support the themes.

Negative cases were also found to prevent hasty generalizations in data analysis. Excerpts from interviews that did not support the primary and secondary themes were extracted to support negative cases.

Sampling

The goal of qualitative sampling is to conduct research that will gather adequate evidence and knowledge gained from this study to understand other Korean males. Themes and phenomena should arise from the data that can be transferable (Byrne, 2001). Therefore, it was important to have a range of diverse participants in the sample.

To find the research sample, a verbal pre-screening process took place. Criteria had to be met prior to meeting with me for the interview to be eligible for the study. Criteria were: (1) be Korean American by being the offspring of both a Korean mother and father to decrease the possibility of confounding variables of respondents who grew up in other cultures other than Korean; (2) currently live in the United States as the interviews took place in the United States; (3) be either born in the United States or born in Korea and immigrated to the United States with a plan to stay in the United States to keep the group of respondents consistent by having individuals who have been exposed to or immersed in American culture rather than a person who might be in the United States to study for a few years and return to Korea or another country; (4) if he was an only son, he could not be an only child due to the particular dynamics of being an only child; (5) be between the ages 18-40 years in order to keep the respondent pool to a group of college or graduate students, working young adults, and younger parents versus parents at varying ages to have a consistent pool of individuals in similar stages; and (6) be fluent in English due to possible language misunderstandings if the data were translated from another language where some of the meanings may not have been captured exactly.

As for obtaining the total number of interviewees for the sample, there was no set number of respondents who had to be interviewed. However, to have an adequate sample, a minimum of 40 interviews were conducted due to the potentially broad phenomenon under study. At the same time, I allowed the data to unfold to determine the approximate number of total interviews needed, once the data was saturated with repeating themes (Byrne, 2001).

Besides needing an adequate sample until data saturation occurred, it was helpful to have a range of respondents who were Korean males from diverse socioeconomic, religious, age, and

geographic backgrounds (Byrne, 2001). Since this study was a broad inquiry of their experiences, such a diversity of demographics added to the validity of the research design. This allowed for the sample to include an array of different characteristics of Korean males to determine whether the phenomenon was universal.

Within the grounded theory framework, theoretical sampling was used. Interviewees were chosen based on new insights provided by previous informants in the study to follow with the theoretical interest guiding the selection of the sample (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003). This helped to keep the integrity of grounded theory methods consistent in order to incorporate new content to generate the continuous process of inquiry.

In addition to utilizing theoretical sampling methods, the study utilized purposeful sampling to help contribute to the research inquiry of the experience of Korean sons. A random sample would not allow for data to emerge due to the need for respondents to be Korean American, an only son, or the firstborn son (Byrne, 2001). With this sample, previous interview data guided new interviews as new data emerged.

Deviant case analysis or negative case sampling was also utilized to find cases that did not fit my criteria (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Curtis, 2001). With this in mind, I also interviewed 12 siblings consisting of younger brothers and sisters, to triangulate and corroborate the data. The original goal was to interview sibling pairs (e.g. first born or only son and a younger brother or first born son with a female sibling) within the same family to compare the two stories and expectations. However, despite my attempts, only one sibling of the 12 siblings interviewed, agreed to participate from the same family: the older sister of a first born son and a younger brother. The rationale behind this method of sampling was to allow the possibility of alternative or unexpected findings to transform the data and to build on new and unexpected knowledge. This method helped to clarify that first born or only sons seemed to be given more expectations from parents than some younger sons or female siblings who did not feel as much or any pressure from the parents to meet certain career or role expectations.

To recruit more participants, snowball sampling techniques were also utilized. I met individuals who were referred to me through various Korean organizations and their leaders, professional functions, and fund raisers. Moreover, after a respondent was interviewed, he referred his friend or I asked if he knew of others who fit the criteria for the study (Byrne, 2001). Despite possible biases of snowball sampling of having interviewees who might have been

similar demographically to each other, it was used as another method of obtaining participants who were eligible for the study. I also had two to three key facilitators who referred one to three respondents to the study. Connections with individuals who were willing to help support this study and who also knew a lot of Korean people, was helpful.

The Interview Guide

An interview guide was used as a tool to assist in exploring a range of facets of respondents' role experiences. The guide consisted of questions that were divided into various themes. The guide was continuously revised as interviews were conducted, as informed by grounded theory, to capture experiences of Korean males and to be open to revising and adding questions based on what participants shared.

Interviews were conducted in English. However, some Korean words used by respondents that specifically captured a thought or experience were translated once data were collected and transcribed.

The interview guide was almost identical for both cohorts of participants of first born or only sons and siblings. However, it was important to slightly change the questions for the 35 only sons and oldest sons versus their siblings. Questions had to reflect being able to compare the two groups based on the same themes. The differences were reflected in the following questions involving experiences of their specific gender and roles. Siblings were not expected to speak for or to understand the role and experience of their only son or older brothers. The topics that were modified to fit interviewees of both groups were asked in the following themes: experience in their roles of not being the son or older brother, health considerations due to not being sons and oldest sons, and policy about how to raise those who were not sons or oldest sons in general. The following questions were the only questions that differed from the questions asked of the only sons and oldest sons:

15. Can you tell me about your experience of NOT being a first born or only son?
16. How did you know you were NOT the first born or only son (by the way other family members treated you)?
17. Do you think other Korean Americans who are NOT first born or only sons have similar experiences?

19. In what ways might your health (emotional, physical, spiritual, etc.) be affected by your role (of NOT being the first born or only son) in your family?
22. What kinds of support or resources do you think Korean Americans who are NOT first born or only sons need?

Within the framework of grounded theory, there was another change made to the interview guide to explore other layers of the role of first born or only sons. The question helped to uncover the nature of the first born or only son's role in the light of their sibling relationships. The revision made in the interview guide was to include in question #4 (see Appendices 4 and 5: "How many brothers or sisters do you have?") a probing question: "What is your relationship with them like?" It was helpful to probe the participant's experience of his role in the context of relationships with siblings. There could be a difference in how parents might treat each sibling differently according to gender and roles. Therefore, understanding how the participant's relationship with his sibling(s) helped extrapolate more information about their status and role.

Lastly, it was important to hear respondents' own voices from their perspectives. It would not be productive to have them guess what it might be like for their brothers. Rather than talk about what they thought of their male first born or only son siblings, their personal experiences of not being first born or the only son, was asked. These questions helped to clarify what their roles entailed as the younger sons or female siblings with regard to role expectations to verify and triangulate what their only son or oldest son siblings experienced.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important to uphold in any study to maintain credibility and integrity. To ensure ethics in research practice, the University's Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CORIHS) application was submitted and approved for four pilot study participants and non-pilot study participants. An informed consent form (see Appendix 1) was read, signed, and a copy was given to the participant before being interviewed. This process assisted the respondent in understanding the purpose, nature, benefits, confidentiality, risks, explanation of how the interview would be conducted and its duration, that respondents could withdraw from the study at any time, a contact for the study in case of questions or comments, and the opportunity to receive results of the study (Locke et al., 2000).

Privacy was especially important to ensure due to the tight-knit Korean American community in the New York metropolitan area. For example, some of the respondents asked for

reassurance from me to keep their interviews anonymous due to their perception and experience of Korean Americans being connected to each other through various venues. Therefore, to respect participants' privacy, I did not acknowledge participants if I bumped into them in the community unless they greeted me first because there were several groups of Korean community members who knew about my research.

To uphold confidentiality, participants' identities remained confidential at the level of record keeping and data collection. Researchers are expected to keep identifying information (i.e. names and addresses) in one file. In another file, the same identifying information should be assigned with arbitrary code numbers to link names and addresses (Kraut, 2004). Participants were told that the content of the interviews would be transcribed verbatim from digital voice files after the in-person interview was completed. The digital audio files of each interview and respective transcriptions and the demographic surveys were coded with numbers to link each interviewee without names or other identifying information. I was the only person who had the master code sheet with names and contact information matched with their code numbers. This information was placed in a locked file throughout the duration of the study. Further, data from the digital audio files would destroyed one year after data analysis was completed.

When interviewees met participation guidelines, they were told that the interviews would take place in a private setting to ensure privacy. They were also given the choice to meet at a location they felt comfortable to provide the interview.

Limitation of Time to Conduct Interviews

The majority of interviews lasted for 45 minutes to one hour. There were a few interviews that lasted for 30 minutes while some took up to two hours to complete. Thus, for those interviews that were shorter in duration due to time limitations, there might have been a lack of content and depth. Even though I did not place a time limit on any interview, an estimate of the duration of each interview was shared with respondents before they agreed to participate. Participants were made aware that the interviews could last, on average, between one to two hours to be realistic about the duration of the process. However, if their time was limited due to work, school, or other appointments, they were told that they could also complete the interview in less than one hour if they focused directly on answering each of the questions and spoke quickly, for instance. Some tried to fit the interview in between tight schedules and spoke as

quickly as possible to finish it. Therefore, some of the rushed interviews might have lacked depth, clarification, and elaboration. Of the 47 interviews, there were three interviews that lasted 29, 32, and 34 minutes respectively. One participant had an exam to study for in college, the other had a newborn baby to help care for after work, and the last one had to go to another appointment. Most of the other interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over two hours. Other respondents who had more time to complete the interview, were able to provide more details and verification of their thoughts when I probed and explored some of their answers during the interviews. Such biases of time limitations might have been a barrier to elicit more in-depth views of the experiences of first born or only sons. However, there may have been other reasons for shorter interview durations. For instance, even if some interviewees had more time and nothing to rush to after the interview, there were some who did not have a lot to say for various reasons. Such reasons were described more in detail in the subchapter "Limitations and Biases: Limitations in Range in the Quality and Depth of Interviews: Varying Levels of Verbal Expression and Introspection."

Pilot Study

Before interviews were conducted, four pilot interviews were completed to observe how the process would allow for stories to emerge. Additionally, it was helpful to see the flow of the interview questions and to revise some questions in the guide as I asked each question. After the pilot interviews were completed, I felt that the interview guide was usable with some minor revisions and added a few other questions to allow for themes to emerge. No problems were encountered in the pilot study phase. Consequently, I started interviewing as many respondents as possible afterwards. Additionally, the pilot study interviews were included in the study and analyzed.

Conducting pilot interviews contributed to additional sampling criteria because respondents in the pilot study introduced new criteria to be included (Byrne, 2001). In addition, the pilot study provided: (1) measurement reliability; (2) reassurance that expected differences existed; and (3) a viable sample for the actual study to work out problems in the research design or with interview questions (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000). I did not know what themes to expect from the interviews. Thus, pilot cases provided a snapshot of findings.

Data Collection

Collecting data took almost one year from May 28, 2006 to May 7, 2007. This time period was needed to interview participants due to my efforts to obtain a range of participants from diverse ages, careers, educational backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. Finding respondents who were willing to share their stories and interviewing them was not a simple task. To find the participant sample, I took every opportunity to attend community events for Korean Americans and to meet interviewees in various parts of the New York metropolitan (i.e. New York City, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Connecticut). I also interviewed participants from other areas of the United States such as Chicago and California to include other geographical areas since other geographical areas might have influenced participants' experiences and roles differently. Fortunately, rather than visiting other states outside of the New York metropolitan area to seek other respondents, some respondents happened to be visiting New York City from other cities such as from Chicago and California when I asked them to participate in the study, and were subsequently interviewed.

To gather basic information about respondents, a demographic survey (See Appendices 6 and 7) was administered before the interview was conducted. Surveys contained 11 questions which took most participants about five minutes to complete. It was helpful to have this information before starting the interview to double check that the respondent met criteria to participate in this study and to have an idea of their backgrounds.

Description of Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using constant comparison methods. Each interview directed me to the next interview where elements from each were compared. Subsequent interviews were compared with continuously emerging data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, every interview provided comparisons of each respondent's commonalities, differences, and unique qualities that were never encountered. Data saturation took place after about 15 interviews of first born or only sons. However, I continued to interview as many first born or only sons to contribute to generalizability. After 35 first born or only son interviews were completed, new major themes no longer emerged; and I stopped interviewing first born or only son respondents. I also interviewed siblings of first born or only sons including female siblings and younger sons. After data saturation was apparent though first born or only son

interviews and triangulation of data via sibling interviews, I identified major themes and sub-themes that were repeated in many of the interviews.

In addition, within the framework of grounded theory, a strategy for the analysis and interpretation of the data naturally emerged from the main purpose of the study (Patton, 1990). Data from the 47 participants were analyzed from transcriptions of digital voice files and was separated and analyzed for thematic content.

Data coding procedures were followed according to instructions based on Strauss and Corbin (1998). This process entailed reading transcriptions from beginning to the end. I searched for repeating themes and words and categorized them into themes. Categories became more solidified as codes were interpreted. Then, as codes were interpreted, themes and phenomena, conditions, consequences, and contexts were examined.

The Researcher's Role

Researcher's roles can provide biases to the process of interviews and data collection. I was aware of my role as the researcher while interviewing Korean males. Specifically, my subjective experience as a female Korean American rather than a male was noted because I did not experience life through the lens of a Korean American male (Ristock, 2003). Thus, my interview questions and comments and general tone of the interview could have influenced how participants responded and the nature of the information shared. Additionally, participants may have transferred feelings towards me as related to their own experiences of Korean American women. For example, positive or negative feelings might have come up for respondents when reflecting back on experiences of their roles in the context of female siblings or relatives. My gender and identity might have brought up issues that participants were reminded of whether conscious of it or not. I did not automatically assume that bias would take place due to my role as a researcher. However, I was aware that participants could have been influenced by their subjective filters that might have shaped the way they answered questions during the interview.

On the other hand, my gender in my role as a researcher and being a single female might have been a helpful factor in gaining access to interviewees since most of the male respondents were also single and similar in age. My relationship status could have been a benefit for me because the men might have been more willing to share their stories with someone they felt a connection to due to age, their own similar relationship status, and shared cultural

understandings and experiences. The negative side to these similarities was that despite being able to have Korean American males share their stories, some might have tried to impress me with their stories, especially if they were single and wanted to date or marry a Korean female, as was expected of them traditionally. If this dynamic was present, some of their answers to my questions may have been less accurate in that they could have been trying to show themselves in a more positive light.

"Getting in" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) is a concept that researchers need to deal with in order to gain access to data and interviewees. Gaining access to interview Korean American males was not difficult for me due to being familiar with this population. Various access points included: my ethnicity of also being Korean and having physical features that could be identified as appearing Korean, knowing the language, and understanding some of the major customs and social norms. It helped to be of the same cultural background to find participants for the study. My knowledge of Korean words, phrases, and customs were helpful because traditions that were common to most Korean Americans such as "jaesah" (ancestor worship) and high expectations placed by their parents to do well academically. In this regard, some interviewees commented, "you're Korean, you know how it is" or "I knew that you totally understood so I didn't have to explain myself." When I heard these comments, depending on the individual and situation, I sometimes allowed participants to continue speaking so that their flow of communication did not have to stop because it seemed disruptive. There were also times when I commented to the respondent that I was glad that they felt I understood where they were coming from due to my similar cultural and ethnic background, and validated their comments with my own understanding of the related issue. In addition, there were times when I probed respondents what they meant about this comment because I needed further clarification on the details of what they were talking about in particular, due to some of their statements being general.

Despite the advantage of "getting in" due to my cultural background, Korean American males might have been skeptical and wary of participating knowing that I was Korean. Although it may not be negative for the researcher to be of the same cultural and ethnic background as the respondents, this dynamic can make participants feel less comfortable in sharing their experiences. This might be because participants might feel self-conscious about revealing personal details if he/she thought that other Korean Americans in the community might learn about their story through me, despite the assurance of anonymity. Some participants worried that

what was shared in the interview might not stay private given that some interviewees felt the Korean community in the New York metropolitan area was interconnected. Thus, confidentiality was assured several times for some participants from the start when they needed reassurance and asked about confidentiality repeatedly as it was a valid concern. I tried to alleviate their worries with consent forms and by explaining the ethics of confidentiality. Despite my attempt to assure privacy, there might have been some respondents who were still cautious about sharing certain thought with me, a Korean American, for fear of the breach of confidentiality within the Korean community.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics are important to uphold in any study for credibility and integrity of the research. Therefore, a University CORHIS application was submitted for review and approval before pilot study participants or actual respondents will be interviewed. An informed consent form (see Appendix 1) was read, signed, and a copy was given to the participant before taking part in the study. This assisted the respondent in understanding the purpose, nature, benefits, confidentiality, risks, procedure (i.e. how the interview will be conducted and its duration), that they could withdraw from the study at any point, were given a name of a contact who oversaw the study in case they had questions or comments, and the opportunity to receive results of the study (Locke et al., 2000).

Above all else, research ethics declares to inflict no harm to participants. There were no physical health risks involved in this study. However, there might have been some emotional difficulty that arose as a result of getting deeper into some of the issues and experiences. It was understood from the outset, before participants were interviewed, that sensitive topics might arise which might have been distressing and/or bring up difficult feelings and memories. Some questions and further probing into issues in this interview may have caused some emotional pain. As a result, it was important for me, as the researcher, not to probe too deeply when the respondent seemed uncomfortable and no longer willing to share further thoughts. Unresolved or difficult emotions may have been evoked as related to experiences in one's role and family status. On a few occasions, this seemed to occur and respondents might have benefitted from talking further about their experiences with a professional counselor. At these instances, they were offered a list of referrals for counseling if they were interested in exploring their thoughts

and experiences further. I also explained that it might be useful to consider checking in with an objective professional who could help them process their thoughts that seemed difficult. There were other times when respondents seemed to feel vulnerable when sharing thoughts with me due to not knowing me personally. For example, if a participant asked, "do I have to answer this too?" when he/she was asked to elaborate on a family issue, I answered that he/she did not have to answer the question. It was also made known to respondents prior to starting the interview that he/she could stop the interview at any point as their participation was voluntary. Other than this concern, there were no known emotional, physical, or other related risks involved.

Another issue that arose in conducting interviews was that at times, boundaries could have been crossed. For example, a few participants asked if I would meet them outside of my role as the researcher. Such offers were declined politely to keep the roles clear and to prevent any complications with data collection. As the researcher, it was important to keep boundaries clear to protect participants from the dynamics of a dual relationship and an unethical breech of the researcher/respondent relationship.

Initial Struggle to Obtain Consistent Transcribers to Complete Accurate Transcriptions

Having a group of transcribers to complete accurate transcriptions through consistent transcribers of the interviews was a challenge. I did not anticipate that finding good transcriptionists would be difficult. The process of finding and training transcribers took time. Further, transcriptions were complicated due to a few Korean words and phrases mentioned in some interviews. It was important to accurately transcribe interviews with correct ethnic words and phrases. This was difficult since none of the transcriptionists spoke Korean; they did not understand what they heard and instead phonetically spelled it out.

Most transcribers became frustrated with the slow pace of listening to voice recordings, typing them verbatim, and the detail oriented nature of this work. Most quit either before finishing one transcription or after completing one full interview. Major complaints mentioned by transcribers were that it took up a lot of time to type verbatim what respondents stated. Often, they heard background noise that made it difficult to clarify what was being said. As a result, transcribers stated they had to listen to the words repeatedly and in a slow voice setting, which added to the total time required to complete one interview averaging one hour.

In spite of these difficulties, one transcriber completed about 80% of the total 47 interviews. In sum, I met and trained more than 40 potential transcribers and eventually hired about 20 transcribers. Of the 20 hired, only 12 remained to transcribe the interviews. Time was lost for data analysis when transcribers who were trained, quit.

After transcriptions were completed, I verified each transcribed interview to make sure that it was accurately transcribed due to the various difficulties aforementioned.

Limitations and Biases: Limitations in the Interviewee Sample

Data collection takes time and resources. Given limited time and resources on my part, and also on the part of the participants, this limitation prevented me from learning about more themes and experiences through a larger pool of participants. Although data saturation was reached and I found some common themes from the 47 interviews, it would have been ideal to hear more voices and stories to increase my study's validity and generalizability.

In my efforts to diversify and increase my sample, the internet was utilized. Despite my efforts to obtain diversity and increasing my sample pool, I tried advertising the study on the internet. Responses were limited on the internet (i.e. Craigslist.com and offering a $10 gift card for participation). I also alerted community organizations, spoke to colleagues, and had individual conversations at community events to recruit participants.

There could be many reasons why individuals don't participate in studies; and there may have been many reasons for not being interested in participating in my study. It is impossible to know each person's reasons as the question could not be posed. Potential interviewees may have preferred to keep their privacy. For example, some responded to my internet advertisement but asked to participate anonymously by typing answers to my semi-structured interview questions and emailing it back. If this method of receiving online participant interview responses was used, there might have been more participants added to my sample. However, they were not willing to conduct a face-to-face interview and thus were not included in this study. Anonymous internet surveys were not conducted as filling out an anonymous internet survey does not allow for verification of the individual's qualifications to participate in the study. For example, if I could not meet the person face-to-face, individuals could have posed as being Korean American when clearly, they might not be ethnically Korean American. Additionally, I would not have been able to verify demographic qualifications such as age range. Such demographic variables

would have questioned my study's credibility due to individuals who might not meet criteria to participate.

There were also limitations to the range of participants recruited due to geography, finances, time, and access to other participants who could have contributed their stories. For example, it was difficult to find a Korean American who did not complete college. Some respondents were approached to participate when referred from fund-raising events where tickets cost $150 per person**.** These participants were among those who graduated from college and may be representative of a higher economic standing within the Korean American community. Further research is required to replicate this study in the future to reduce sampling bias of having a higher functioning sample of Korean American first born or only sons who were able to contribute $150 for a fund-raising event.

Limitations and Biases: Limitations in Range in the Quality and Depth of Interviews: Varying Levels of Verbal Expression and Introspection

Another major limitation that arose was the differing level of emotional maturity and self-introspection on respondents' experiences. The interviews varied in the depth and quality of interviewees' stories and subsequently, the duration of the interviews. Some people speak a lot and some don't. Some elaborate with feelings and expressiveness and some do not like to expound on their thoughts. However, talking or expressing fewer thoughts did not necessarily mean that participants had fewer thoughts.

Understandably, there were qualitative and quantitative differences in interviewees' stories. Some were able to elaborate on their feelings and thoughts and some were not, some recalled extensive memories from childhood on a certain theme while others did not or were unwilling to do so. This is associated to factors such as: emotional intelligence, cognitive abilities, intelligence, and life experiences that may have enhanced one's ability to understand more facets to an issue.

Lastly, many participants were born in the United States or immigrated at an early age (average age of immigration based on demographic data of a total of 27 immigrants, 24 (88.89%) were under age 15 when they arrived. Many (11 of 27 or 40.74%) immigrated between the ages of zero to five years while 13 of 27 (48.15%) respondents came to this country between ages five

and 15. Some spoke Korean as their first language. For those who immigrated to the United States at a later age (after 15 years old) than the majority of the respondents, there might have been limitations of thinking in a foreign language (i.e. Korean) and then translating it into English during the interview. This dynamic might have brought on the challenge of not being able to fully share one's thoughts. Moreover, sharing and talking about feelings in a second language might have inhibited the range of emotions and thoughts.

Researcher/Interviewer Bias: Leading Questions and Interpretation Bias of Themes

It can be natural for qualitative research to include biases when incorporating methods of grounded theory due to the many trajectories that interviews can lead to. For example, interviews can be biased because questions can be posed as leading questions based on the interests of the researcher. Even though I attempted not to ask leading questions, there were times when specific points were asked for elaboration while others were not. This creates an inherent bias by asking for more details about certain aspects while not asking for elaboration on others that were not of interest to me.

Given this bias, how could I, as a researcher, judge which aspects were most important while some were not? There was always a chance that my interpretation of what was said could have been misinterpreted since qualitative interviews have an inevitable element of subjectivity. Words could have been misunderstood and may not have conveyed what the respondent was trying to say. Therefore, it was important to note that the themes that emerged from the data might not necessarily be primary and secondary themes. There may be other major themes that were missed due to my inability to see with full objectivity. Such flaws in research analysis are bound to happen. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that other major themes may have arisen for other researchers interviewing these same respondents or in analyzing the same data set.

Moreover, with regards to comfort levels of sharing personal information, some interviewees seemed more anxious about sharing details of their experiences as some questions were personal. Therefore, when this occurred, I sometimes shared my own experiences with racism or aspects of Korean values and traditions that respondents understood or experienced. Sharing my thoughts seemed to help participants feel more at ease and may have allowed for respondents to share more details than they normally would have if I did not share personal experiences. Some respondents who felt vulnerable sharing their personal experiences and

opinions, wanted to know my thoughts. Since this was a semi-structured interview and it was important that respondents felt they were talking to me, not only as a researcher but also as a human being with common experiences, I answered their questions as much as I felt comfortable while keeping in mind that my thoughts might bias their responses. For example, an issue of physical punishment came up during an interview. One interviewee asked me directly how I felt about physical punishment in general. He shared with me that his parents physically punished him if he did not do well in school. I responded stating that I understood that studying was important within the Korean culture and that I would not know if I would do the same thing in that situation. I also shared that there were other interviewees who shared that their Korean parents physically disciplined them to do well in school. I tried to normalize his experience within the broader context of Korean values and customs to not make him feel guilty when he shared that his parents used physical discipline to encourage him to get good grades. My understanding when this participant shared his experience was that he felt embarrassed to share what happened to him as if he were placing blame and a negative light on his parents. However, again, my role as a researcher has inherent biases and this interpretation might not be correct.

Overall, sharing personal experiences were kept at a minimum due to possible boundaries being crossed. Giving too much of my own personal accounts could have affected how respondents shared their stories and also would have taken time away from participants' participation in their interviews. Sharing my experiences as needed, occurred. Although qualitative researchers do not always have to keep a neutral stance, I may have influenced what interviewees chose to share. My thoughts might have biased the process of respondents' thoughts.

On an empirical level, my questions for the semi-structured interview guide might not have been the most comprehensive list to explore the topic of this research. How would I know whether my questions were good questions that helped to elicit the participants to reveal role experiences of Korean American first born or only sons? Qualitative studies do not have to have the perfect questions at the outset. Instead, researchers can probe deeply from different angles through this inductive style of inquiry. I could have included a different sequence of questions that could have elicited the experience of first born or only sons in a better way. This can only be determined in future studies. Therefore, a sense of humility in the face of the complexity of

human beings and their social constellations must be acknowledged in the process of qualitative research and interpreting findings.

Limitations in the Settings of Interviews as Related to Duration and Depth of Interviews

Due to the wide variety of settings where interviews took place, it was difficult to gauge how comfortable respondents felt being interviewed at different locations. It was also difficult to know whether the setting affected the duration and/or the depth of the interviews. Some interviews took place in a private and quiet office setting with no distractions. Some were conducted in public cafes, community parks, fast food chain stores, and bookstores where there were many people. Although I attempted to provide as many choices for settings as possible to make the respondent feel comfortable and to assure confidentiality, there were times when there were limited choices. This was particularly relevant for interviewees who were asked to participate directly while I was searching for respondents in the community without a prior referral or contact. If I met someone in a café, it was likely that the interview took place at that location or at a nearby other public establishment since I needed to pre-schedule meeting in a private office in advance.

In public settings, there were strangers passing by which might have prevented interviewees from responding to questions in depth. In comparison, in an office setting with no distractions of noise and other passersby, participants might have been more able and willing to share more and go more in-depth with their thoughts. Alternatively, some might have preferred the noise and public setting to share their thoughts with me and some might have not felt comfortable being in a private setting with me, a complete stranger.

The nature of settings might have affected the duration of the interview in that participants might have wanted to end the interview as soon as possible. At the same time, however, public settings were less quiet and there were distractions of people and noises from the street such as honking from cars or ambulances. In public settings, there were more clarifications and repetitions of questions and answers needed because they were less quiet. This might have contributed to longer interviews. But in these same louder settings, some respondents might have wanted to finish the interview faster due to these distractions and less privacy. However, some may have preferred or may not have been concerned about the public places and distractions for their own individual reasons which may not have influenced the

duration of the interviews. In sum, each setting's dynamics influenced each participant differently due to varying individual factors.

A One Time Limited Opportunity to Glance at Interviewees' Lives

Even though I did my best to connect with each participant, I assumed that there would always be limitations with the content and depth of information shared. It is natural for strangers to not want to divulge personal information on sensitive topics. Interviewing strangers for a "one shot deal" and never to meet the individual again, might have encouraged respondents to share intimate details without fear of running into me in the future. Yet, at the same time, there was a chance that interviewees might have felt self-conscious and this may have limited their responses. Thus, themes and analyses of their thoughts may not be as objective as I might have hoped.

Results

Growing Up Korean American

Major themes were found in the data regarding what it was like for respondents to grow up Korean in America, the privileges and burdens experienced by first born or only sons or as observed by their siblings, how characteristics of the role of the first born son affected siblings and family relationships, specific role expectations of the first born or only sons, and participants acknowledging their parents' sacrifice of working hard as immigrants and supporting them to succeed with their education and careers. The following themes and excerpts provide a picture of what respondents shared.

Parents Work Long Hours: Korean American Children Raising Themselves?

Connor, age 24, and a recent college graduate recalled being "raised by the TV." He said in a joking manner that "it was one of those families." He went on to explain that due to being immigrants and working towards making a living in America, Connor's parents opened up their own business in the beginning and "they were never home. And they're still not."

While John's (38 year old attorney) parents worked long hours at the family business in Brooklyn and also lived there, John and his younger brother "were living in NJ…watching over the house, cooking…doing the laundry, studying and basically taking care of each other." John and his brother wanted to work hard to make their parents proud. It was their way of showing appreciation for their parents' own hard work. They worked 14-15 hours per day and seven days per week at the family business in New York City. For many years, John's parents lived in two places to focus on working these long hours while John and his brother took care of themselves.

> My parents were always running the business. They were never home. They ran a fruit and vegetable stand … in Brooklyn … after they sold that, they opened a dry cleaning store in Manhattan … they ultimately ended up running three dry cleaning operations in Manhattan at one time … we never saw our parents growing up through high school and college. It was very difficult to see them.

Kwang Soo, age 33, a computer programmer, shared how his parents were barely home while they worked long hours. Yet, the most important thing his parents stressed was getting good grades. They spent little time with Kwang Soo and his brother. This made them feel that their individual worth was based on doing well academically.

> … My parents weren't that around…When they were around, grades were one of the most important things … You grow up as if your parents don't love you unless you get good grades … Maybe growing up I may have resented some of that … you don't see them that often but they really emphasize education … sometimes they … say you're a bad son … you should have got better grades … so that set up conflicts in my head. Do they really love me?

Sung Jin, the first born of two boys, was currently enrolled in law school at age 34. His younger brother (age 32) was living and working in Korea. Due to parents "both working all the time," Sung Jin reflected that he was his brother's "older brother/parent/friend." As a result, Sung Jin, just two years older than his brother, was put in charge of taking care of his brother. Sung Jin was responsible for raising his brother with little parenting himself.

Young Kyu, a 24 year old medical student, wished that his parents, once he had kids, would teach his children about Korean culture and "be a family resource." His hope had its roots in remembering how his parents worked "insane hours at the store (dry cleaning business)" to

provide for the family as recent immigrants. Assuming that his parents would no longer have to work long hours, he looked forward to when his parents could provide Korean cultural teaching for his kids.

Jinny, a 26 year old elementary school teacher, voiced how "a lot of Korean immigrant families typically … worked about 50 hours a week." According to Jinny, this prevented parents from spending enough time with their kids to be "happy" and to guide them away from "things that they shouldn't experience." She stated Korean American children would be happy spending time with their parents more:

> They're happy to be spending time with … their mom and dad … doing things together that makes them happy … just not seeing them and just spending time with their babysitter … they're not happy … (they shouldn't) experience things that they shouldn't experience … as a child … if … they were guided … if they knew that someone cared for them or their parents cared for them, loved them, I don't think they would do that.

I Speak English, You Speak Korean: Communication Barriers

Interwoven with Korean parents striving to work hard to achieve certain dreams, is having communication with their children. Most parents were not able to spend much time with their children due to working long hours. Parents spent time working to achieve financial stability and thus were not able to teach respondents Korean. Therefore participants shared that they spoke English fluently while their parents barely spoke English. Most respondents' parents did not speak English fluently or well enough to communicate substantially with interviewees who did not speak Korean fluently. While basic communication in Korean was conducted in the home with parents, participants stated that deeper conversations were not common or easy due to not being taught Korean. Typically, interviewees stated they spoke Korean minimally to get by, and understood most of what their parents said. But they were not able to speak back in Korean with the kind of depth that they had wished.

Respondents further stated that they felt their parents were not fully "assimilated" into American culture with a lack of fluency in English and having non-Korean friends. As parents spoke mostly only Korean while the majority of interviewees spoke mostly only English, there

was a communication gap. Most of the respondents in the study shared that their parents spoke minimal English and didn't have or take the time to learn the new language despite being in the United States for many years. This caused a lack of communication with those in the community and unless the children spoke Korean, there was limited communication in the family.

One respondent, Brent, age 24, stated his expectation that his parents learn the English language: "they're living in this country too, they inhabit it too, so they should know the language too, so you know it should be like their learning something and we're learning something, it should be both … a learning experience with both parents and kids."

Rami, a 21 year old college student, felt that her parents were "missing out" when they did not learn the English language and "take part in the culture." She did not understand why her parents would immigrate to America and not immerse themselves in learning about the new culture and language. She noted: "I think they miss out … I always thought…why come here (to the United States) if you're not going to take part in the culture and not take the time to learn how to speak English?"

Negative Cases

Some respondents' parents were assimilated more than most of the other interviewees. Thus not all Korean American parents had communication barriers with their children and in the community. If the children spoke Korean and the parents also spoke English, there were few issues of a lack of communication. A few parents spoke English proficiently and had non-Korean friends. Both were characteristics that were not present in most of the other Korean parents.

William also reported that he was fluent in Korean and English and had no problems communicating with his parents. William shared that he and his parents were able to communicate given this dynamic. Further, he stated his parents spoke English (though not very well) and had some non-Korean friends. He felt that his parents were assimilated into American culture as a result.

Jay's parents were one of the very few pairs of parents that the respondents talked about having been assimilated to American culture. His parents were both physicians and spoke English fluently. Jay felt that language acquisition when one settles in another country, is a

major sign of assimilation. Jay and his sister were able to communicate with their parents in English.

> I … speak to them in English … they speak to me in English … their English is … very good … (regarding whether Jay felt his parents were assimilated into American culture) … I would say yes … not completely but … much more so than the average Korean set of parents … I think that the acquisition of language skills has been a big factor … their professions have forced them to become fluent in English … as a result I think their social interactions with their colleagues at work and their environment has also forced them to learn social skills that are very American. (Jay, age 34, medical director)

Julian's (age 34, corporate lawyer) parents were also anomalies amongst respondents. His mother was a physician while his father was a professor. Both spoke English fluently even though "their English is good but very heavily accented still." Julian noted that his parents had "American friends." Most parents in the study, as talked about by the participants, did not speak English and most did not have friends outside of the Korean culture and ethnicity.

Typically, participants' parents who spoke English well and seemed assimilated were those who had higher education degrees. Few parents of respondents were able to find employment commensurate with their career levels achieved in Korea.

Racism Experienced While Growing Up

Many Korean American interviewees in this study shared, without my prompting, stories of racism experienced when asked: "what was it like for you growing up in your neighborhood?" Respondents opened up about receiving racist remarks, physical and/or verbal attacks for being Asian American. Meanwhile, none of them reported that they themselves initiated such negative behaviors on others for their race or ethnicity.

The stories of two female respondents help explain how being able to identify with and feel a sense of belonging and understanding of one's ethnic and racial background, can be positive. The alternate experience is that one can grow up with limited buffers and validating experiences that can be included when being around others of similar ethnic and racial groups.

Iris was one of the few interviewees who had children. She was 27 and a homemaker with three young children. Her experience of growing up was "very good." She attributed this

to having "a lot of Korean cultural influence" from her parents. This allowed her to find a community of other Korean Americans who shared similar backgrounds that made her feel "not alone" and "part of this Korean community … there's somebody that you know, they're able to understand you I guess because they're coming from the same background."

Rose, the 26 year old medical student explained how she would have liked to have "as many Korean people" living in her mostly Hispanic neighborhood. There were "a few" Korean Americans in her community. Rose commented "it was hard to not be able to have as many Korean people as I would have liked … because a lot of friendship is based on having things in common … sharing things. And when you can share that with someone, your experiences…if you have a problem … when I had Korean friends they could understand … the experience … "

Iris and Rose's thoughts imply that it is helpful for Korean Americans to have others with whom they could feel close to and identify with, rather than experience a lack of belonging and acceptance. The following stories of respondents highlight the difficulties of assimilating and adapting to their new environments especially if they were the ethnic or racial minority.

Arnold, (age 28), a post-baccalaureate student in pre-medical studies, is the only son of three other older sisters ages 30, 38, and 40. He was the ethnic and racial minority in his community and experienced racial harassment and remarks. Until 8th grade, he attended a school that was "predominantly white … some Latino … then I had one friend who was Korean. Thus, Arnold was one of just two Asian Americans in the entire school. He looked back on his experiences:

> I've been in a lot of situations, especially growing up … where people would make jokes or … racially motivated or hurtful (remarks) or even my friends who probably, at the time, I didn't realize they were offensive … because I don't know any better … there weren't … many Asians in my school … I think that (racism) happens when … we obviously look different.

After 8th grade, Arnold's family moved to another area in the same state where the concentration of Asian Americans was much higher, that is, at least 20%. In his new school, he felt it was helpful for him to have the experience of being among other Asian Americans where he was no longer the minority. He felt this way because after making Korean American friends and then going to college, he had already experienced growing up in diverse ethnic and racial settings. After being in a high school where he was not racially harassed and having a group of

Asian Americans in his social circle, he did not feel the need to only associate with Asian Americans in college. Arnold believed that having this range of experience in his childhood prevented him from "shutting out everything" because he did not need to feel secure being only around people who looked like him. Since he was used to being in the minority, but appreciated identifying with Asian Americans, he found a balance of branching out with various other ethnic and racial groups so that he didn't just stick with the "Korean Students' Association" like his friend did. He didn't want to have the attitude of "me against the world" as a result of feeling singled out in the past due to race. Thus, having both experiences - being connected and comfortable seeing others like himself while growing up - seemed to help Arnold to be able to branch out to a diverse range of people as an adult.

> … then you go through life like that (being racially harassed as a minority) and when you go to a place where all of a sudden there are more people that look like you and … have a similar background to you, you tend to … be like, that's all you want and don't talk to anyone else and get … like me against the world type of attitude … so for me I think it was better that I experienced that a little bit in high school (having people around him who were similar ethnically/racially) or else in college I really wouldn't have done anything… everyone's different, but this guy only ended up doing Korean Student's Association … stuff. I did a lot of different stuff in school and even though most of my friends were Korean, I did branch out a little more. Who knows? I might have … branched out even more if I spent my whole life around Asian people cause I would have just been … enough … you know?

Nathan, age 31, a computer consultant, lived in a neighborhood that was ethnically diverse and experienced racism. There was a range of various groups residing in his community: African Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans. However, he felt more of an "affinity" towards "yellow colored people." Nathan chuckled at his own remark. Regardless of his ethnic background, people assumed he was Chinese. There were no Korean Americans. Not only was his ethnicity disregarded, but besides the teasing where he "stood out like a sore thumb," he was also physically beaten.

> … people assumed that I was Chinese and um whenever I met up with Chinese people … I think we just kind of got bunched together in … colors…you guys are … all Chinese, so we just assumed that it was a natural place to go … It was kind of hard (growing up in his neighborhood) because people would make fun of you and you stood out like a sore thumb … if you ever got into a fight in the

> neighborhood, the neighborhood guys would help that other group. I can remember a few times where I was fighting with some neighborhood kid and the next thing I knew, I'd be winning and the next thing I know, 15 guys come up with bats and they beat me up … that's the type of neighborhood I grew up in.

For Rami, a 21 year old college student, it might have felt that it was her against the world growing up in her mostly Caucasian neighborhood, where she experienced racism. She could not understand why she was racially taunted with words like "flat face" when she believed that she was no different from them. Rami felt she was "singled out" because she looked "different" even though she herself perceived to be "white too." Her experience is described below:

> … when I was growing up … for the longest time I thought I was white too. I didn't realize the difference until around middle school but in elementary school I did have to deal with racism and things like that. Some older kids would pick on me because I look different and they call me like racial names and things like that… flat face … I couldn't really understand why they're singling me out because I thought I was just like them. In my mind I didn't really see any difference between me and them.

In sum, being and looking ethnically and racially different were reasons to be harassed racially, especially in communities where the respondents were in the minority. Respondents had difficult experiences of being targeted for being Asian American. If they had a sense of belonging in a community with other Korean or Asian Americans, who not only looked like them, but also identified with similar backgrounds, it seemed to have provided a buffer and support for the racism they faced.

Negative Cases

Not all respondents had the same experience of racism while growing up in their neighborhoods. This was the case for a few interviewees and even for those who were among the minority ethnic or racial group in their communities. Individual and neighborhood dynamics and factors contributed to different experiences for different people.

Minsun, a 30 year old social worker, recollected growing up in her neighborhood as "neighborhoody." She felt that it was a positive experience in that despite not having many Korean friends in the beginning, she had "friends around" and "played outside and went over each other's houses." Her parents owned various stores and businesses in the community where Korean members would stop by and this created their own "Korean community."

Brent grew up in Queens where he was amongst mostly Latin American youth in his neighborhood. His experience, despite being one of the few Asian Americans, was a positive one. He commented that his community" … modeled me to who I am … a nice boy … Everyone knew each other basically - my block was Hispanic … everyone knew each other … all the kids, you would see them outside … we would play with each other … baseball, basketball … it was like a close community." (Brent, age 24, Information Technology Operations Coordinator)

Steven, age 31, media consultant, did not share the experience of being a target of racism while growing up in his neighborhood. His experience of his community was that it was "nice." He further stated that he had a "decent childhood" where "nothing major happened … there weren't that many Asians back then, so I hung out with a lot of Hispanic kids … Generally people were nice … I had a decent childhood…nothing major happened … I didn't get beat up…or got lost somewhere."

Julian, age 34 and a corporate lawyer, recalled feeling like "I was just like a normal white kid" while growing up in his neighborhood. Even though he was an ethnic minority in his community, he didn't experience feeling "different…my friends didn't really … make a fuss about my being … Korean or anything. My neighborhood was … 100% white … the way that I related to them and the way they related to me, was just like any other boy." What was more influential in his childhood was "at home … my parents were very strict conservative Korean parents. That played a bigger role in how I grew up, definitely."

Brandon, age 27, and working as an online based business consultant, also did not experience racism and feeling different despite being one of only three or four Korean Americans in his neighborhood. He "loved" growing up there and had no problems despite being the ethnic minority. Brandon easily befriended people from various backgrounds.

> I loved it … I had all non-Korean friends…I didn't have a problem with that at all … when I was a kid, I was … hanging out with … people from all over the

> country … Yugoslavian … Spanish … Chinese (people) … straight up American born … and I … just never really knew what it was like to have a lot of Korean friends. So I didn't think there was anything different about that.

There are many dynamics that play into individuals and groups being targets for racism. In this sample of 47 Korean Americans, when they were the minority ethnic or racial group in their neighborhoods, many were victims of racist remarks and other aggressive actions by other non-Asian American ethnic groups. If they had Korean American friends or a social venue where they were not taunted or singled out for being the minority, it provided a buffer or support to help them cope with racism. But many voiced that they were isolated and targeted with racist attacks. However, despite some being the ethnic or racial minority, they experienced growing up in their communities as positive. They shared that they grew up without experiencing racism. They did not have problems of socializing and did not feel they did not belong in the community they were raised in.

First Born or Only Sons: Privileges and Burdens

More Attention, More Respect, More Privileges

There are material and non-material privileges of being first born or only sons in the Korean culture. Respondents in this study experienced being given more material items, respect, attention, and status, than their siblings. They understood that they were entitled to certain privileges and enjoyed them. It seemed that only the rare few protested their privileges openly to their parents in light of their siblings' treatment. Often, such privileges were points of contention in their relationships with their siblings.

Many inequalities were observed between how younger sons and female siblings were treated in comparison to their oldest brothers or only brothers.

Bryce, the 27 year old lawyer, simply illustrated that having "the firstborn syndrome" meant "a lot of attention is given to you so you expect that attention wherever you go … I feel like I need … attention everywhere I go…sometimes I become more flamboyant in my persona, cause I want to attract that attention."

Brent, 24 years old, has a 23 year old sister. He also described what it was like to be the only son in his family. He is an Information Technology Operations Coordinator. His

experience was equated with being a "prince." Whenever he would visit his parents, unlike what his sister typically experienced, he would be doted on with many dishes of food and be the "center of attention." Anything that came out of his mouth or whatever he did, he was paid attention to around his family and relatives.

> … a lot of attention is put on me … we're like a royal family … and me being the first born … I would be the next line to the throne … It's kind of crazy when you think about it … from a Lee dynasty … they put all this emphasis on this … past imperial notion … I've become … the prince, and it's like what (laughs)? I grew up in Queens. All I want for breakfast is an egg cheese sandwich … Whenever I go there … it's like twenty different dishes … it's like wow … they'll fill me up … my role, I think it's … to be the center of attention when I'm around my family … whatever I do, they seem very much … immersed in what I say, and I didn't really have much to say …

I asked Brent whether his parents would do the same for his sister as they did for him -- making him many food dishes whenever he came home. From his answer, it was not clear that his parents treated his sister in the same way: "I hope so, yeah (chuckles) … They should."

Brent shared his observation that sons had more privilege in Korean families. Within his role, he had privilege and attention. He received more attention by family members. Brent's parents expected his sister to cater to his needs whenever he asked. His sister resented this. Yet his mother enforced this expectation. His role of being the son allowed him the "privilege" to boss his sister around. For example, when he ordered his sister to get him a glass of water, she would resist. But their mother would insist that she get him the glass of water. Thus, his sister obliged.

> I'm not trying to [be] stereotypical or anything, call me … a pig … Seeing other families I grew up with … one of an older sister being first born and the youngest one being a son… he got all the love … I don't know why … they like the sons. If you're a girl … you'll suffice, but we want a son … Because I'm her older brother … and sometimes I would abuse my ability.

Brent's open confrontation with his mother to equalize the attention given to himself and his sister made his mother aware of her actions. He stated he would have to tell his mother to stop giving him so much attention. Despite Brent's communication to his mother, his mother still seemed to think that she was giving her daughter enough attention. In his own words, he

shared: “Sometimes I have to tell my mom … what are you doing? You know you’re putting too much … attention to me and I think my sister might want some … she’ll say I’m giving her enough and I’m just like it’s not enough where I have to tell her give to give her more (Brent, age 24, Information Technology Operations Coordinator).

In light of the attention and privileges he was given in his family, Brent stated that he just wanted to be himself around his family and not “take to their ideals … about this little title of the first born son:” “I didn’t really take to many of their ideals. I … didn’t care about this little title of first born son … I’m just Brent, call me Brent … just trying to be who I am … plain … old Brent.”

Nathan felt guilty that he was the most loved of all of the other siblings due to his status of being the first born or only son. Nathan especially felt badly for his five other siblings when his father implied that his other siblings were not as important. He shared, “I think because I’m the oldest son … I think he loved me more than he loved all the other kids … when he had three daughters … he was waiting for me (to be born) … and I was like … oh, that’s so bad … my sisters are important too … “ (Nathan, age 31, computer consultant).

Siblings shared their experiences of not being the oldest son or only son. Such stories helped to highlight the veracity of the experiences of first born or only sons through the eyes of non-first born or only sons. A younger son complained that he was not given as much attention or respect as his older brother. An older sister shared how her younger brother would be supported financially throughout college by her father, be paid much more attention to at family gatherings, and given respect while she was expected to care for her siblings by completing domestic chores and making sure their needs were met. Relatives would not ask her what she aspired to for her career while they doted on her brother with attention and questions.

When sons are given more attention, their self-concept can be boosted. However, for those who receive less privilege and attention, self-esteem can be negatively affected. Many female respondents shared that they were given less attention and respect than their brothers. Minsun, a 30 year old social worker stated how she was not given the same respect as her brother or as a male. Minsun didn’t feel like “a whole person” because she was not the son. She used to resent how others in her family treated her because of her gender status. But now, she is able to have her own mind and to assert herself. Her backlash entails being stronger as a result of her experience of not having the same privileges her brother had.

> … before it used to bother me tremendously … I would never speak at family gatherings … just be bitter…now, because I've come to accept it as … a given, I can go beyond that … though I think they may not see me as a whole person. I try my best to (show) … I am fully … grown and … articulate … I can make decisions and have visions of my own though I may not be the son or a man … but it also … made me want to be more forthright and … honest. Not in that kind of feminine … 'oh whatever you say is okay.' I really want to be strong because I want to show people … I'm not who you think I am just because I am the daughter.

Rose, a 26 year old medical student, recollected that her brother, the only son, would have privileges which she thought were not fair. "We went to Macy's and he would be getting all of these expensive clothes … he always got the most money." However, her brother would get the most money because he also had to buy his female siblings food when they went out or took care of their needs if their parents were not around.

Ava, the older sister of one younger male sibling (one year Ava's junior at age 34), was surprised to recall a memory explaining the privileges her younger brother received. There seemed to be a clear difference in the way her parents treated her in comparison to her brother. One such example was highlighted when both of them got married. When Ava got married, she paid for all of the expenses on her own. When her brother got married, her father took out a $10,000 loan to give to her brother to help pay for the expenses. Further, Ava described Korean cultural practices in relation to the first born or only son where the son gets the family's possessions while the daughter is considered no longer part of the family once she marries:

> The theory goes that the man gets it all because once the woman is married they're considered some other person's family's … possession. So there's no point in giving the daughter anything because that's like giving it to a stranger … which is kinda weird because they're your own daughter … you're family so you give it to your family but there is that … belief that … once you marry you're someone else's family… it's really not the mom and dad's responsibility to take care of you in any financial way.

Moreover, while growing up, Ava's brother would ask their parents to buy computer games for him and he would receive them. Meanwhile, Ava noted that she rarely asked her parents to buy her anything because she was "self-sufficient." When Ava was younger and

didn't have children, she realized that she was "blind" to the privileges her brother received. But now, as a parent herself, she admitted that there was an "underlying belief" that her parents valued sons more than daughters. The value of having a son, her mother especially insisted, is that the family line continued with him. Bearing a son also meant that others would love Ava more.

> I was never the type to say, 'Hey, how about me?' cause I was very independent and … very self-sufficient … I always grew up never feeling like "oh, my brother had this but I didn't have?"… I'm … indifferent about that … but my brother … was always very demanding but I never asked for anything … I don't think I really … realized it or I was blind to it … now that I'm my own person … and have my own family, I see things differently. I see my parents differently … (Ava, age 35, physical therapist)

Rami was close to graduating college at age 21 when I interviewed her. She has an 18 year old brother. Her brother not only received more attention and status but their father was going to financially support her brother while Rami was "cut off" for not going into the field of medicine. However, despite the fact that her brother also didn't want to become a doctor, their father still promised to provide financially for her brother because of Korean culture. Rami understood it as the father taking care of the son more because the son carried on the family name. Consequently, Rami received less support, attention, and respect.

> When I became an adult then it became very clear to me that we have double standards … when I got cut off (financially) from my father, I was really worried that he would do the same thing to my brother because I knew that my brother didn't want to become a doctor. But my mother assured me that would not happen to him because he was a boy … the father has to take care of the son … because he was a son and … was going to carry on the family name … he will take care of him and support him no matter what. Unfair … I don't see why he gets that kind of treatment when I didn't. All my relatives love him … They are very friendly with him … adore him. But when it came to me, I was treated always as a little adult … because he is the man … He's going to carry the family name … I see it a lot in Korean culture … boys are very prominent … (Rami, age 21, college student)

From the perspective of a respondent who was also a mother, it was noteworthy to learn that Ava, a 35 year old physical therapist with two children was told by her mother that she must have a son in order to "continue the heir for your family. That's how you're gonna be loved …

you'll be valued and all of this traditional belief … " Her mother told her this when, at the time, Ava's first child was a daughter. Ava, later gave birth to a son.

Accepting Burdens that Come with Roles and Privileges

The previous subchapter elaborated on the experiences of being given privilege within one's role. Review of the data revealed two major sides of being the only son or oldest son. One major aspect that continued to be expressed was privilege. The other consistent theme that unraveled interview after interview was the burden associated with his role.

The results of the study revealed that there was an unexpected theme of accepting burdens within one's role as the first born or only son. Themes of privilege were defined as previously mentioned. The expected themes expressed were clear experiences of respondents feeling stress and burden in taking on major responsibilities for the family. Respondents shared that despite the burdens they were given and experienced, they felt it was a part of their lives and somewhat of a privilege in some cases. They seemed to accept their roles and not overtly complain about the associated burdens.

Brent, age 24, shared that despite the "perks" of privileges and attention given to first born or only sons, there were also pressures. In his verbalization of his role as the only son, during the interview, it seemed, as evident in the excerpt, that Brent felt "good" an/d "pampered" in his role. However, the pressure of his "important role" included carrying out his duty of "filial piety." This meant that Brent had to sacrifice his time to work to financially support his family and was not able to complete college. His experience was shared in a previous results chapter (Results 1, Subchapter A). But it is noted in this chapter to show examples of the combined sense of privilege and burden. Brent admitted that despite feeling "pampered" in his role, he also believed it was an "important role:" "I guess it feels good … you're just being pampered for this little title they give you (laughs) when you're born, when you're born as first born son … I guess it's an important role … I think especially for your siblings I guess, and your other cousins … in certain situations (there is pressure in the role), but it has it perks … "

When Brent had to take a break from college to help his family financially by working full time, he admitted this felt like a "big burden" and that he had to "accept the circumstances." There may have been "perks" in being the only son but the other side was also noteworthy. In his own words, he stated what his role entailed: "Sometimes it's a big burden … because …

there's times where you want to go a certain way but it's like a gravitational pull that's that you know gets placed over your head, you know, you have to accept the circumstances of it … (Brent, age 24, Information Technology Operations Coordinator).

Brent described that regardless of the burden and pressure within the expectations for sons, he and others in the same role were "just trying to live life." Therefore, the added burden of his role seemed to make his life more difficult: "you know what the burden is, what the pressure is, and the expectations … but … inside we're just trying to live life … without those standards … we're just trying to be our best, the best that we can be."

Some first born or only sons simply seemed to accept their roles without question. William, a 34 year old banker stated that he knew his role of being the first born son as something that his parents knew he would "buy into." It was almost as if he was placed in this role with no other choice but to accept it, especially since his siblings were not going to take on the role in his place. William explained that he didn't feel that his role was a "burden." He sounded like he took on this role without hesitation and with the understanding that this was what he had to do. William seemed neutral about his duties while describing the list of traditional expectations. The following except illustrates his verbal acceptance of his role burdens: " … the eldest son is supposed to do certain things … they didn't really talk about that because it's a Korean concept and they knew that I would buy into it. For that matter, none of my siblings would either. I took that responsibility onto myself" (William, 34 years old, financial consultant).

Many first born or only sons did not overtly express that expectations placed on them were burdens. Many respondents did not report aspects of their roles as burdens such as being expected to financially provide for their families, or sacrificing their time to support and lead their families. Perhaps part of the reason for this may have been that their master status had not been concretely thought about or verbalized for most first born or only son respondents. Most acknowledged that participating in this study was their first time being asked about what it was like to be in their roles.

I asked another open-ended question to follow up with what it was like to be the first born or only son: "what do you think Korean American males need?" Some answered: "we need mentors … counseling … support … no one ever asked me what it was like to be me (first born or only son) before." They didn't necessarily want to seek counseling for their role burdens

especially due to the stigma of receiving mental health services. However, many stated they would like role models and mentors to guide them in navigating the expectations placed on them.

A voice that represented some of these thoughts was summarized by Jay, age 34, Director of a medical speaking group. He openly wished that there were groups for Korean American first born or only sons. He believed that most likely, they would not attend. But the need for such a group was there. Jay found that sharing his story of being the only son and the unique role expectations he had, was "extremely useful." He had an elaborate understanding of the dynamics of available resources versus access in relation to shame and stigma of seeking help. Jay believed first born or only sons should be offered: " … free counseling for a year" but felt " … many people would not take advantage of that." Jay shared:

> … I do think that counseling is something that a lot of Korean American males definitely can benefit from … certainly among my peers … I have a good friend who I should introduce you to because … he's the oldest of two… we talk about these things … He's my age and his parents are giving him a tough time … he was a sad little boy … I don't think he has as much rage or anger as I do but he's … a reserved individual to the point where … maybe you should see somebody … he's like … maybe I should but not really getting into it … the support that we can give each other … it's important … in a real meaningful way, not in this macho go out and get drunk way which is a coping mechanism but something a little more productive and constructive … I think males in general are not conducive to … man groups … support groups … But I would think that discussing this … a lot of what we discussed … today would be extremely useful in group session with other Korean males … I am not sure who would actually show up … and the people who do show up probably don't necessarily have to be there. They're probably already fairly in tune with their feelings … the people who do need to be there probably wouldn't want to or even recognize that they have to be there.

Brandon, a 27 year old business consultant with one female sibling (age 25) shared a similar perspective that he believed might "help Korean American males." He felt having a "voice" for sharing burdens and stresses within this role could be helpful and would "help each other out." There would be "advice and sharing:"

> … they would benefit from a social group or support group or resource but knowing Korean male, knowing the general, the general, the general Korean male population they're too proud to even like accept any sort of help like that … I just need, they just need something made for them. Maybe, I, I don't know what

> other, I don't even think there are any other racial – social groups that that actually exist but maybe just a voice would really help …. just for what's going on in this right now with umm the Korean American culture, umm, how there are certain issues … that people are dealing with like media helps a lot, TV shows… like movies, meetings … maybe Koreans … bring out bring out a voice, and voice … the issues that everyone's kind of going with going through and it just kind of helps … less isolating that they're not the only ones going through this and that it kind of helps to talk about certain relationships, certain problems, and certain stresses that people go through … I think it would be helpful. I think everyone can kind of like help each other out. I think it can also be … advice and sharing … help everybody.

Roles Affecting Siblings and Causing Family Strain

Strained Sibling Relationships Due to Status, Privileges, Burdens and Expectations of the First Born Sons and Lowered Expectations of Siblings

From respondents' accounts, sibling relationships were strained due to unequal expectations and preferential treatment given to first born sons. Such treatment negatively affected family harmony and siblings. It was clear that favoritism and preferential treatment given to first born or only sons had a negative effect on some respondents' relationships with their siblings. Some sibling relationships were strained due to unequal expectations and treatment given to first born sons versus their younger brother or female siblings. For some siblings, such tensions lasted for many years, especially if there was little or no communication between the siblings acknowledging the varying expectations and privileges. Some siblings felt that they were not treated fairly or as well. Yet at the same time, some siblings acknowledged that they didn't bear as many burdens and likely would not want to be in the role of the first born or only son.

Interviews about and by siblings helped to triangulate the data. The experience of the first born or only son could be validated for accuracy based on the information also contributed by siblings. Stories shared by siblings seemed to give credibility to what the first born or only sons shared.

Julian, age 34 and a corporate lawyer, whose only male sibling was 32 years old, and lived in the same city, was…"not that close" with his younger brother. "We don't see each other that often." I asked Julian why he thought his relationship with his brother was not as close. Julian sensed that despite his younger brother's acknowledgement and "sympathizing" with him

being given more pressure as the older son, there was another dimension to their relationship. While Julian's brother may have understood that Julian had more expectations to fulfill, it might have been stressful for his brother to try to "follow" in Julian's "footsteps." Julian stated:

> … he probably sympathizes with the fact that I had to deal with more pressure than he did … but at the same time, I think it was difficult for him to … follow in my footsteps. So I'm not sure how much time he spent … sympathizing with me as opposed to … worrying about his own lot in life (in comparison to Julian's accomplishments) … And especially from … high school onward, we became less … less close.

Connor (age 24), the oldest son of an older sister Soo (age 26, working in finance, and also interviewed for this research) and a younger brother (age 16), admitted that his parents gave him more pressure than his siblings because of his role. He noted, "my dad and my mom … by nature … put on my shoulders … this … you have to do well. For my sister … it was never … that pressure of you have to do well." With this pressure placed on Connor came the implicit assumption that his sister was not as important even if she were to succeed. They believed only Connor's success would make their family look good. His sister could feel that because her parents only expected Connor to do well in his career, it didn't matter what she did or how successful she was. Even if his sister did well, they believed once she married, she would leave the family. His parents knew "she's gone anyway." Connor seemed to understand that perhaps his sister felt she was not as important in the family: "My sister, probably felt … my parents don't think … I'm as important … as my younger brother who's the oldest son (Connor) … I think she … had a little bit of … animosity towards me."

From Connor's account that she had "a little bit of … animosity towards me," one might assume that Soo would share negative feelings about how she was treated in comparison to her brother Connor. However, despite recognizing that her parents had different expectations of herself and her brother, Soo didn't talk about having any "animosity" towards Connor during her interview. In fact, she said that her parents seemed to treat them equally despite their gender differences. She didn't feel that as a female, that she could achieve any less than her brother. Soo asserted, "There was nothing that my…parents did to … make that distinction. I think it's

good because its equitable … it's not like you're a girl … so you can or cannot do these things versus he's a guy, first born son, so … "

Soo described her relationship with her brother Connor (the oldest son) as just "different" rather than as having conflict due to their gender status: "we're both very different … the way we are in terms of…our characteristics and personalities … and sometimes the way we think."

Connor noted that Soo didn't receive as much "pressure" to succeed as he did by their parents. Soo corroborated that when she shared:

> … there is a little bit more pressure … because you are the first born son…there is… expectations … carrying on the name … I think there is…differences…in my parents shoes I think it's very difficult for them … coming from Korea … being immigrants and trying to make a life here … you want them to succeed because … they work so hard and you … struggled … to … give up everything for their children. So you want them (the kids) to be successful and … to turn out well … in society.

Soo wasn't exactly sure whether her brother felt a lot of pressure being the oldest son. She understood that his role entailed pressure and expectations that exceeded that of herself and the youngest brother. But she didn't have a clear sense of the amount of pressure he might have felt from their parents. Soo knew that her brother would want to make their parents "proud." She shared her reflections: "… I wonder if … it was a lot of pressure for him because … as a child, you … wanna … fulfill that … you can't help … wanting to … make them proud … I wonder if for him if it was a lot of pressure? … my guess is that there definitely was a lot of pressure on him … exactly how much … I can't quantify, but … I think he probably did feel … kind of like … "I want them to be proud."

Jay was pensive about his conflicted relationship with his younger sister (he was 34 and she was 33 years old) who openly resented Jay and their parents for giving Jay more attention and status. I asked Jay what his relationship with his sister was like at this time. He admitted that they had issues to work out. The conflicts stemmed from his mother being emotionally abusive to his sister due to her gender. She ended up moving to a foreign country for work. Jay acknowledged that he now realized how unequal his mother treated him and his sister. He no

longer wanted to "ignore" this preferential gender treatment within his family dynamic that put a wedge in his sibling relations.

> I think we're close … to be honest … within the last five years … we, as individuals, are dealing with … family issues … that … has affected our relationship … it's been challenging … it's … an acknowledgement now of things that were not so pleasant rather than … disregarding … or ignoring them … as we get into our 30s … something hasn't been right for a long time … a lot of the things my sister and I are going through right now … is … that we weren't treated equally from my mom … my mom was … emotionally abusive to my sister, which I was not aware of … the gender difference really was marked … in the way my mom treated me and my sister. Verbal and emotional abuse … has really taken a toll on her. (Jay, age 34, medical director)

The overt attention and privilege paid to Brent, age 24, by his mother and subsequently expected by his sister was clear. This dynamic caused his relationship with his sister to be conflicted. She "hated" Brent because he was the favored child due to his only son status. In line with the privileges given to him, Brent said he "abused" his status by making demands of his sister to cater to him. However, at some point, Brent stopped "abusing" his "privilege" and eventually got along with his sister. Such open acknowledgements by the first born or only sons was rare among the participants. But in those situations where it was acknowledged, it was an important factor in repairing the negative relations between siblings and the first born or only sons.

When Brent realized this inequality and observed how upset his sister got, he openly confronted his mother and reminded her to give his sister more attention. Yet this unequal division of attention caused tension in the relationship between Brent and his sister while growing up. Fortunately, as a result of Brent's acknowledgement and confrontation with his mother to be fair in giving attention to both him and his sister, they now get along well.

> … yeah … I don't know why (my sister hated me)…sometimes … I would notice … without even thinking … hey sis, go get me a glass of water … and she would be like, why you got arms and legs too! And I was like, please? Because I'm her older brother and sometimes I would abuse my ability … but she's only a few months apart … but mostly in front of mom … I'd be like momma she's not getting me a glass of water. And she'd be like go get it [to sister] … and [my

> sister would] be like … what the hell? Maybe that's why she hated me. I stopped doing it … We can talk to each other about anything. (Brent, age 24, Information Technology Operations Coordinator)

While some siblings experienced unfair and unequal treatment, they also acknowledged that they didn't bear as many burdens and likely would not want to be in the role of the first born or only son. I asked Rose, the 26 year old medical student, what it was like not to be the first born or only son. She acknowledged that there was "too much pressure" on her only brother and that she was "relieved" and "glad" not to be the only son:

> It was a relief honestly … I don't want to be the first born … my parents … even though they wanted me to be a doctor or a lawyer, there wasn't as much pressure as my brother … with my brother it's kind of like a shame that he didn't turn out so great … he went to law school … But … it's a shame that he can't be supporting them (the parents) … and be … a really good son … for me … they can't count on me as the youngest daughter … but with a first born son it's really hard and I'm just glad I'm not the first born son … too much pressure.

Negative Cases

Not all siblings experience tension as a result of the privileges and attention given to first born or only sons. This excerpt from Rami's interview represents a subsample of the few cases where siblings did not experience tension due to first born or only son preference. Rami's brother is 18 years old. She stated that she had a good relationship with him despite his getting all the attention from her parents. Her brother was also promised financial support by her father despite not becoming a doctor as he had hoped of her brother. Rami shared that despite receiving less attention from her parents, and observing her brother to receive more of the attention, she was "… really close (to her brother). When we were growing up … I was more like his mom … I took care of him but we were inseparable … " (Rami, age 21, college student)

Korean American 1st Born or Only Sons: Expectations

First Born or Only Sons: Work and Financial Support for the Family

In order to understand the role expectations of first born or only sons, it's important to understand the dynamics of holding onto certain value systems by Korean parents in the United States. This is helpful because when a group of individuals come from a country with beliefs, traditions, and values, one wonders how much of their culturally held traditions and values are perpetuated. For Korean Americans, it seems there are strong attachments to some expectations and values which include aspects of the role of the first born or only son.

Within Korean values, first born or only sons are expected to take care of their parents and siblings. Findings from the interviews entailed first born or only sons experiencing more pressure, burden, expectations. Their stories were corroborated by their siblings who were able to describe that their only or older brothers were expected to carry burdens of being financially responsible for the family and caring for parents in old age.

Respondents talked about being a surrogate head of household by providing financial support along with his parents. Given these expectations, first born or only sons were given pressure to succeed financially in order to fulfill this role. Earning a good income was emphasized because it would help to support the family. This was based not only on birth order but also on gender. Female siblings, whether younger or older, were not expected to make as much money as their oldest or only brothers. Younger male brothers were also not expected to earn a stable income to support the family.

Some first born or only son respondents talked about being expected to assist with the family's finances. This recurring theme is identified as one the most important unintended consequence due to Korean parental emphasis on the role first born or sons. The following experiences illustrate how the role of the oldest or only son is expected to be a major source financial support for the family.

Victor shared how he was expected to "make a lot of money" in order to support the family. Meanwhile, Victor's parents did not expect the same of his sister. They wanted her to get married to a "nice guy" and did not expect her to support the family. In his own words, he stated: " … they (Victor's parents) just said … make a lot of money … my sister … just to marry a nice guy … (they told Victor to) get a good job and make a lot of money and then support us

(Victor's parents) … Supporting them was a bit overwhelming … making enough money to support them was kind of daunting (Victor, age 32, computer assistant).

Sung Min, age 26 and an investment banker, was the only son of two older sisters. He shared that he found it "frustrating" and "stressful" that his parents instilled "old school Korean values" expecting him to "take care" of his family. His parents conveyed that they "depend" on him to be like the head of household. Sung Min added that his peers and friends of other cultural backgrounds likely did not have the same burden of financially supporting the family due to role. He reflected, " … they (Sung Min's parents) depend on me so much … I understand that you're supposed to take care of your family, etc., but … it's not like I'm 35 and making a couple million a year and … I don't think you would see that in other cultures … And I find that really frustrating … it's pretty stressful."

In addition to being expected to make a lot of money and finishing college in the traditional time period of four years, Sung Min was asked to do something that his sisters were not expected to do. His parents expected him to succeed financially and he was able to do so. They also expected him to help pay for his two older sisters' tuition. Yet, he took out loans to pay his own college tuition while in school. Additionally, his parents did not expect his two older sisters to graduate college on time in the traditional four years after high school. They were ages 27 and 29 years old and still had not completed their bachelor degrees. Sung Min, meanwhile, was given pressure get stellar grades, to finish his degree on time, and to earn money to contribute financially to the family. Yet, in Sung Min's mind, regardless of whether he earned a good income or not, he didn't find it fair that he should pay for his sisters' tuition fees. Further, Sung Min was also resentful that he had to work hard to complete his college degree in four years while his older sisters were able to take their time. Sung Min did not think this was a reasonable expectation simply given his only son status. He was held to higher standards than his sisters.

> My parents … expect a lot out of me … (they) expect me to help out the family a lot … they expect me to … help my sisters … get through school … financially… it's a lot of pressure … I'm … annoyed by it. Nobody helped me get through school. I came out of school with a ton of loans. And … my parents expect … my sisters to get an easy free ride. I think it's … bullshit ... it's really unfair … they … tell me it's different … you're a guy … there's less expectation with girls … in a Korean family for girls, it's sorta ok to be wishy washy about what they

> want to do. If it was reverse, if I was like that, I think they would've taken me out of the house and cut ties with me a long time ago … (Sung Min, age 26, investment banker)

Nathan's father told him that he was waiting for him to be born. Nathan's status in the family as the first born son of six children deemed that he had to be held to a higher standard of expectation. However, his three sisters were born before him with the oldest sister being six years older than Nathan. His father's expectations produced a range of responses. Nathan recalled thinking he felt the pressure of having the "whole world" on his shoulders. He felt that he was given the status of "God" but did not want to be "God." Nathan was given the burden of taking charge at an early age: "I felt like the whole world is on my shoulders … It feels like … you have like the "God" complex … you don't want to be God but someone puts you in a position of God and you don't want to be God and you're like, you know you're not God but someone puts in that high level of expectation … (Nathan, age 31, computer consultant).

Brent, age 24, Information Technology Operations Coordinator, talked about sacrificing his college education to help his family financially when he quit college for a period of time. He had not yet completed his bachelor's degree as a result. In his role as the only son with a sister one year younger at age 23, Brent was expected to take on the burden of helping his parents. He had to "hold off on school because of … filial piety duties … Sometimes it's a big burden … there's times where you want to go a certain way but it's like a gravitational pull that's that you know gets placed over your head."

Enzo, the middle son of three boys, explained the role of the oldest son primarily being expected to help the family business. His older brother is one year older at age 34. His younger brother is 28 years old. Interviewing Enzo corroboratively supported the burden of the first born son, his 34 year old brother who is the eldest son. The depth of the burden of responsibility for the oldest son as a surrogate head of household can be understood. It would have been ideal to interview his older 34 year old brother but his brother's residence in Argentina made this impossible. Nonetheless, from his younger brother Enzo's understanding, we can get a picture of the burden of family responsibility placed on the first born son. Enzo's oldest brother's role entailed working alongside his parents in the family business from ages 15-34. Enzo admitted that his oldest brother had to help with the family business first. Enzo's eldest brother still works for parents in the family business with no salary.

> … because of traditional Korean values … The oldest son always has the most responsibility. He is the one who … by the arbitrary position of being the first born son, he has the most responsibility of helping out the parents … my older brother had not been able to finish college … he was working with my parents in a business … he hadn't been able to devote time to school … he doesn't get a salary even though … six out of seven days he's working. So one thing I'm thinking is that it's hard for him to meet a girlfriend because he doesn't have much time. (Enzo, age 33, financial news editor)

Enzo recounted how this role expectation had major repercussions due to the time commitment of working for his parents within the role expectation. At age 34, his brother had not finished his college degree, was not married or in a relationship, did not live on his own, and was not paid a salary. Enzo admitted that missing out on such milestones was due to being expected to work at their parents' store for a more significant amount of time than his two younger brothers. Meanwhile, both Enzo and his 28 year old youngest brother finished college, lived on their own, had jobs with salaries, and had time for dating.

His brother rarely had time to meet girlfriends, and has not yet finished college due to working for his parents since age 15. At first, Enzo thought there was pressure for the oldest son and that it was "overbearing." But in the same breath and conversation, Enzo validated this expectation of the first born sons due to acknowledging the tradition of the first born or only son fulfilling the filial duty to be the most responsible in helping one's parents to sustain the family. It was almost as if there was a dichotomous split. Enzo agreed that the oldest or only sons experienced pressure in their roles. However, he also seemed to excuse the cultural expectations on the first born or only son due to Koreans being "very family oriented people." Enzo, not being the first born son in his family, didn't highlight the fact that his eldest brother seemed to have made the biggest personal sacrifice in working at the family business for 19 years, while Enzo and his younger brother were able to finish college, date women, move out and live in their own apartments, and enjoy the freedom of living independently of their parents as discussed.

> There may be a lot of pressure involved and in some ways it can be overbearing. But at the same time, I think that and this is my - and this may be a little difficult - this may be a little hard to understand from a Western cultural perspective, but even the Koreans are

> very family oriented people. It's very normal to my understanding and in my view for a son - first, second or third to help their parents out in terms of need. (Enzo, age 33, financial news editor)

Another sibling, Rose, age 26, a female medical student, shared her observation that her only brother was expected to be a surrogate head of household. Rose is the youngest of an older sister and an older brother. She noted that her brother, the only son, had "pressure" within his role. She talked of her brother's role burden in light of her own experience of being female; not directly as if she were the first born or only son. Even though her brother finished law school, she noted that it was a "shame" that he "didn't turn out so great" in that she knew that his parents' expectation of him was to support their parents, be married, and be " … a really good son." As for Rose, she felt that her parents " … can't count on me as the youngest daughter … but with a first born son it's really hard and I'm just glad I'm not the first born son … too much pressure."

Rose also noted how her brother was expected to help with the family business in more ways than her sister or herself. For instance, her brother was asked to pay the mortgage for the family home. Additionally, his credit card was used by his parents to pay family bills, invest in stocks, and to buy items for the family business. Rose acknowledged:

> … my mom … wanted him to start paying the mortgage … because he's the oldest son … which is a lot, and he got really upset, and he's like I can't do that … don't put it in my name … my brother offered … his credit card … because my mom needed money to buy merchandise for the store … and he offered it, and my mom used it, but she … paid the bills but then she would borrow again, and she wasn't responsible with it, so he got mad … my dad … one time, he borrowed his (Rose's brother's) credit card and used it to put for stocks … they put a lot of pressure on him financially.

I asked Rose what she thought about brother's credit card being used by her parents and about the burdens attached to his role. Even though Rose felt badly that her brother bore much of the burden to financially help the family, she admitted to feeding into her parents' expectations of her brother by pressuring him to help her parents out. It seemed that both Rose and her parents expected her brother to be the surrogate head of household. She stated, "It

makes me upset, and I want … to help my parents out a little bit … I feel bad for my brother…I want him to be happy … but I don't want to pressure him either, but I end up pressuring him because … I feel like I follow my parents' footsteps, and … I really try to stop myself" (Rose, age 26, medical student).

Negative Cases

A female sibling's experience represented a rare subsample of participants whose oldest or older brothers did not have major burdens despite having privileges. Jinny is 26 years old and teaches elementary school. She has a 24 year old brother who is the only son and her only sibling. Her experience described an atypical situation in this sample where the only son did not have the same burdens and responsibilities. Instead, according to Jinny, Jinny was the responsible one. Her experience was that being responsible and reliable were "hard." She understood that the reason for this non-traditional Korean role was likely due to the fact that she was the older child. Additionally, she stated that her brother was not responsible. The only expectation that her parents had for her brother was to "carry the family name" by marrying a Korean woman. Her frustration was explained below in answer to the question: "What is it like to be in your experience of not being the first born or only son?"

> That you watch your brother, he's told 'you gotta carry the family name' and have a lot of responsibilities cause you're responsible and they don't put that kind of responsibility on him. For some reason he's not as responsible … I think it has to do with that he's the younger one … the responsibility is hard, the reliability is hard … because I'm the older one … they expect me to do it … not because I'm the daughter … and not because he's the son that he can't do it … he has the freedom to do whatever he wants and I can't …

Overall, first born or only sons carried the bulk of the weight of being responsible for the family. They were appointed as surrogate heads of households as needed, to provide a financial backbone, and to help and support their parents. This theme emerged consistently throughout most of the respondents.

First Born or Only Sons: Parents' Old Age Insurance Plans

Another major theme emerged repeatedly from the interviews. First born or only sons were not only designated to be financially responsible and surrogate heads of households. There was also the implied or overtly stated expectation that first born or only sons would be a form of old age insurance for their parents. In essence, first born or only sons would continue in their roles as heads of households of their aging parents. Included in this future role was taking in one's parents into one's home and caring for them with his wife.

Based on the major themes found in the analysis of data, it was found that the majority of the thirty-five only sons and oldest son participants stated that they would most likely be the ones to take care of their aging parents and provide for them financially as needed. From the interviews, this was not always apparent unless further probed during the interview. Upon further probing, it was apparent that there were fears and worries attached to their implicit roles for their parents. They didn't usually complain but there were a few who expressed they felt it was not fair to have this burden on them more so than on their siblings simply due to the fact that they were the only sons or the eldest sons. This was even more difficult to digest once they thought about what they were revealing to this interviewer. That is, even if they were only one or two years older than their siblings, they were still expected to carry out this role. This caused a conflict for those whose younger siblings or female siblings might have been more financially successful and were better able to take care of their parents or were just as able to care for the parents but were not explicitly or implicitly expected, as they were, to care for their parents. This was corroborated when the siblings interviewed did not mention as the only sons or oldest sons would, that one of the expectations they experienced as a child and as an adult, was to care for their aging parents when it came to that stage.

As will be highlighted in a following section, many participant first born or only sons were expected to make a good living financially. Being financially stable would allow sons to support parents in their older years; not just while their parents were younger and still working. Additionally, when mentioning that they were expected to be their parents' major form of old age insurance, many didn't verbally express negative feelings about it. Instead, it seemed the respondents understood that it was simply a part of their lives; something that they seemed to accept. Siblings also corroborated this expectation of their only or older brothers. It was clear to

many siblings that their oldest brother or only brother was the designated old age insurance plan for their parents. Some siblings admitted that they felt less of the burden and "pressure" in that they were not expected to take care of their parents later in life.

William, age 33, financial consultant, spoke about how he would solely take care of his parents in older age despite having an older sister and a younger brother. William expressed that it was simply his "job" given the "luck of the draw." It was something he talked about in a way that indicated he accepted the role and burden of caring for his parents. He was clear about how his role had been delineated for him to care for his parents and did not expect his younger brother (two years his junior) or his sister (three years his senior) to "feel the pressure" of being part of their old age insurance.

> Obviously … I wouldn't expect my little brother to take care of my parents in their later years … I would expect myself to do that. I don't want my little brother to even feel the pressure because it's not his job … it's the conclusion that I've come up with. It wasn't expected of me. They didn't talk to me about it. Just something you know you have to realize … (I asked William how he "realized" this role) how? I don't know. Luck of the draw I guess … It was like implicitly assumed … to me it's a fact of life … the responsibility of the oldest son … It was … implicitly assumed, so maybe that's why it wasn't spelled out … like taking care of them … being there for them (when his parents grew older). (William, age 33, financial consultant)

Darren, age 21, the oldest son of two boys, frankly spoke about his suspicion that some Korean parents might be investing in their children for their old age insurance.

> Sometimes, I think they just kind of see their kids … I hate to say it but at least sometimes that's just the way it seems … like almost insurance. 'Cause if their kids are successful, then chances are that they'll be taken care of … and you always hear these success stories … about how these kids are such brats, and all of a sudden, like they come out on top and they're … filthy rich and then they buy their parents all sorts of shit and that's like, yes, payoff. (Darren, age 21, college student, pre-med)

Brent, age 24, shared how he, not his sister, was the "investment plan" for his parents in old age. He noted that he was hoping his sister would help him. If he could not care for them, his parents would "run" to his sister. But primarily, the responsibility fell on Brent's shoulders. He hoped that his sister would help him when the time came but it was not expected.

> … they expect us on our personal time to support them when they're no longer able to support (themselves) … financially, physically … those duties will probably be expected to be done by the first born … it's a big task … sometimes I think oh, I can barely support myself, how am I going to support…if the tables are turned … you know that's what they did for us, now it comes full circle … they took care of us and now we take care of them…I have to … You have to or else … if I don't do it … then … my sister. I hope she helps me … but … I guess, if I won't do it … they'll run to her, so … (my parents tell me) you gotta take care of me when I get old … I'm the investment plan (Brent, age 24, Information Technology Operations Coordinator)

Connor (24 years old) is a recent graduate of college in communications and has an older sister (age 26) and a younger brother who is 16 years old. He shared how his parents saw his sister and the reality that they assumed she would leave the family once she was married to be with her husband and his family. Thus, Connor would be the one caring for his older parents. It was a role he was given without a clear directive but that was tied to being the oldest son. I asked Connor who would be the point person caring for his parents in the future. He shared:

> I think it's just me … my sister … in their mind, she's engaged … when they get married, she's out. So she's like, out of the family … they still believe that … the Korean daughter, just … becomes part of the other family … I know my sister … has a heart for the family … she does everything she can … for the family … but she kind of takes it upon herself … for me it's sort of like … just the nature of my relationship with my parents (Connor's inherited expectation to care for his parents and family) But my sister … she puts it upon herself to do that.

William is the oldest son of two sons and an older sister. As the oldest son, he was expected to take responsibility for caring for his parents in old age. William did not feel that it was a burden to be the old age insurance plan for his parents. Instead, he simply stated, it is a "part of life" and a "fact of life." It seemed William accepted this role burden without complaint. It is also noteworthy to mention that William was successful financially in his career: " … I'm the eldest son and the eldest son is supposed to do certain things … taking care of them (parents) … being there when they need help … it's really a Korean concept and they knew that I would buy into it … To me there's no pressure in doing that … I think of it as part of life … I

am there … when they need me … I am always there … It was … implicitly assumed … to me it's a fact of life … the responsibility of the oldest son. (William, age 33, financial consultant)

As many have stated, the first born or only sons are expected to be caregivers of elderly parents. If the first born or only sons did not step up to such roles, there might be sibling conflict based on what the role delineated. Kurt, a younger son, spoke openly about his sense of responsibility for his parents. He stated that if his older brother could not care for their parents, something was expected due to his status, Kurt would care for them instead. However, he noted he would be "angry" or "disappointed" if his oldest brother did not help financially in supporting their elderly parents once under Kurt's care because it was what he would "expect" based on the expectations of Korean culture. But what if his older brother was not stable financially and could not help Kurt out? Kurt mentioned afterwards that his sister might help out. Yet, the major point here is that Kurt expected his older brother to assist and not his sister because of his brother's role. This expectation could cause family strain between the brothers and possibly other members as a result.

> Sometimes I feel bad for him because he does have a lot of pressures and he feels burdened and it feels that there's a tremendous amount of responsibility on his shoulder … the … responsibility of when your parents get older and they can't care for themselves, who's going to take them in? And I think some of the things that would come across my mind, is God forbid they came to the point where they can't look after themselves … if he couldn't … then obviously I would step in and be there if he wasn't in a position where he could take them in because of his four kids and what not, then I would take them in but maybe if I'm struggling with my economic situation I would expect him to help out, and if he did, then that's great. That's what I would expect. And if he didn't … I would be disappointed or maybe angry with him … I'm sure my sister would also contribute.

A sibling shared a corroborative story about their understanding that their only or older brothers were expected to bear the burden of caring for their older parents. Ava, a 35 year old physical therapist with two children and the only sibling to her younger brother (age 34), told of how her brother was the designated future caregiver of her parents. It was not explicitly told to her brother but was understood because he was the only son. She asked him directly whether he acknowledged his role for future caregiving duties. Her brother confirmed that even though he

didn't take "ownership" of this responsibility when the time came. Ava felt "great" about knowing that she would not be bearing this future burden.

> It was very underlying (role expectations) … subliminal … they took care of him … they never explicitly said I expect you to take care of me when I get older … I expect you to … be the financial supporter of this family … he knows that ultimately it his responsibility 'cause I had a discussion with him. I said "Do you think … you have that kind of responsibility?" and he's like "I do, but, it's not—It's not like ownership of the responsibility. It's more like … ultimately it'll fall upon him 'cause he's the only male in the family. And when it does fall on him, he does feel that he's going to take that responsibility.

Rose, the 26 year old medical student, verified that her brother, the only son was expected to care for their parents in older age "because he's the eldest son, they have a lot of pressure put on him … way too much pressure, they're expected to take care of the parents. My mom even said, 'I don't know if he wants to live with us' … but traditionally they are supposed to."

Minsun, a 30 year old female social worker expressed that her older brother (age 33) and only sibling, had been given implicit expectations to care for their parents financially in older age. Minsun acknowledged that she had less of a burden as a daughter as opposed to her brother. Rose planned to help care for her elderly parents but her brother was expected to care for them financially. Rose experienced this as a relief of not having to bear the burden of taking care of her parents with her income. In Rose's words: "… it's been less of a burden to not be the son … the first son. So I'm grateful for that … because I don't have to worry … though I am planning to take care of my parents I don't have to worry about the financial burden … I think my brother has … implicitly taken on that burden because he is the first son."

Negative Cases

It is important to keep in mind that there are some Korean American first born or only sons who were not given explicit or implicit expectations to care for one's parents in older age. Although it was rare to hear from respondents that they were not expected to be a form of old age insurance for one's parents, there were a few who didn't have the same role burden.

Steven's experience represents the small subsample of participants who did not feel the role burden of caregiving for his aging parents.

Steven, age 31, media consultant, did not feel the pressure or expectation by his parents to care for them in older age. Despite being the only son of two other sisters, he shared how his parents would like him to care for them but did not expect it. With regards to being a form of old age insurance, he stated a common expectation that Korean sons take care of their parents when they are older. Yet in his own family, he did not believe he received the same message. I asked him what common values were emphasized by his parents: " … definitely taking care of parents when they get old is one. But they don't expect it. I think they want it. But they don't expect it. They don't tell me I have to be the one to take care of them when they get old. I think they prefer to live on their own but it is not enforced."

Our Parents Sacrificed for Us and We Want to Repay Our Parents

Another theme that emerged from the data was that Korean American children acknowledged their parents' "sacrifice" of working hard to raise them and take care of them financially until they were able to take care of themselves. They wanted to repay their parents with "repaying" them in their older age. This is part of the value of caring for parents as if the offspring were like retirement insurance. The concept is a general understanding of giving and taking. Children feel a duty to pay back their parents for rearing them.

There was another side to paying back their parents for their hard work. Korean Americans in this study didn't complain much about their filial duties to take care of their parents when they grew older. Despite what others might see as burdens, first born or only sons and siblings wanted to help their parents when they could no longer care for themselves. Korean Americans learned the value of family ties and closeness of looking out for their siblings and parents. Some expressed a thankful attitude regarding how parents' high academic and career expectations pushed them to work hard to achieve. In the end, as adults, they were proud of their accomplishments despite the experiences of stress and pressure they felt growing up with high expectations. Some respondents stated that, if left to their own choices of career, they might have chosen to study a field that did not provide as much economic security or status. Parents invested in their children's futures and in turn, children wanted to thank them for supporting and nudging them to do their best in schools and professions.

John, a 38 year old corporate attorney, also talked about repaying his parents for their hard work. While his parents worked long hours at the family business in Brooklyn and also lived there, John and his younger brother were caring for themselves in their home in New Jersey. He observed his parents sacrificing for them by working to make money for the family. This reality pushed John and his brother to work hard to make his parents proud and happy. John felt that it was a way of "doing something in return" for the labor of love that his parents showed. It seemed fortunate for both John and his brother that they landed the two dream professions that many Korean parents wanted: doctor and lawyer. John became a lawyer and his brother became a doctor. John spoke about how both he and his brother were able to "return" the hard work their parents put into raising them:

> … from an early age … we saw our parents sacrifice so much and … we decided … we needed to do something in return for them. And for both of us now, we are, I think in … careers we both feel very happy about. We feel that we are doing something that is very professional, respectable … it's what our parents wanted. We are just very happy that their dreams came true for that.

Brent talked about how he was a kind of investment plan for his parents in older age. He explained that there was a reciprocal process where it came "full circle" from parents raising kids and kids supporting parents when they could not. If he could not fulfill this way of giving back as the only son, he expected that his sister would. This was his way of giving back to them for supporting him while growing up. Given that his parents sacrificed for him and his sister, he felt the duty to do his "best" so that his parents' "hard work would be justifiable." He understood that parents invest in children because they are the "future."

> … they expect us … to support them when they're no longer able to support (themselves) … financially, physically … by the first born … it's a big task … if the tables are turned … that's what they did for us, now it comes full circle … they took care of us and now we take care of them … I have to …You have to or else … if I don't do it … then … my sister … I understand … what they sacrificed … as a kid there's pressure to do your best … so … just so there's some kind of advancement … so all their hard work would be justifiable with something, and with the … children being the future … what more better things to … put your hopes in? (Brent, age 24, information technology operations coordinator)

Julian (34 year old corporate lawyer) did not want to "break" his parents' hearts by telling them that they didn't always know what was best for him. Julian didn't want to go against their wishes for career and general academic achievements due to "obligations" to them. Some of the reasons for wanting to obey his parents stemmed from his acknowledgement of their financial support of his educational endeavors, such as attending Harvard University. He didn't feel comfortable choosing his own path when they were paying for his tuition.

> I never felt that that was true and I've never had the nerve to say it … to break their hearts. You just don't really know me at all … I put a lot of the blame on myself for not standing up to them. If I really wanted to do something I should've just done it … but … I feel a lot of obligation to them … that … weighed on me as far as disobeying them… especially paying for Harvard tuition … it's kind of hard to … say screw you, I'm gonna do this … I didn't feel a lot of maneuvering to … choose my own major or field.

John (age 38) the corporate attorney, also illustrated this concept of obeying parents who sacrificed for them. He spoke of how his parents worked hard and he knew that they experienced hardship themselves. His Korean parents sacrificing "everything" for the children came up in his interview. Such sacrifices don't go unnoticed by children. It placed burden and guilt on the children to obey their parents and to succeed as their parents expected in the ways that this study has noted in previous chapters. To complain about parental expectations in light of the long hours their parents worked, was not acceptable.

> When I say Korean parents, I'm speaking … first generation parents in the United States who immigrated in the 70s to 80s … they put a tremendous amount of pressure and put very high standards on their children only because they … have experienced so much themselves … they don't want their children to go down the wrong path or make mistakes …. they … sacrificed everything … and had … to come to the states and … live for their children … But you know for what they did for us … my parents worked seven days a week … 14 or 15 hours a day … for my brother and I to say … we're just going to do what we want to do … it … didn't sit well with us.

Kurt is a 39 year old police officer in New York City. He shared a similar story of how his parents "sacrificed everything by coming here …" for himself and his siblings. He further said, "my parents … sacrificed their whole entire lives just to work. That's all they did … that's all they knew how to do and they really struggled."

Brent, age 24, working in information technology, didn't feel comfortable sharing his burdens with his parents. He kept his troubles "inside." However, despite having a "high tolerance level," he still experienced a "boiling point" that put his academics in "jeopardy." The reason he didn't want to burden his parents was because he knew that they sacrificed a lot by coming to the United States when their business went bankrupt in Korea. Once they came to America, his parents had to "grind it up" which seems to mean that they had to work hard. Hence, as his parents had to work hard to start again, the children also had to work hard in their own respective ways to help the family return its status to where it was when they were in Korea. Brent talked about how his family, while in Korea, "were upper class" and then went "bankrupt." That's when his family came to the United States for a "a new opportunity." He realized his parents experienced life in America "not like what they heard." He further shared that as a child of immigrant parents struggling to establish themselves, "… you still have to grind it up, right? So … once the kids are grown that's more pressure to have to grind up …"

> They know … I have … a high tolerance level … I never talked to them about any of my troubles. I just keep it inside, I have a lot of self-control … but … everyone has a boiling point, at one point … I had to show such an extreme gesture to tell them … that I really meant what I said … once the saw the Fs, they were like, oh shit … we won't fuck around with you son … it may have … sent the message, but it was detrimental to myself also … I put my education in jeopardy … but … I was like fuck that for the time … it was collectively a lesson learned for everyone … Education is important for me … but I should do what I want to do … right?

Ava, a 35 year old physical therapist, shared how her brother would be the caregiver of their parents when they grew older. He would take them into his home. This duty was something that her brother accepted as part of his role as the only son. But this would also show his appreciation for taking care of him until he was able to take care of himself (i.e. support educational and career goals by assisting with paying tuition for college and graduate school, etc.). Her brother confirmed that even though he didn't take "ownership" of this responsibility to

financially support his parents, he would take it up because "they took care of him." Therefore, there was a process of reciprocity where parents took care of children and children, in turn, took care of elderly parents when they could no longer take care of themselves.

Rami, a 21 year old college student shared how she wanted to "repay" her mother for doing "a lot for me growing up … or my mom's case I understand and I'm more than happy to do that [take care of her mother in older age] because she did a lot for me growing up so I want to repay her."

First Born or Only Sons: Responsible for Siblings and Being a Role Model

Many of the thirty-five first born or only sons who participated in this inquiry shared how they were expected to be surrogate caregivers for their siblings and good role models. In Korean culture, whether a first born son is many years older, just one year older, or whether he is the only son amongst sisters (younger or older), he is responsible for his siblings' well-being, and to be a model of success in school, career, and character. For some, it may feel like a burden that is not appropriate, especially when they are still children themselves. Yet for others, this role was embraced. They did not complain about it. But inevitably, whether the first born or only son accepted the role or not, participants spoke of the pressures felt about parental expectations to take care of their siblings and to model high standards of academics and responsibility. Such pressures were highlighted for first born or only sons when non-Korean peers did not appear to be under the same expectations.

A common experience of the role of the first born or only son was in being a surrogate caregiver for one's sibling. Bryce (age 27), a corporate lawyer and the older of two boys, expressed this was not a choice but a directive from his parents to be his younger brother's surrogate parent as if it were his "job." His parents worked long hours at the family business and therefore, Bryce's brother became his "surrogate child." Even to this day, Bryce was so used to being his brother's second parent that he has had to "ease up and let him live his own life."

> Since I'm the oldest … I have to look after my brother … they always remind me that it's almost my job to make sure my brother's o.k … to look after him … they expect me to care for my brother … I look at him … pretty much like a surrogate child … because … when we were growing up I was … taking care of him … like he was my kid … maybe to a certain extent I'm too much like a parent…when I

> talk to him, so I'm trying to … ease up and let him live his own life … when we were young … my parents owned a store so they were always there … so I was … alone with him and … taking care of him. (Bryce, age 27, corporate lawyer)

Bryce also recalled the expectation that, as a first born son, he was expected to be his younger brother's role model. This role entailed responsibilities "excelling" in everything he did in order to provide an example for his brother to follow. Bryce shared:

> … you have to set a good example … for your brother because you're the oldest … I have a certain job and a certain role that I have to fill … because I'm the first born … to be a good role model … it's basically everything that I do, to excel at … I'm trying to picture myself as a younger sibling, I'd look at my older brother and I'd see that … he excelled in everything that he set out to do … that's a great lead to follow …

Bryce comments, however, that he felt there was a positive side to the role of being a role model for his sibling. He believed that he became a better person as a result of the pressure to be a good role model. To this end, he stated he dealt with the pressure of the role given to him: " … but … I think now that I realize that … makes you a better person … the pressure, you know, so, I just kind of deal with it." Bryce seemed to accept this as part of his life.

With the clash of Korean American versus non-Korean American culture, Bryce talked about the pressure he felt in being expected to follow Korean parental expectations to be a role model for his younger brother. He noted that his non-Korean friends were not given the same expectation:

> I think that it's a lot of pressure and obviously … sometimes I look at my friends … American (non-Korean) … and I look and their parents didn't really emphasize a role … and if they made mistakes … it's fine … and I saw that they didn't really have that pressure … sometimes I think … that's pretty lucky and they're pretty cool for not having that and it must be nice …

Nathan, age 31, a computer consultant, was the designated head of household if his father were to die. He was told that he would be in charge of taking care of his entire family if anything happened to his dad. This responsibility felt overwhelming to Nathan. Nathan was only twelve years old when his father told him that he would be in "charge" if his father died.

Although Nathan was the fourth child of six children, because he was the oldest son of two younger brothers, he was placed in this role by his parents. His father told him:

> … you be the dad if I [die] … So he just kind of left it at that … expectation that I'll be in charge if he dies … If I die, you're the daddy and take care of the kids and everyone in the family … and I'm like … No!

Carleton, age 38, explained that his duty as the older son of two boys entailed being a role model for those younger than him, including his brother. Yet he felt that, similar to Nathan's experience, as a child himself at the time, it was an "uncomfortable" expectation that his parents had for him. He was expected to behave and speak in a manner that others could look up to.

> My father especially tried to instill much of his values that were passed down from generations ago because I happen to be that … first son. So … I did not like the fact that as a child I had to abide by … traditional Korean family rules… you have to behave in a certain way. You have to speak … in a certain way … and also you had to be more … responsible because … you had to be the person whom people…and kids could look up to. As a child, I was a rather … uncomfortable. (Carleton, age 38, Product Manager)

Charles, a 19 year old freshman in college majoring in engineering, shared how his parents expected different things from him and his younger brother of two years. He made it clear that he was held to higher standards and was given "all the pressure" because of his older son status. The emphasis was on succeeding in education. As long as he did well academically, he was a role model for his younger brother. Charles mentioned that he would "get beaten up" by his father in his youth because his dad wanted him to be a good son. When I asked what it meant to be a "good son," Charles stated that he was to fulfill "high expectations" given to him by his parents as part of his status as the eldest son. He stated, "If I … become successful my brother will follow … so the pressure was on me to succeed … to lead my brother the right way … it's all education."

John, the 38 year old corporate lawyer, talked about his role in being the surrogate caregiver for his younger brother who was three years his junior. John spent every day with his brother and looked out for him daily. His parents were busy running one to three family

businesses at a time and did not get to raise them. Thus, John became the designated person responsible for his younger brother as traditionally expected: "We played together; we would go out on the street and ride our bikes together. We'd go to school together. We'd eat together, did our homework together … we were together all the time … as the older brother I was also his watch. He was over my watch … at all times 24/7 … we were together.

Kyle is a college student studying computer science and has a younger sister who is 18 years old and a freshman at the same college. He complained about having to take care of his sister. For example, he was expected to buy his sister water since he has the car and she didn't. He felt that his sister could take care of that on her own by taking "the bus or whatever." There was resentment due to the fact that Kyle didn't have a car when he first came to college and took care of himself. He didn't like the expectation of having to first buy her water and then delivering it to her dormitory when he felt she could do this herself: "When I was first here. I didn't have a car…She says it's expensive…she wants me to buy it and bring it to her dorm. I don't … get that."

Kyle felt validated by his cousin who was the same age and also a son had a sister the same age as his own sister. His cousin and his cousin's sister were also at the same college. They shared the experience of having to be responsible for caring for their sisters. His conversations with his cousin would entail the following thoughts: "She expects the same thing from … her brother too … whenever I call … the guy male cousin, we are like oh my God, how's your sister? She's trouble. Tries to make us do everything for them, you know? … I'm not going do anything for my sister." I asked Kyle, "Am I right to say that you feel like it's a burden sometimes to take care of your sister like that?" Kyle answered, "we suffer … Being a young girl has more advantage."

Sung Jin was currently enrolled in law school at age 34. He was the first born of two boys. His younger brother (age 32) was living and working in Korea. Sung Jin recollected that he was his brother's "older brother/parent/friend" due to his parents "both working all the time." As a result, Sung Jin, just two years older than his brother, was put in charge of taking care of his brother. Sung Jin mentioned that his brother "didn't have any kind of parental influence." Both children did not receive parenting due to their parents being busy. Meanwhile, Sung Jin was the role model and responsible for his brother because of his first born son status. Sung Jin, who was not significantly older, and also did not receive guidance from his parents due to their

limited time. Sung Jin could not "straighten out" his brother out from being involved in negative behaviors. In the end, his brother was sent away to live in Korea to separate him from the negative influences that his parents asked Sung Jin to steer him away from as the older brother.

Sung Jin recollected that at age five, as soon as he immigrated to America, his father's older brother greeted Sung Jin and said:

> You better listen to your parents … he is like literally threatening me and telling me that if I didn't take care of my brother … he would come and beat me up or something … I was scared of him …" Even at family gatherings, he was reminded that caring for his younger brother was priority. Part of the reason why he understood their expectation was that he explained how Korean families "tend to be so tight." Whenever they had family gatherings, "usually the first question" was "How are you doing and are you taking care of your brother?

Siblings also helped corroborate findings that first born or only sons were expected to be leaders of their families. Enzo is the middle son of three boys. His understanding of his oldest brother (age 34) was that he was expected to be the "leader" of the entire family if his father died or became "incapacitated." If the father can no longer lead the family, the oldest or only son would assume the role of "family leader." First born or only sons seem to be the stand-by surrogate head of household in case the father was not present for any reason. Enzo explained:

> … if the father becomes deceased, or if the father is ill or incapacitated or absent, he takes the position of family leader … I don't agree that he should have more authority than the wife or his own mother but if he's put in the position of being the oldest man in the family, he has, by default, the responsibility … of assuming charge of the family" (Enzo, age 33, financial news editor).

Family loyalty and values were instilled according to most respondents' accounts. This helped to explain why first born or only sons were responsible for their siblings. Steven (age 31, media consultant) captured what many interviewees shared about these family ties: "we help each other out. My parents are into that…helping the family … very strong family values."

In sum, despite first born or only sons carrying the burden of looking out for and sometimes raising their siblings in the absence of their parents, such a burden may have also taught the importance of caring for each family member.

Negative Cases

Not every Korean American first born or only son felt that his role as a role model for his siblings was a burden. In fact, some seemed to be proud of their status of even being a second father to his sibling. William had a brother who was two years younger. His experience of being the oldest son was that he was not only close to his brother but he was also a father figure to him. It was after his brother became a "man" or an adult, that William "let him loose." He didn't feel this role was a burden or "pressure" and stated he was "always there" for his siblings. William reflected: "With my little brother I am very close. I would even say growing up I was father figure … when he became a man, I guess I let him loose in a sense. But I do consider … myself as a father figure growing up … To me there's no pressure in doing that and also that's like you know … I think of it as part of life. I am there … when they need me. I am always there" (William, age 33, financial consultant).

A different way to conceptualize a negative case is also by looking at the roles of siblings. One oldest child and sister of two younger brothers, Soo, age 25, working in finance, shared of her experience of needing to be responsible for her siblings. It is difficult to know whether her subjective experience and role was objectively acting as the one taking care of her siblings. She might have felt the most responsible for her siblings while the oldest son, her 24 year old brother, also might have felt the same way about his role as the oldest son. Either way, it was important to include Soo's story of her role. She felt mentally stressed by being the oldest child and sister who needed to be responsible for her siblings. Her experience in this role made her aware of making sure "everything was in order … things are checked off." Therefore, the role expectations of her status as the eldest child versus her younger brother as the eldest son, introduces another question. What is the reality of the role and burden of responsibility of the oldest son if he has an older sister? Is the sister equally as responsible for caring for siblings, for example or more responsible in some cases?

> I think my role as a first born daughter … I felt … I needed to be responsible … mentally … it's affected me … like I have to take care of … my siblings … stuff in the house … I think that's how it played out on my life … like I'm responsible. I need to get things done …to … nurture things … I guess it can be good and bad … it's good because you're looking out for others … I think it can be straining too … you're … putting stress on yourself too … to make sure everything's in order and … so things are checked off …

To help clarify this question, Soo's brother, Connor, age 24, a recent college graduate and looking for work, was also interviewed for this study. Soo and Connor were the only sibling pair who agreed to be interviewed. Even though Connor understood his implicit role to be the one responsible for his family, he acknowledged his older sister's self-initiated sense of responsibility for the family. He knew that his sister "kind of does everything she can … for the family … but she takes it upon herself." As for Connor, the oldest son, it was known to him that "there's more, family responsibility … it's not very explicit … just kind of understood." Thus, even though Connor was the person expected to care for his family and siblings, it seemed that his sister Soo, played a major role in caring for the family. While one may be idealized as the person in the role of bearing responsibility for the family, another member, such as the oldest child/daughter, may be the actual family member who takes care of the family.

First Born or Only Sons: Leaders and Mediators

First born or only sons in Korean culture were expected to become leaders and mediators within the family. Even though fathers were the actual heads of household, the first born or only sons were raised to be leaders and mediators of their families from a young age. Being a leader of a Korean American family meant that the first born or only son may have to step in as a leader if something happened to the father. They helped make major decisions for the family and were expected to be mediators to solve problems, and to promote family unity and well-being.

Brent spoke about having to possess qualities of a leader. His sister and only other siblings was just one year younger at age 23. As the son, he had to be "patient," "understanding," and in "control" of any situation:

> … you have to be very patient, understanding and very … no matter what happens, you have to be able to control the situation … never show that you're weak or … hesitant or any of that … you have to hold your ground and … make everyone feel that you have everything under control and that everything will be alright … (Brent, age 24, Information Technology Operations Coordinator).

Sons in his family, according to Brent, were given more power and authority. His sister would have to listen to him as he had the "upper hand." He could have his parents pressure his sister into doing things for him and deferring to him. He shared: "… sometimes she gets pressured into it. Whenever … there are conflicts, then the older brother would have the upper hand and you would have to step down … because he's the older brother …"

Bryce, calls being the first born of two sons in his family, a "syndrome" that entails being a mediator of family matters. He had to get involved in mediating and finding solutions to problems within the family and carrying out family traditions to help the family become closer. Bryce believed it was part of his "job" to fulfill this role.

> … it does come from the expectation of excelling in what you do and in being that firstborn syndrome … you have the middle child syndrome, you have … the firstborn syndrome … there are certain characteristics that are very common … it's a job to carry on family traditions, to … bring your family closer together. If there are problems in your family, you're the one that has to deal with it … I had this responsibility as the firstborn to be the head of the house…head of the family and to … take care of family matters … (Bryce, age 27, corporate lawyer)

Being leaders and responsible children starting at an early age may help build character. These expectations can help to build maturity and a sense of accountability to oneself and others. They can also help develop qualities of independence and responsibility. Sung Jin, age 35 and a current law student, described how being the oldest son was "difficult … because of all the different responsibilities." Yet at the same time, he experienced these expectations as character builders. He was "happy" with who he was at the time and didn't feel he needed to make any changes.

> I think it is difficult being a first born because of all the different responsibilities … at the same time I think it helps build character … it … helped me overcome a

> lot of the obstacles … in my life … so … in that sense it was good … I'm pretty happy about who I am … I don't necessarily know if I would make any changes … being more responsible … that has always helped me … I tend to be a lot more independent than most people … I don't depend on other people for much … so I am pretty proud of that.

First Born or Only Sons: Marry Korean to Keep the Family Name and Culture

Besides being leaders in their families and building character from these expectations, most first born or only son respondents shared the same expectation of marrying a Korean woman. According to their parents, they must marry a Korean woman to carry on the "family name" and "heritage." Many seemed to accept this expectation because they wanted to please their parents. But some voiced frustrations that they weren't given many choices in marriage.

Female siblings, however, were not held to the same standard. Their choices were more varied. When sons were given lectures about whom to marry, the expectation to marry a Korean woman was included. For daughters, there was rarely, if ever, any mention by parents, to marry a Korean male. Parents were more lenient with their expectations. The general message was that the husband she'd marry should be "nice" to her. That was it. One female sibling participant even noted that her mother was "ecstatic" that her boyfriend was not Korean. This was because her mother believed that Korean men had "harsh" and "overbearing" personalities.

Given this expectation, John, age 38 and a corporate attorney, openly talked about his "challenge" of being "unhappily" married to a Korean woman he could not understand (i.e. language) or share similar values with. This had negative consequences for his "happiness" because he made a "sacrifice" to his parents by marrying a native Korean woman who was not raised in the United States as he was. Due to his status as the oldest son, his parents expected him to "marry a Korean woman." Initially, he wanted to marry a native Korean woman not only to please his parents, but because of his "Korean pride" and to "not forget where our blood comes from." His younger brother also decided to marry a Korean woman but she was Americanized (i.e. spoke English fluently and was assimilated to American culture). He not only believed that his parents would be happy being able to communicate with his wife, but that they would also be glad John could learn more about Korean culture and teach it to his children. His parents "adored" his wife and consequently, John was happy he accomplished his goal of marrying a Korean woman. However, John felt he could be "happier" had he chosen to marry a

Korean American or a non-Korean woman who was more aligned with his acculturated background, language, values, experiences, and a working as a professional like himself. After seven years of marriage, he realized that he was "not as Korean" as he thought.

John experienced a "conflict" of wanting to have the best of both worlds. He wanted to continue to keep some of his Korean values and cultural traditions while incorporating American ideals that he appreciated such as: "individuality," "freedom", and "personal well-being." He realized that after he made his choices to please his parents (i.e. career and marriage), he should keep his own "happiness" in mind. He seemed to hint at a sense of regret about making "the sacrifice" to his parents both in his career and choice of bride because he felt that he could be "happier" if he had listened to his Americanized self that emphasized more about "me":

> I find that sometimes those expectations, those sacrifices that you make … all the goals that you try to achieve should not get in the way of your happiness…that sacrifice … I made to my parents, there's a part of me that says that I could be happier … I could've been more successful doing something else … instead of being a doctor or a lawyer I could've been a … computer graphics artist or … an architect … I could've been more free. So definitely growing up I feel now that … I was attached to a ball and chain … you make these sacrifices like who you marry, what career you make, and what life you lead, and how you're supposed to live, and as you get older, you realize that it's not all about that … it's all about me … my personal well-being. And this now is my American, Westernized side coming back … This is all about me, culture … freedom … doing what you want … individuality … I have this internal conflict … I … look back into my life and I say… I could've done things differently but I didn't because I'm Korean.

John made it clear that he was at the "extreme" end of someone who followed his parents' wishes and sacrificed his personal happiness, rather than having a balance or going "the other way" to rebelling against parents' wishes. Yet, his example of duty to his Korean parents was noteworthy due to the strong bonds of loyalty and his first born son status that he was raised with. John wanted to balance his life and choices with more of his "American" and "Westernized side."

Marrying a Korean woman was so important to one of the participant's fathers that his dad would "brainwash" him at odd hours for up to three to four hours per night while he was supposed to be sleeping, to remind him to marry a Korean girl. Although Nathan personally believed that as long as he married a woman who was Christian, he would be content. But he

was reminded by his father that he was expected to marry a Korean woman. Nathan remembered being told this value by way of being "brainwashed." He talked about what his father told him:

> My dad … used to … brainwash me. He would come into my room like at twelve midnight and say 'you must marry a Korean … you must marry a Korean.' He used to do that until like three or four o'clock in the morning … and I was sleeping and he knows I'm a light sleeper so I'm hearing it and I'm one of those guys that was like … ok … I need to marry a Korean. You know … honestly, in Christ I could marry anybody … (Nathan, age 31, computer consultant).

William was expected to carry on the family name. His family was aligned with the Korean cultural value of the oldest son carrying on the family name. Additionally, his family also adhered to the biblical value of the "oldest son carrying on the family name." Knowing that he was the oldest son, William grew up with the expectation to carry the family lineage and "get all the power" at the same time. William did not seem to mind the expectation given that he felt marrying within the culture was beneficial to keep the "heritage." He shared: "… I would carry on the name … in a Biblical sense you know like the oldest son always carries on the name. He gets all the, you know … he gets all the power and all that stuff … I feel … for continuing the … heritage. I think that's a great move" (William, age 33, financial consultant).

Julian, the 34 year old corporate attorney, shared his reality of being pressured to get married to the right Korean girl. Not only did he have to hurry to find someone, she had to be Korean with a family background that was acceptable to his parents. Therefore, Julian had a difficult time finding someone to date. He had to look at his future girlfriends through the eyes of his parents with high expectations. It felt to him as if marriage was "more like a business kind of transition than a romantic" union. He reflected: "Whenever I meet somebody … I'm not just looking at them with my own eyes, I'm looking at them through parents eyes … it's hard to get closer to somebody that way. I find out about their parents, I'm thinking … what will my parents think of their parents? … I've had experiences where they were Korean and yet they [my parents] still didn't approve because … they come from a bad family."

The pressure to find someone quickly was on Julian's mind even when he attempted to vacation for one week. His parents made a "big deal" about his single status. They were upset

with him for taking a week off in China when he could be looking for his future spouse. This pressure caused Julian to feel that he wanted to give up "trying to please" his parents. He didn't have a choice of which ethnicity he would marry. His parents made it clear that he was limited to marrying a Korean woman. If he were to choose someone from a non-Korean background, he understood that both he and his partner might have to go through a difficult period.

> Now the big deal is, why aren't you married? … that's the only subject of conversation … these days. When I told them … I'm going on vacation to China, they were like, how can you do that? … you need to get married … I'm going to China for a week and even that was too much … (If Julian dated a non-Korean woman) I would prepare myself for some very rocky times…she would have to be especially understanding for that to work … it's limited my options because my parents are extremely conservative about my choice in companion … if they're not Korean … it may make life very difficult for me … and because of that, I'm … limited to Korean Americans … it's a constant source of angst. (If Julian found a non-Korean girlfriend) that would be a big headache. My brother … dated a girl who is Chinese … he didn't speak to my parents for … long … they wouldn't approve … that probably broke them up …

As mentioned previously, many daughters or sisters were not explicitly told that they must marry Korean men. One female participant, Rami, said that there was no specific expectation that she had to marry or date a Korean male. In fact, her mother seemed to prefer that Rami not date a Korean man. Rami shared that she was dating a Chinese man who was two years older. I asked Rami what her parents thought about the fact that he was not Korean. She said: "My mother was ecstatic that he was not Korean. She told me to never date a Korean guy because … of their personality … harsh … overbearing … like to be in control … dictatorship kind of relationship" (Rami, age 21, college student).

In sum, most first born or only sons had the pressure placed by parents to marry only a Korean woman. It was made clear to first born or only sons that they had little choice but to marry only a Korean female to continue the family heritage. One participant wanted to please his parents so much that he married a Korean woman who barely spoke English while he barely spoke Korean. Thus, their language and cultural differences made their marriage a struggle. Further, the stress of not getting along and not being aligned with similar cultural values, took a toll of his physical and mental health.

Female siblings were not held to the same standard. Many were not expected to exclusively marry Korean males. One female sibling participant's mother stated that she was happier with her daughter's choice to date a non-Korean male.

Pressure for Academic Excellence. Only Two Career Goals: Doctor or Lawyer

The majority of parents of participants in this study usually had higher educational and career expectations of first born or only sons versus daughters or younger sons. Many of the first born or only sons revealed that their parents expected them to receive stellar grades. Receiving less than either 100% or an "A" in a course meant that participants could be lectured, yelled at, and criticized. Getting anything less for first born or only sons was "unacceptable." Sometimes, participants wondered whether their parents loved them if they didn't receive good grades. At times, it seemed that while growing up, their value and worth as a child was tied to academic achievement in their parents' eyes. Furthermore, in contrast between Korean and American educational expectations or values, many expressed that their parents emphasized getting excellent grades more than their non-Korean friends' parents.

In addition to getting perfect grades, the main two choices of career expected by parents were either to become a doctor or a lawyer. Even if parents could accept other career tracks, they frequently mentioned just these two professions to the first born or only sons. However, there was less emphasis placed on sisters or younger sons to become doctors and lawyers and to receive perfect grades. It was rare that a Korean American interviewee, with the exception of the female or younger male siblings, expressed that their parents did not care what kind of career they chose. It was an anomaly to hear a Korean American respondent share that his/her parents wanted him/her to do anything as long as you are happy.

As found in this study, Korean parents pushed their children to strive for excellence in academics and career choices. These expectations, especially for the first born or only sons, were not easy to follow while growing up with temptations of slacking off and playing games. However, there was also a theme of respondents being thankful for parents pushing them to succeed because at the end of the day, many of them achieved at high levels. They might have experienced pressures as struggles but when they were satisfied with their careers and realized

how much their parents did for them to help them get there, they wanted to show gratitude by taking care of them and helping them as needed. Strict values implemented by many Korean parents in raising their children with the focus on academic and career success, was not negative for all. Instead, some participants decided they would like to raise their offspring with similar values while easing the limit of only wanting them to become doctors or lawyers.

Hyung Oh, age 23, a college student studying English, shared what his parents expected of him, which summarized some common outcomes first born or only sons had to achieve. Hyung Oh stated:

> My dad had very high expectations of me … having all As … he'll be disappointed if I got a B or a C … they wanted me to be a doctor or a high level professional … I really did not inspire to be any of those. I grew up not knowing what I still want to do.

In addition, Hyung Oh noted that the expectations on him as an only son were different from those placed on his sister. His parents merely wanted his sister to have a family and to be successful at domestic duties. His sister's choice of career was more flexible and perhaps even expected to be lowered to a working class or blue collar level. His parents told her that she could be a nail technician or a hair dresser like her mother. Hyung Oh felt his parents' lowered expectations of his sister in comparison to those of him "had a damaging effect on her psyche." According to Hyung Oh, his sister was not held to the same expectations that he was held to.

> … my sister was … supposed to be more … the house wife. She is not supposed to do much except bear children, provide … for the children, make food at home … I think it had a damaging effect on her psyche. Our dad really did not care what my sister wanted to be. My mom wanted her to be someone like her working in nails, hairdressing …

Julian, a graduate of Harvard University and law school, had a similar experience of parents expecting him to get high grades in school. He realized that his role as the older of two boys entailed excelling in school and experiencing more pressure to achieve than his younger brother of two years. His parents also expected less of his younger brother simply because he

was younger. When it came to choice of career, Julian was "strongly discouraged" from going into his first choice of filmmaking or film. He wanted to "stand up" to his parents against their wishes for him. Thus, his parents had high expectations for his grades and choice of career in comparison to his brother.

> … grade-wise, it had to be … A's … B's … would be … cause for a lecture … they definitely had lower expectations for my brother … being the oldest son was and still is a huge thing. When my brother got into U Penn [University of Pennsylvania], my parents were just thrilled because they didn't think he was gonna get into anywhere. They were even talking about him going to the local state college 'cuz his grades were never that great … they were good but compared to mine … they pushed him but not nearly to the same extent they pushed me … Korean older sons have different experiences. (Julian, age 34, corporate lawyer)

William, a 33 year old financial consultant, shared the experience of parents who wanted him to bring home excellent grades. There was no discussion about the possibility of getting less than the highest grades. He had to receive A's. Anything lower was not acceptable. He noted: "… I better bring home an A…that's just the way it was …"

Charles, age 19, a freshman in college studying engineering science, experienced pressure from his parents to go to the "best" college. When I asked him what parental expectations he grew up with while living in Korea (Charles immigrated to the United States around age 14), he said they wanted him to get into the "Harvard version … in Korea." Otherwise, Charles needed to gain entrance to a university on par with Harvard if he still lived in Korea. Not only was Charles expected to attend a top college, he also, as a first born son, had to be "successful" because "I'm … first son … from the first son." This meant that because Charles was the first born son of his father who was also a first born son, there was extra pressure to succeed. In comparison to his younger brother of two years, Charles stated, "he didn't really grow up with like a lot of pressure…because all the pressure was on me."

Young Kyu, a 3rd year medical student is 24 years old and has a 33 year old sister. He observed a disparity in the way his parents expected him to get "straight A's" while not pressuring and demanding the same of his sister. He understood this as a Korean tradition that was handed down from past generations. Young Kyu's father was the first born son in his own

family and faced the pressure of being in the master status and consequently being successful in his career in order to support his parents and family back in Korea.

> One thing that was always clear was that expectations for my sister compared to me was different … my sister … is … successful in her career [advertising] … but … in terms of the kind of pressure and demands that were placed on her … if she were struggling … or not getting … straight A's … I remember my parents being a little … more lenient … I guess having a sister in my family showed me that there was there was this difference [regarding academic expectations] … I have some ideas … of … where it comes from … those are the same kind of expectations that were placed on my parents … not so much on my mother, but definitely my father.

First born or only sons shared that their non-Korean friends' parents did not emphasize only getting A's in school. I asked respondents what it was like to have parents who valued high academic achievement. Some admitted that they didn't feel as loved unless they received good grades because much of what Korean parents valued was stellar academic achievement. Some participants noted that both of their parents were busy working sometimes seven days per week. But once they came home after work, the emphasis they focused on was getting A's.

Brandon is a 27 year old business consultant with one female sibling (age 25). Brandon's parents were strict about him getting top grades. Therefore, Brandon talked about how he would have like to "mess up in life, in school and everything." He came home with a "C" on his report card and was "devastated" because he knew his parents would be disappointed and he would subsequently feel he disappointed them and the pressure to get higher grades. He shared that he felt bad that his parents were disappointed in him. He stated:

> … not because of me getting a C, its more because of what my family would think, my parents would think … they don't have to say anything to me to feel the pressure and their disappointment … my parents excel in giving me looks of disappointments and I'm very good at feeling it.

Based on how Brandon was raised, he talked about wanting a "healthy blend" of both Korean and American cultures instilled in his future children:

> I want them to be have a nice healthy blend of American and Korean culture … I'm hoping to get that Korean culture from my parents … and try to instill it into my children … they're definitely gonna have that from me and my future wife … wherever she's from … I just want them to have a healthy blend.

Kwang Soo, a 33 year old son who had a 31 year old brother, talked about his experience of how his non-Korean friends' parents didn't seem to put as much pressure on grades. I asked Kwang Soo how he felt about his parents' value regarding education. He shared that he "resented" his parents' pressure to achieve high grades growing up. This pressure was magnified when his father and grandmother would criticize him for not studying hard enough to achieve better grades. Yet when his parents spoke to their friends or outside family members, they were "praising" and "bragging" about him. Consequently, it made Kwang Soo "confused" about whether they "loved" him or not. Getting bad grades was equated with "you're a bad son." But now, in his early 30s, he stated that he gained perspective that he could appreciate his parents' emphasis on grades. In retrospect, however, he was "happy that they stressed" their high expectations.

> … friends' parents, they don't seem that concerned with … their grades … most of my non-Korean friends didn't seem as concerned. My parents weren't that around … When they were around, grades were one of the most important things … whereas my friends, they seem to slack off at school … You grow up as if your parents don't love you unless you get good grades … Maybe growing up I may have resented some of that … you don't see them that often but they really emphasize education … my dad and grandmother are very critical but externally they're praising…bragging (about academics) … sometimes they … say you're a bad son … you should have got better grades. My dad would always say if I studied as much as you did, I would be a doctor … so that set up conflicts in my head. Do they really love me? But … looking back I'm happy that they stressed … some of those values. (Kwang Soo, age 33, computer programmer)

Most respondents stated that their parents wanted them to become either doctors or lawyers. They were primarily expected to strive for these fields. Bryce, age 27 (corporate attorney) and the older of two sons, exemplifies how he got into the law profession. Despite liking his field and job, it was not his choice. His parents decided this career track for him since junior high school. Bryce admitted that his parents emphasized the "doctor or lawyer"

expectation. I wondered if Bryce was innately born with this desire to become a lawyer or whether his status of being the oldest son had an impact. He stated: "… I've always planned on going to law school since, I even think it was since I was in the sixth or seventh grade … I've always wanted to be a lawyer and I think that happened because my parents emphasized going into a profession. You know either a doctor or a lawyer or something like that."

Carleton was being sarcastic while sharing his thoughts when I asked him what his parents wanted him to choose as a career. This sarcasm stemmed from the cliché that his Korean parents expected him to be a doctor. Such expectations are part of a Korean cultural pattern that was not just a Korean individual family's hope. Carleton implied that Korean parents mainly only allowed two choices of career: doctor or lawyer. He shared: "They … wanted me to … be a doctor. What a cliché huh? Korean parents wanting their children to become a doctor … so that was another expectation … what else?" (Carleton, age 38, production manager)

An older college student, Dante (age 23), was told that he was expected to be a "model of success." The expectation to become a doctor or lawyer or accountant was given by his parents. However, he had a dilemma that he thought he could be a mathematician. However, he didn't like math. In comparison, Dante's younger sister did not receive the same pressure to succeed in academics. Thus, to support Dante's educational prospects, he was sent to an afterschool tutoring school called *"hagwon"* while his sister was not.

A common Korean and Korean American cultural practice is that children attend tutoring programs called *"hagwons"* after school to supplement their learning. *Hagwons* are a traditional establishment in Korea, where most children attend extra academic preparation programs. This tradition is rooted in Confucian thought to achieve in careers by achieving in academics. Parents want their children to have an edge when it comes to career success and thus spend extra money on tutoring schools (Yi, 2002). Zhou and Kim (2007) found that the majority of Korean American children they interviewed in Los Angeles, California, for their study, currently attended one or more *hagwons*.

Sending Dante to tutoring institutes after the school day, cost his parents a lot of money. Yet his sister was not sent to them. He recollected:

> They expected me to be a … model of success … like … an accountant or a lawyer or a doctor … I was neither of those things … I … recognized that for myself … I'm not really built to be a mathematician. I don't want to design my

> life to do that … in terms of my sister … I don't know if they were more relaxed on her, but they didn't send her to *hagwon* [tutoring school].

John, age 38, corporate lawyer, went through most of his years of college being "pre-med" and eventually did not become a doctor. It was expected of him to become a doctor. John stated the expectation to become a doctor was, "driven in my head since I was a child. You're going to be a doctor … that's it nothing else … by the end of my third year [in college] I received a C in organic chemistry, my future looked very dark … of being a doctor …"

John shared that "there are some extreme pressures put on children, especially Korean children." There were times when John became "somewhat rebellious" and felt he was being "unfairly burdened with such high standards …" However, he mentioned, "you grow to accept it." In the end, after he became a lawyer, John was glad that his parents were able to boast at church about him and his brother. They can say that "my son's a lawyer and my other son is a doctor." Such bragging, John says, is indicative of "a typical Korean parent … they're so proud … I probably would have looked down on that when I was younger. John stated that he would have said it was "so shallow … snobby." But John accepted his parents' behavior because of the sacrifice that he believed his parents made: "… for what they did for us … my parents worked seven days a week." John's parents were happy to brag about his accomplishments while John felt proud that his parents could brag about him. This dynamic emerged as one of the buffers for the stress he received in the past while struggling to meet his parent's expectations.

Jay is a 34 year old medical director who was not practicing medicine. He received his medical degree having completed both medical school and residency. However, after his training, he decided not to practice clinical medicine and instead, worked in a corporation. This was a source of pain for his father and mother who were both practicing physicians. Jay recalled how his father especially had expectations for him to follow in his footsteps. When Jay did not meet his father's expectations to practice medicine, Jay became depressed and started taking antidepressants and receiving psychotherapy. No matter how clear Jay was about no longer wanting to pursue clinical medicine, his father continued to expect him to practice as a physician.

> At the end of medical school … I started entertaining that thought more seriously [entering into business] … I told my mom and dad … look what happened to me.

> I'm on this therapy … this medication. They were extremely upset and anxious … they flew here to make sure I was okay. I think that put them under a lot of stress. I told my dad specifically … I don't want to be a doctor … he said that's okay as long as you're okay … happy … healthy. However, I think he said … when I got better … what are you going to do after medicine? Are you going to be a cardiologist?

Brent, age 24, shared what it felt like to be forced to study something he did not want. He felt locked in a "box". Such an experience can add to the stress of first born or only sons. He said: "… I was pressured into it by my mom … she used to be an accountant … she wanted me to follow in her footsteps." When I asked Brent how it felt to have to follow his mother's accounting path, he shared, "… it's just like being locked in a box, being told what to do … I didn't like it … it wasn't my first … choice … but I wanted her to be happy … I reasoned that she made her sacrifices, I guess this could be a chance to make mine, and I'll see if it'll be good for me … I tried it out … I'm done with it." Brent didn't stay in accounting but for the sake of pleasing his mother who made "sacrifices" for him, he tried it out.

Connor, age 24, a recent college graduate who studied communications, felt that he always experienced a burden of being successful in order to make his father feel successful. He felt the burden to succeed: "I always felt growing up that my dad's, my failure is my dad's failure … my success is my dad's success. And also … taking not just my dad but my family … explicitly or implicitly … because I'm the oldest son … they did have these expectations…those expectations are bad … for my sister, they never … put that on her …"

Some respondents, despite feeling pressured by parents to succeed, were thankful for their values and high expectations. Some voices highlight this feeling. The values shared by many Korean parents in raising their children with the focus on academic and career success may not be negative for all.

John, the attorney in his late 30s didn't complain about his parents' expectations not only because he saw how hard they worked to provide financially for them while growing up, but because he appreciated the values of working hard in a respected career. The outcome of their pressure was that he became financially secure and happy in his job where he felt respected at his level of achievement. Even though he shared how he had "cracked" at one point during college due to stress of trying to get into medical school, he still accepted the high values placed on education and degrees. With regards to his parents' standards, John stated, "for my brother and

me … we accepted it well … values that … Korean people instill in their children and … pass down from generation to generation is critical to the livelihood to every future generation … (my friends and I talk about) why the Korean family is so successful as opposed to other families … it's because we … instill these values of respect, success and studying, education and doing the right thing and … being well mannered and proper."

Some respondents wanted to include the best of both cultures (Korean and American) in formulating their values about how to raise their own children with regards educational and career attainment. Participants were raised with high educational and career standards. Many spoke about having to bring home the highest grades or it would be a cause for lectures and scolding. Parents expected them to be the best. For the most part, being pressured by their parents to achieve excellence and to aim for high levels of achievement was not negative. In the end, most of the participants completed college and found jobs. Some became doctors and lawyers, as their parents wished.

In the context of respondents' experiences of being raised with high standards, I wanted to know how they, themselves, would like to rear their own future children. Interviewees acknowledged how their parents invested in their futures by teaching and enforcing ethics of working hard and pushing them to be their best. Korean American first born sons and their siblings appreciated their parents' examples of sacrifice and hard work to provide for them. In turn, some respondents wanted to not only succeed to make their parents proud to see the results of their hard work but also wanted to instill similar work ethics onto their own offspring.

Most respondents did not have children but some shared their wish to apply similar hard work strategies into their parenting. But they wanted to place less pressure to strictly become doctors or lawyers and give less pressure to get perfect grades or go to top name schools.

In response to his parents' emphasis on academic and career achievement, George, a 34 year old non-profit lawyer, hoped to raise his own future children differently. George, the only son of two sisters, talked about not wanting to promote the same pressure of going to "great schools" that he experienced while growing up. Instead, George stated he would allow his children to "pursue happiness" and to be a "good person." He did not want to place limited expectations of becoming either a doctor or a lawyer on his children as his own parents had done. "I'm not gonna ask for a lot … I don't care if they don't go to great schools … let them pursue their happiness … be a good person." George did not say that he wanted to enforce similar

pressures he faced from his parents. However, the rest of the respondents hoped to combine both Korean work ethics and the American ideal of allowing more individual choice.

Arnold is 28 years old and a post-baccalaureate student for pre-medical studies. He is the only son of three other older sisters ages 30, 38, and 40. Each of his sisters obtained advanced degrees: two practicing physicians and one who obtained a Master of Public Health degree. In addition, his father is a doctor and his mother is a nurse. Initially when I asked him the question of how he would like to raise his own children, he stated: "I just want them to believe in themselves … that they are perfect the way they are … that they have a really great personality and … great skills and qualities … they are unique … Whatever they decide to do … that's how they know they are in the right field … being the best at what they want to do."

I asked Arnold a follow up question. How did he think about how his parents would like him to raise his own children? Arnold's answer revealed a different thought in wanting to raise his future children that was similar to how his parents raised him. He felt this way, even though he just finished saying that he wanted his future children to "believe in themselves … whatever they decide to do." Arnold said in his own words:

> … expectations of how I raise my kids? … probably be the same as their [his parents'] expectations, what college are they going to? … they're going into a career with a license. That's a big thing to my parents. Get a license. That way you'll never not have a job.

Arnold "fought" the expectation of his parents to become a doctor. Thus, he started pursuing medicine at age 27 because it was his own choice. For his children, he wants to give them expectations but provide them with more choices of career. He stated: "… my own kids I am going to … push them, but I wanna push them in whatever field they wanna do most. My parents were very specific. They wanted me to be a doctor … that was part of the reason why I fought not to be a doctor until I started … actively pursuing it … at age 27, which is late …"

When I asked Arnold how he felt about his parents' expectation of becoming a physician, he simply stated, "… I guess it's better than being on the street …" Thus, having a career with financial security was not a bad idea because it would allow him to support himself.

Respondents shared that when they have children themselves in the future, they would like to keep some aspects of Korean values and expectations but also to incorporate American ideals for raising children with regard to their academics and careers. Many respondents stated that they would like to be less "harsh" and "rigid" about having their children only becoming doctors or lawyers. They also would not want to use physical punishment to enforce high standards in academics and employment prospects. Therefore, the clash of Korean and American styles of parenting for education and career were expressed as a catalyst to incorporate a balance of the best of both worlds. Participants stated their belief that parents can have high standards and expectations but be more open by giving children a wider range of career choices with support.

In conclusion, Korean parents have placed pressure on their children to succeed. This pressure was experienced as stressful for many participants. However, there were buffers to their stress such as feeling proud of their accomplishments, feeling happy about making their parents proud, and in being able to financially care for themselves and possibly, as needed, their parents as well. Working hard, making an effort, and practicing discipline, as taught by the respondents' parents, were not strictly negative experiences. The voices of these participants argue that Korean Americans can strive to find a balance between hard work and openness to other measures of success through combining positive aspects of both the Korean and American worlds that they live in.

Negative Cases

Not all first born or only sons shared the same experiences of being expected to succeed academically and to become a professional (i.e. doctor or lawyer). Although the majority of participants shared that their parents had higher expectations in academics and career choices than their siblings, there were a few whose parents were not as strict about performance. In these rare interviews, there were a few Korean parents who didn't push for perfect grades or expect their children to become doctors or lawyers.

Steven has two older sisters. He shared that his parents "never pushed" him with regards to academics. He had received "really bad marks" ever since elementary school. However, he noted that his parents only told him that they wanted him to do "better." They didn't push him to

study or to become a doctor or a lawyer. He recalled only one time when his father asked whether he wanted to become a lawyer under the influence of his father's friend. But there was no pressure. He also shared that his friends [many were of Latin American descent] experienced this similar lack of pressure to do well in school. There were few Asians in his neighborhood. Therefore, Steven was around peers whose parents also didn't push for academic excellence.

> Of course they expected me to do well, but they never really pushed me with schoolwork … they don't believe in making you do things … you don't want to do … they … don't force you … when I was in school … 4th grade … I got really bad marks. They weren't happy with it … otherwise it was pretty loose. They never said … I'm gonna … make you learn … they just said … do better. In junior high I didn't do too well either … But they never … pushed me to study … A lot of my friends were raised in a similar way. Their parents didn't really force them to study hard … They never pushed me to become … a doctor or lawyer … once I remember my father's friend … trying to tell my father to make me a lawyer … that's like the only time he said 'do you want to be a lawyer'… I said 'no.' That was … it … no typical … Korean kid trying to be a doctor or lawyer. They never pushed for that … (Steven, age 31, media consultant)

Parental Expectations: Stress, Resentment, and Frustration

The following stories illustrate how the role of the first born or only son affected both the individual and group dynamics of his family. For Korean American first born or only sons, traditions and expectations can be a source of frustration that can lead to stress. He can become frustrated with the stress and burden of his role that may include difficulties, resentment, and roadblocks.

John, a 38 year old corporate attorney, talked about how he "cracked" under the pressure of parents' expectations to succeed in academics and career, as did others he knew. What did John mean by "cracked" under pressure? Holding emotions and stressors inside one's mind and body can be detrimental to one's overall health. He elaborated:

> … in the back of your head, you … say … my parents are doing this for us … we should at least try to succeed and do what they want. But at the same time … the pressure builds. I've seen a lot of people crack … a lot of other Koreans … just not living up to … expectations … it's a nightmare … I also cracked at one point. I was…pre-med … that was … driven in my head since I was a child …You're going to…be a doctor … nothing else … I received a C in organic chemistry. My future looked very dark in terms of being a doctor. I … couldn't tell my parents

> … I wasn't pursuing medicine … I was a junior in college. I was under extreme pressure to do something … I didn't know what to tell them … about a year and a half or two, I kept the secret … it grew to be a big secret and creating a lot of pressure within me.

Brent, age 24, Information Technology Coordinator, shared how the pressure he felt started to build up emotions inside of himself. Eventually he could not hold it in anymore. He stated he was normally "passive" but that there was a "boiling point" that was reached given parental expectations to excel. When he repressed the pressure within, it had a detrimental effect on his grades and well-being. At some point, due to the pressure he experienced to achieve high grades, he stopped going to class. This was his way of communicating to his parents that he was no longer going to deal with the pressure. His protest against having to "study my ass off" resulted in his decision to quit college for some time. At the time Brent was interviewed for this study, he was working full time. However, he planned to return to college to complete his degree: "I took a couple of years off, just to get my head straight, after my, little blow up and … I'm just working right now, full time".

> … when you're pressured like that since … you're young, it starts to build up … like the feeling where somebody's pushing you … the tolerance level might be different for some … but I was very tolerant up to a certain point, and at one point you're just like fuck it … I … wanted to show how much I'm putting into it, and to show them what it would look like if I didn't putting anything into it … teaching them a lesson … you put too much pressure on me … I … wanted to be blatant … [to show his parents] an example of … what could be, so I just stopped going to class … sophomore and junior year, my grades … were failing in everything … right now the way you … are pressuring me … I don't feel like doing anything … I just want to regain my composure … after that … they gave me my space … I'm normally not like that, I'm very passive … whatever is given to me, I'll … do my best, but up to a certain point …

Hyung Oh, a college student studying English, (age 24) talked about abusing drugs and alcohol to cope with the stress of not fulfilling expectations of being the only son in his family. He had a sister who was 25 years old. His father had a string of opening up businesses and then filing for bankruptcy. His mother worked in a nail salon. Their struggled financially and Hyung Oh no longer wanted to be a "burden" on his family because he did not have a job and was not

yet done with college. The expectations his parents had for him as the only son were not fulfilled, in his perception. Therefore, he felt "rejection feelings of negativity" from his father. What Hyung Oh described as expected duties were being a "provider" for the family and being "stern" and more of a "thinking man" or "less emotional." He wanted to "escape" from this feeling of "failure." Pressures built up in relation to his inability to live up to the "prototype" of a Korean son. As a result, he "detached" himself from the failed expectations of Korean cultural expectations and became more "Americanized." Hyung Oh turned to "drug abuse…smoking a lot of weed to escape." He stated he did not want to be someone "that I don't want to be." I asked Hyung Oh what the pressure to be a certain "prototype" was like:

> … I have more self-defeating tendencies … I would just not act cause…probably the rejection feelings of negativity from my father … I guess I failed so far [to fulfill the traditional role of the son] … I don't want to be a burden anymore. I just want to escape from that … I guess I don't fit the prototype of the typical … Korean male - one who provides, more stern, less emotional … more thinking man. I don't know. Maybe they had an effect on me today … expectations … pressure … to the fact … I always I knew I was a smart kid whenever I had a desire to be motivated … I think so. But in the end it really didn't matter … I was … detached as I grew older. Their whole realm of Korean customs … It just I did not resonate to me. I became more Americanized … I guess I was more into … and open to many possibilities … eventually leading to drug abuse … smoking a lot of weed to escape. I didn't want to be someone that I am not someone that I don't want to be.

Discussion

This study explored the experiences of first born or only sons in depth. Was being the first born or only son in a Korean American family a privilege or a burden? It was a topic that had not yet been researched. It also attempted to have participants reflect on their identities within their complex familial, cultural, social, economic, historical, political, and environmental contexts. Did Korean American first born or only sons need support for the expectations of their roles? Did their siblings and parents also need resources and support in relation to the emphasized role of the first born or only son? Lastly, the goal was to extrapolate from the data, whether there was a need for policy makers, community professionals, and Korean American individuals and their families, to be aware of public health issues raised in this research.

The accounts of Korean American first born or only sons were not only missing in the literature, but most respondents had also not previously reflected specifically on their role identities and experiences. Their answers to the final question of "what was it like to participate in this study?" revealed that most of the respondents had never been asked these questions before. Moreover, it did not occur to them to reflect on their roles in this way. Thus, they had not shared their thoughts about their subjective experiences of their roles with their siblings or parents. However, two interviewees expressed that they shared their frustrations with a cousin or a close friend who were also Korean American first born or only sons, to talk about parallel expectations experienced. This was an indication that despite the lack of communication for most respondents about their roles with others, there were a few who felt a shared connection with others in the same cultural role.

Since qualitative stories about Korean American first born or only sons have not been heard widely in either research, community or peer circles, hearing personal stories from participants helped to reveal clearly defined themes of privilege and burden. The expected themes expressed were experiences of respondents feeling stress in taking on major responsibilities for the family and being given higher standards for achievement in academics and in their careers. In other words, some participants expressed *role conflict* from *role overload* and *role strain* (Merton, 1957). Korean American first born or only sons participating in this research shared that they were given more pressure and expectations than their younger male or female siblings (younger or older). However, while being interviewed, many participants did not complain about their stated burdens or privileges. At the same time, respondents also talked about privileges of being given more attention, status, power, and respect. Privileges tied to their roles may have provided buffers for their burdens. Thus, perhaps that was the reason why many didn't complain about the expectations.

Role-sets, as coined by Merton (1957) for Korean American first born or only sons in this study, consisted of being persons with power, authority, and responsibilities. They were given *status-sets* (Merton, 1957) that defined within Confucian ideals, that they would be regarded with high status in their families. These were cultural and historically ascribed and passed on through generations and further along to Korean American immigrant parents who established themselves in the United States. Regardless of the age differences between male and female siblings, even if the first born or only son was one year older than the younger brother, he was

still made responsible for his younger sibling or sister. In addition, if he were the only son of one or more sisters, it did not matter whether he was younger than his sister(s). He was still be expected to be the leader and financially supportive (if needed) as if he were a surrogate parent.

First born or only sons were expected to be surrogate heads of household, obtain high grades, become doctors or lawyers, be leaders and role models for family members, and to care for their parents in old age.

The dynamics of the context of why Korean American parents continued to place expectations on first born or only sons to be surrogate heads of household and future old age insurance plans, so to speak, was examined through data. This provided a reality base for expectations. In this research, 54% of respondents' parents owned businesses according to the demographic survey filled out before participants were interviewed. If such a high percentage of respondents' parents owned businesses, it is likely that Korean American parents in this study also had low rates of health insurance and retirement plans.

Owning or working in a small business can contribute to individuals and families not having retirement plans due to the cost for employers. Korean Americans have the highest self-employment rates in America. This results in "reduced access to employer-sponsored retirement programs," a major part of retirement planning (Kim, Im, & An, 2007, p. 5). Thus, given that many Korean Americans own or work in small businesses, many do not have retirement plans. According to the United States National Bureau of Economic Research (2001), Korean immigrants had the highest self-employment rates (28% of men and 20% of women) owned their own businesses. Examples of businesses Korean Americans work in or own are: garment factories, dry cleaners, groceries, food services, construction and manufacturing, and wholesale and retail stores (Lee, 1998; Nam & Herbert, 1999).

Twenty percent (20%) of all small businesses in the United States offer retirement plans (Gladych, 2011). This finding paralleled the percent of 489 Korean Americans surveyed by Kim, Im, and An (2007) in Los Angeles and Orange Counties in California: "20% have a 401(k) or 403(b) account, employer-sponsored retirement funds" (p. 4). Moreover, 2% of those who were self-employed, had a Simplified Employee Pension Plan (SEP-IRA), a retirement plan for those who are self-employed person or own businesses (Kim, Im, & An, 2007).

Similar to having a lack of sponsored retirement plans by employers of small businesses, or when self-employed, health insurance can be a luxury for some. When companies have less

than 100 employees, they are less likely to have employer-sponsored health insurance coverage than those with more than 100 employees (Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 2008). Sixty percent (60%) of Korean Americans who work, are employees at a business or company with fewer than 100 employees (Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 2008). In comparison, less than 40 percent of other Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (AA & NHPI) work at companies with less than 100 employees (Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 2008). For Korean Americans, employer-sponsored coverage can be as low as 49 percent (Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 2008). Consequently, Koreans (31%) are the most uninsured of all AA & NHPI subgroups (Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 2008).

Korean Americans have one of the highest rates of not having health insurance. In specific, studies have found that a range of 24% - 33% of Korean Americans were uninsured (Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 2008; Sohn, 2004; Sorkin, Nguyen, & Ngo-Metzger, 2011; Yoo & Kim, 2007). Health coverage rates of non-elderly Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders differed among the Asian subgroups. The highest percentage of those uninsured were Korean Americans (31%), followed by Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (24%), Vietnamese (21%), Chinese (16%), Filipino (14%), Asian Indian (12%), and Japanese (12%) (Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, 2008). Similarly, a study by Sorkin, Nguyen, and Ngo-Metzger (2011) found that Korean Americans (24%) had the highest rates of being uninsured or not continuously insured of the 20,712 adult sample in the 2007 California Health Interview Survey, consisting of six Asian subgroups and non-Hispanic whites: Chinese (8.2%), Vietnamese (13.9%), Filipino (4.1%), Japanese (3.5%), South Asian (10.5%), Korean (23.6%), and non-Hispanic whites (4.4%).

Given these figures of Korean Americans having low rates retirement plans and health insurance, their offspring, and first born or only sons, in particular, as respondents in this study have shared, may become one of the major old age insurance plans for parents. This goes in accordance with traditional expectations that the first born or only sons care for parents when they get older. This can be especially highlighted when Korean American elderly cannot live on social security income alone when they have a "relatively short work history" in the United States as immigrants (Kim, Im, & An, 2007, p. 45). Only 42% of participants in Kim, Im, and An's research (2007) reported that they had retirement plans other than social security. In sum,

given the statistics on business ownership and subsequent lack of health insurance and retirement plans offered to employees and acquired by employers, there may be a practical reason why Korean American parents might be depending on the first born or only son to care for both financially and if they develop health problems in old age. According Kim, Im, and An (2007), 33% of their 489 respondents financially supported their parents and 29% regularly gave gifts to parents.

Most first born or only sons stated that their parents expected them to become either a doctor or a lawyer. If neither was an option, participants were expected to go into professional fields with financial security, or by obtaining a license, or obtaining advanced degrees. Their parents expected them to be their best and set the standard high. Eventually, however, some parents had to lower their expectations according to individual abilities and interests. Although most respondents did not become doctors or lawyers, many obtained financially secure careers that they were proud of.

The negative aspect of having a limited choice of careers (i.e. either doctor or lawyer) can cause tension and make one feel inadequate if another career track is chosen outside of what parents hoped for. Therefore, high expectations can be both positive and negative. There is nothing wrong with a parent wishing their child to be in a professional career. But when one cannot fulfill expectations, a sense of failure is experienced. Can this be damaging to one's self esteem and one's sense of fulfillment and accomplishment in life?

If the first born or only son accepts the expectations that are tied to his role and is able to live up to them, he would not have a conflict about his identity. However, if a first born or only son does not accept his role burdens and expectations, and/or cannot live up to the standards (e.g. academic excellence, becoming a doctor or a lawyer, or being responsible for siblings), what happens to his self-esteem, sense of identity, and mental health? Many first born or only sons shared that they felt "pressure," "overwhelmed," and "burdened" by aspects of their roles. These difficulties and burdens of role created stress. But do these stressors also negatively affect the physical health of Korean first born or only sons? There are many questions that need to be explored further to understand these effects.

Furthermore, within the dual cultures that they live in, do first born or only sons struggle with their role expectations? As some respondents shared, their non-Korean peers were not raised with the same expectations of being leaders in their families, getting only A's in school,

caring for parents in the future, becoming doctors or lawyers, carrying on the family name, and marrying within the culture. When first born or only sons observed that their non-Korean peers were not held to the same standards based on gender and status, the disparities and cultural clashes were highlighted. They wondered why they had to follow and obey traditional values and customs.

These conflicts also influenced another major aspect of their lives: their sibling relationships. Participants expressed being envious and upset towards his sibling(s) who had less duties and responsibilities. As such, based on the findings, being the first born or only son sometimes created a conflict between the respondent and his sibling(s) given how parents treated them differently and imposed different levels of standards. Some sibling conflicts from childhood resulting from gender status roles continued into their adult lives. Siblings complained about not getting enough attention and privileges as their brothers. This contributed to lowering their self-esteem and feelings of being perceived as being less capable of achieving at high levels like their brothers.

Simultaneously, however, while discussing burdens, some first born or only sons talked about accepting their roles as a fact of life because such expectations built their character. Acceptance of the duties attached to their role did not necessarily mean that the first born or only sons liked or did not like expectations of their role. Yet, they expressed that they benefited in various ways. The burden of being responsible for siblings and their families taught them about the importance of the family and to be loyal to family members. They valued being close to their families and caring about each member. Some accepted their duties and responsibilities as a form of privilege and status they were entrusted with and which resulted in a sense of pride.

It was also apparent that pressures placed on first born or only sons was seen later in life, as an adult, as positive for motivating them to work hard to achieve goals. Some stated that they appreciated their parents for expecting them to be their best because they were satisfied with the outcomes of attaining university degrees and having jobs they were proud of. Interviewees spoke about the stress of high expectations for getting perfect grades and gaining acceptance into prestigious universities while growing up. Yet the satisfaction and rewarding outcomes of their achievements made their hard work worthwhile. Honor, respect, praise, and status resulted in having accomplished their goals.

Additionally, participants believed they learned leadership skills despite the burden of caring for younger brothers and sisters, being surrogate heads of household, and role models for their siblings, while their parents worked long hours. These skills were transferable from their role expectations to their careers and interpersonal relationships.

Realizing that burdens and duties produced good values, character skills, and life lessons, burdens and privileges were interchangeable parts of their lives. Burdens and privileges emerged as a fluid and interwoven aspect of their lives that was not easily separated. Many accepted that both burdens and privileges existed. Few challenged their parents openly about their privileges or burdens. Their approach to understanding their roles was integrated as they incorporated privileges of respect and power.

Integration also took place at the level of negotiating two sets of cultures and expectations. The process of acculturation and immigration contributed to factors of manifestations of stress in first born or only sons due to role conflicts stemming from two differing cultures. There was a clash of what respondents' immigrant parents in a new country (America) expected of Korean American first born or only sons as they still held onto values from the old country (Korea). There were also stressors experienced by parents, as told by respondents, of working long hours and not having time to spend with participants. For instance, parents needed to enroll the help of first born or only sons to be heads of household while they were at work. While first born or only sons were trying to fulfill parental needs to help raise their siblings, they also had to achieve well in school and prepare for their careers.

Therefore, the clash of American and Korean values for first born or only sons had to be integrated to cope with the stress of their roles. Buffers assisted by not framing burdens as negative but as a part of life that helped build character to achieve at higher levels. After all, respondents were in good relations with their parents and appreciated them for instilling high standards and expectations.

Not all cultural clashes were positive or learning experiences for participants. This research found that growing up in various communities was not easy for some respondents due to experiencing racial harassment as a minority group. Acculturating and assimilating in new neighborhoods that were not always welcoming, was a challenge. However, most interviewees seemed to have pushed through these difficulties and still went on to achieve major milestones. Moreover, as immigrants to a new country, participants were raised in America with Korean

parents who brought with them, their hopes and dreams for better lives. One of the major themes that likely provided a buffer for racial harassment might have been recognizing that their parents made sacrifices for them to immigrate to the United States. Their way of thanking their parents for suffering through sacrifices was to work hard to help their parents fulfill expectations of achievement rather than focusing on belonging to a racial minority in their neighborhoods.

Another culture clash that many respondents struggled with was that they wished they had a wider range of choices for career and universitiek1s to attend. With this in mind, respondents wanted to change the way they raised their future children by combining a happy medium between high standards of excellence in education and career coupled with more choices and support. This way, there would no longer be a clash of American and Korean values. In fact, many respondents shared that when they had their own children, they would like to keep some of the Korean values and traditions while incorporating values of American culture that they liked. They looked forward to their parents helping to teach their children Korean culture and language while they, as parents who could integrate the best of both worlds, and teach their children the positive aspects of the culture of their adopted country (the United States).

In sum, this research on Korean American first born or only sons describes the integrated experience of being in a master status that comes with privileges and burdens. Privileges seemed to be buffers of burdens. The dynamics of Korean American first born or only sons was illustrated within the context of master status and expectation states, hierarchies, and influence given to first born or only sons. Buffers and mediators of stress were discovered such as identity-relevant experiences of higher statuses and rewards/privileges. Role performance was connected to a network of relationships which they benefited from and which were congruent with expectations of their high status roles. This in turn, increased their self-worth and identity. However, if role performance was not congruent with expectations, Korean American first born or only sons may have experienced a lowered self-concept and identity.

Meanwhile, as indicated by the results, many of the first born or only sons coped with stress tied to their role expectations, and succeeded in fulfilling immigrant parental expectations to excel in academics and in their careers. They integrated the duties of being a first born or only son in the context of a Korean child of immigrant parents and the historical expectations of this role in addition to adapting to American culture with its own values and expectations. Korean

American first born or only sons needed to incorporate divergent aspects of culture and identity not only within themselves, but with their parents, siblings, peers, and the larger context of class, age, abilities and disabilities, geography, social inequality, and other factors.

In addition to identity issues in the larger context, the dynamics of being the first born or only son entailed duty, burden, responsibilities, being expected to marry a Korean woman, having success in one's career with indicators such as achieving economic security, taking care of siblings and elderly parents both emotionally and financially, and being leaders and mediators. Such aspects of the first born or only son's role were different from their sibling's roles (younger sons or daughters). Typically, siblings interviewed in this research, did not state that they wanted to be in the role of the first born or only son due to expectations and responsibilities. This corroboration of data suggested that first born or only sons experienced both buffers to burdens and successes despite stressors of responsibilities.

Not all first born or only son participants achieved at the levels of most. While it was not uncommon for some to have graduate degrees, a few did not complete college. For those who did not meet expectations of culturally perceived levels of success, an inferred theme contributing to poor health and mental health arose. Although many first born or only sons in this study accomplished major milestones and fulfilled parental expectations, those who were unable to achieve these expectations felt like failures given the status and attention they received growing up. Such identity disappointments (both to themselves and family members) within their master status roles can lead to first born or only sons needing support from the community in areas of mental health, in the form of mentors and role models, and education about the stress of role burdens.

Overall, many first born or only sons felt they learned important life skills. They were proud of their achievements despite the hard work and pressures they experienced in their educational paths and careers. Additionally, they were thankful to their parents for pressuring them and setting high standards to get them to where they were in their lives. Despite the burdens and frustrations of aspiring to meet higher expectations, first born or only sons withstood stress while achieving milestones. It seemed that first born or only sons coped with their burdens and role expectations with buffers and rewards of status, privilege, attention, recognition, and a sense of self-worth.

First born or only sons raised in the United States grew up with traditional role expectations. However, the privileges that used to be awarded to first born or only sons in Korea historically, are no longer the equivalents of status, major gifts, and endowments. In America, having the status of being a first born or only son does not have significant meaning or power. In addition, due to economic advancement, both Koreans in Korea and in America, no longer need to rely on the first born or only son to survive financially. Siblings, whether younger male or female, can also achieve financially and in their careers on their own. Most also don't have to depend on their older brothers or only brothers to support their education. As in the past in Korea, first born or only sons usually received the majority of resources because they were seen as future investments of financial security for their families. But this expectation is outdated because of better economic circumstances and siblings also being able to support their families if needed. Therefore, being the first born or only son no longer carries the same privileges but still has some of the burdens that are not strictly burdensome. In between privileges and burdens were major intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and benefits buffering stressors of role expectations.

Finally, this study has implications on mental health; identity; role burdens; gender differences in terms of role expectations; acculturation and assimilation; conflicts resulting from the clash of values and expectations of Korean and American cultures; and further inquiry into the overall well-being of Korean American individuals and their families.

Summary/Conclusions

Immigrant life has not been easy for most groups in the United States. For Korean Americans, the process of acculturation and immigration contributed to manifestations of stress in first born or only sons due to role conflicts stemming from two divergent cultures. There was a clash of what respondents' parents in a new country (America) expected of Korean American first born or only sons as they clung to values from the old country (Korea). There were also stressors experienced by parents, as told through respondents, of working long hours and not having time to spend with participants. It was natural to discover through the interviews in this study that parental stressors of immigration likely led to first born or only sons being in positions as heads of household and responsible for their siblings while parents worked.

Further, first born or only sons were hoped to be future caregivers and to financially support their older parents. A major reason for this expectation was not only due to traditional Confucian values placed on first born or only sons, but may also be likely due to the fact that many Korean American parents did not have retirement plans or health insurance. Most of the respondents' parents worked in or owned private businesses where there were no allotments for retirement savings. Additionally, it was important for families to financially survive rather than save for the future. Thus, first born or only sons were designated by tradition and consequently, by parents raising them in America, to be financial supporters after retirement. However, buffers existed with the added duties and responsibilities of first born or only sons. These buffers of praise, attention, respect, and power seemed to contribute to some first born or only sons taking on their role expectations with pride rather than as a burden.

Given the dynamics of acculturation, Korean American first born or only sons seemed to struggle with the conflict of negotiating how to please their Korean parents and meeting expectations of the traditional Korean values versus differing cultural norms in the United States (i.e. less emphasis on role burdens and privileges). Participants shared their conflicts of expectations of what their roles meant. While older brothers or only brothers received much attention and respect, they also were expected to achieve in career and academic aspirations. The siblings of first born or only sons, however, were not expected to achieve at the higher levels expected of first born or only sons. They had more choices. In fact, they could become successful and have privileges resulting from their own hard work and individual goals. Siblings being raised in America were not prevented from taking and benefiting from opportunities similar to those given to their older brothers or only brothers. Yet siblings didn't have the same higher status, responsibilities, burdens, and pressures that their oldest brothers or only brothers had. Additionally, first born or only sons in America seemed to no longer receive the traditional privileges of land, money, opportunities, and status as practiced in Korean culture.

Currently, first born or only sons or their siblings could equally achieve high status and privilege. Siblings could attend good colleges if they worked hard without getting the same privileges of respect and status that their older brothers or only brothers were given. Regardless of privileges, siblings could take out loans, get scholarships, work for their degrees on their own if their parents chose to invest more in their older brothers or only brothers. Therefore, receiving the benefits of being the first born or only sons was mostly moot in the United States where the

same status and privilege of being the first born or only son no longer translated to the same receipt of valuables, status, and power, as was the case in historical Korea.

Most participants, however, despite stress and struggles that came with their roles, seemed to enjoy and appreciate buffers of their stress (i.e. privileges and status). Most also were able to achieve major milestones such as completing college, getting a job, and enjoyed relationships with friends and family. Most did not share that they "cracked" under the pressure of their roles. Despite a few first born Korean sons in my sample who seemed to experience difficulties with pressures they faced, I found no evidence that serious mental health issues are typical among Korean American men. All or most of the first born sons in my study seemed to have coped reasonably well with such pressures. Moreover, even those who expressed that felt they "cracked" under pressure, were not seriously impaired given their abilities to keep full time jobs and have positive interpersonal relationships that included their siblings and parents.

Policy Issues for Social Work Practice

Support, Cultural Education, and Training

To promote healthy Korean American individuals and families, policies to promote and implement support, training, and education for prevention and intervention in Korean American communities can be provided. These might include education about cultural clashes and aspects of raising immigrant Korean American children with dual influences and expectations. Community organizations and schools can work with Korean parents in understanding best practices in raising children with factors of immigration such as acculturation and assimilation in mind. How can professionals and community professionals help Korean American parents bridge gaps with the old and new cultures? Promoting and supporting culturally sensitive policies can help Korean Americans be contributing members to society and increase the overall well-being of their communities.

As youth are in school for a major part of their childhood (from kindergarten to 12th grade), parents, teachers, and school professionals can benefit from multicultural education and training. They can be taught about the impact of immigration and culturally specific factors affecting youth and academic and social success. For example, parents and teachers can learn

about the effects of immigration and the possible clashes of culture, roles, expectations, and other strains that can be placed on children which can impact their achievement in school.

For schools with higher concentrations of immigrants and in particular, Korean Americans, it might be beneficial to train teachers (at the K-12 levels), counselors, college educators, and social workers to understand Korean values and traditions with regards to education. Professionals coming in contact with Korean Americans can be taught to help Korean American families negotiate expectations and cultures of both Koreans and Americans. For instance, school guidance counselors and college academic advisors can be helped to understand the potential pressures for Korean American males in choosing a career. Another example involves responding to a Korean American student in distress over his/her grades in school. It will be helpful for those working with the student to understand the cultural context of Korean parents' expectations and values. This will help to assess the levels of stress and severity of the student's concerns. Some cultures may not emphasize education as one of the most important factors of success. But given the findings in this study, it is helpful to keep in mind that Korean Americans place a high value on obtaining higher education and having high expectations of achieving academic excellence. Therefore, professionals working with the student in distress need to have this knowledge in mind so that the distress is not minimized and their interventions, or lack thereof, do not make things worse. Moreover, professionals can be made culturally aware and sensitive to the dynamics of findings in this research of Korean American first born and only sons that may influence added pressures experienced by students. It is important to note that a major finding in this study is that the Korean American first born or only sons were predominately functioning well and reflected on their parents' high expectations as providing a positive force in their development.

On this note of pressure and high levels of educational expectations placed on Korean Americans by their parents, there is also a counterpoint to support a more balanced expectation on the part of all parents in America for children to succeed academically. Perhaps what might help the American educational system is for all parents of all cultures, races, and ethnicities, to be actively involved in and have high expectations for their children. If children are given the support with a balance of discipline and expectation with pressure, the educational attainment levels of youth in the United States might increase. Given that most of the respondents in this study did not crumble under pressure despite the stress and pressure they felt, there might be

something to say about adopting some of the practices of Korean American parents for education. In fact, in the long run, the older respondents who were established in their careers were thankful and appreciated their parents' pressures to achieve in school and in their careers.

In relation to the emphasis on the importance of education for all American children, there was recent dialogue and controversy over an article written by Amy Chua, a professor of law at Yale University. Chua wrote about "Why Chinese Parents are Superior" (Wall Street Journal, January 8, 2011) where she outlined some major differences of Western parents and Chinese parents in America. Chua provided an explanation of values and parenting styles that many Korean American parents also seem to emphasize, including the expectation of achieving excellence in education. Similar historically shared concepts of Confucian ideals of children obeying parents and practicing filial piety were explained by Chua. This included the expectation to obey parents' wishes due to parental sacrifice as related to immigration. Chua told of how Chinese American children see how their parents work hard to support the family. Chinese American parents, as asserted by Chua, spent hours teaching, guiding, training, and educating their children. In turn, the children had a sense of duty to repay their parents through making their parents proud of their accomplishments. However, there was much controversy over this article and labeling Chinese mothers "Tiger Moms" which inferred that they were being harsh on children and not letting them have enough time to relax and enjoy growing up. There were arguments on both ends of the spectrum that Chinese parents were pushing too hard verses American parents not pushing their children hard enough.

There are contextual cultural factors that need to be understood for Amy Chua's article. One major backdrop of this debate can be illustrated with the "model minority" coined by sociologist William Peterson (New York Times Magazine, 1966). As sentiments of racism were prevalent in the 1960s, Asian Americans were perceived through some accounts of the media as "model minorities." This term revealed how Asian Americans, despite immigration, discrimination, language and cultural barriers, seemed to be able to overcome these factors to achieve in academics. However, this was not the reality for all Asian Americans. This stereotype then had a negative consequence of Americans thinking that all Asian Americans did not need support due to seeming to be high achievers in a new land (The United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1980). Therefore, labeling Chinese American mothers "Tiger Moms" seems to have a negative connotation about Asian American parents who push their

children so hard to result in the end product of their children being successful academically. It may also perpetuate the model minority stereotype that all Asian Americans achieve at high levels.

With regards to Korean Americans and expectations to obey their parents to achieve high levels of academic and career success, as illustrated in this study, there needs to be education and training provided to parents, teachers, and other professionals coming in contact with Korean American youth to support a bicultural balance of expectations and values. Confucian ethics promote obeying one's parents which Korean Americans still adhere to, to some degree. Within Confucian values, it is not respectful to go against parents' wishes and directives. This may contribute to Korean American youth not being able to easily assert themselves as easily about matters of academics and career. Thus, Korean American youth can be taught a balance of being more assertive while trying to obey many of their parents' directives at the same time, since high expectations, in themselves, for children, are not harmful.

Based on respondents' observation of differing expectations, American values seemed to promote more choices of career and educational paths versus Korean American values. For instance, many respondents were expected to achieve high grades on their exams throughout their education and to gain entrance into competitive colleges, and to go into competitive careers such as medicine and law. Given the bicultural perspectives that Korean Americans are exposed to, it would be helpful for professionals working with Korean Americans to understand the expectations their parents might have for grades and college acceptance. It may also be helpful for Korean American parents to be taught about promoting a balance of the two cultural perspectives to offer Korean American children more choices and subsequently, less pressure to succeed.

Another policy issue centers around how immigrant parents cannot provide as much time and supervision to their children after school. This study revealed that many respondents grew up with little parental supervision due to parents working long hours to financially support their families. Therefore, schools with high concentrations of immigrant families whose parents work long hours, can provide afterschool programs and classes in support of parents who cannot be there for them after school.

As for Korean American first born or only sons who are currently caring for their aging parents, awareness and education can be provided to promote a balanced perspective of role

expectations. How can siblings of first born or only sons understand their oldest or only brother's roles? Are there ways that siblings can be educated about how they can negotiate supporting their brothers to assist in caring for their elderly parents? Additionally, how can older Korean American parents holding onto traditional values and expectations placed on first born sons, be taught about balancing expectations with each of their offspring instead of placing most of their expectations on the first born or only sons? To reach the Korean American elderly population, geriatricians, gerontologists, and those who work in elder care services can be trained to teach this group how to negotiate their own past ideals with new, more balanced views. Elderly parents can be taught that their first born or only sons must negotiate how to balance taking care of their own families and the needs of his parents through family meetings.

Targeted solutions to support and balance the duty of the first born or only son may be to modify filial duties and negotiate norms within Western and Korean traditions by: (1) reducing the eldest son's duty to parents and having siblings take a more active role in caregiving; (2) having parents accept the importance and respect for their son's marital bond or other individual needs and duties; (3) preventing the need to have their sons solely support them financially by saving for retirement while still working; and (4) limiting filial obligations of each of their children in general (e.g. by assisting parents to apply for government assistance such as income support).

Based on the underutilization of mental health services by Korean Americans, how can professionals and community members decrease the stigmas attached to receiving such services? To provide mental health support for Korean American individuals and families, more Korean American bilingual and bicultural psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers in clinics and hospitals are needed. There are many professional settings that have no Korean speaking mental health professionals. Korean clients receive less care as a result of the language barrier. Some cannot make an initial intake appointment due to not speaking English as there are few or no Korean speaking professionals to obtain their information. Further, there is no mental health clinic in New York City, for instance, specializing in working specifically with the Korean American community. There are, however, a few bilingual Korean American mental health professionals in private practice in New York City who usually do not accept insurance. This was based on a database compiled by the Korean American Behavioral Health Association (based in New York) of Korean American bilingual psychiatrists, psychologists,

psychotherapists, and social workers. There are also a few bilingual Korean American mental health professionals working in mental health clinics but there are not enough to meet the demands of clients. In areas such as Flushing, New York, where there are high concentrations of Korean Americans who do not speak English and need interpreters to help them start the process through making the intake appointment. Therefore, those with language barriers and fewer resources may receive limited mental health services. This can lead to possible emergency situations due to not having preventative care beforehand.

To provide other social supports to meet the physiological and basic needs of Korean Americans, more Korean American bilingual and bicultural social workers or clerical assistants and translators working for federal aid supplemental programs are needed. It can be difficult for English speaking individuals to access and receive and to apply for federal aid (e.g. food stamps, housing, supplemental income). For those with limited language proficiency, there are more challenges.

To gather a wider community of professionals who are bilingual and bicultural, a recruitment campaign to encourage Korean Americans studying to work in the helping professions can be initiated.

Lastly, a Korean community advisory board of mental health professionals community resource providers, religious organizations, businesses, academic professionals, students, parents, and any other group wishing to advance the Korean American community's access to help and resources can be created.

Prevention of Alcohol and Nicotine Abuse for Korean Americans

Korean Americans males have higher rates of smoking cigarettes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997; Kim et al., 2000; Ma, Shive, Tan, & Toubbeh, 2002; National Center for Health Statistics, 2003). Korean Americans were also found to binge drink at a higher level than the general population, and among other Asian American ethnic groups (The Health of Immigrants in New York City, 2006). Part of the higher rates of binge drinking can be attributed to the drinking norms and attitudes in Korean Americans (Galvan & Caetano, 2003). Therefore, Korean Americans and professionals working with this group, can benefit from education, interventions, and policy initiatives that target culturally specific prevention and cessation of alcohol and cigarette use. Even though the question of usage of alcohol and nicotine was not

asked in this study, prevention of substance abuse is noteworthy due to the assumption that stress can increase the use/abuse of alcohol and nicotine in some people.

As found in research cited previously, some individuals use and/or abuse alcohol and nicotine to cope with family stress, difficulties of transitioning into puberty, and moving onto high school from junior high school (DeWit, Adlaf, Offord, & Ogborne, 2000; McCubbin, Needle, & Wilson, 1985; Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987). Researchers found that these transitions related to physiological changes and entering high school during the vulnerable period of ages 11-14, constituted a source of "acute anxiety and stress" that caused academic and behavioral problems (DeWit, Adlaf, Offord, & Ogborne, 2000, p. 749). In creating policies as related to adolescents, early intervention is important because it was found that among 5,856 lifetime drinkers of alcohol, 8.6% (501 participants) reported that they started abusing alcohol at age 17, and 8.1% of this same population (473 participants) became dependent on alcohol by age 20 (DeWit, Adlaf, Offord, & Ogborne, 2000, p. 747). Therefore, identifying family stressors and strains in pre-and early adolescence, and understanding problematic factors of puberty and transitioning into high school, can benefit all individuals, and in particular, Korean Americans, in the prevention of high rates of cigarette and alcohol use.

It is important for Korean American parents and their youth to know that there are other ways for them to cope with stress other than with alcohol, nicotine, and other drugs. Ways to educate people can be to provide community outreach through many venues: religious establishments, schools and afterschool centers, mental health agencies and clinics, hospitals, and through educational pamphlets both in English and Korean.

With regards to policies on health education and prevention for addictions such as alcohol and nicotine abuse, policies can be enhanced to provide multicultural awareness and education at primary and secondary schools on the prevalence and reasons for abuse. This measure can contribute to culturally specific interventions and treatment to help decrease the abuse of substances.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research was limited in that it included only one ethnic and racial population. There are limitations of learning about the dynamics of only one ethnic and racial group. Therefore, in

the future, research can include another ethnic and racial group as a comparison. Participants can be interviewed with the same semi-structured guide of questions to learn about how another group might or might not be impacted by culture and traditions regarding the first born or only son. For example, future research can include Chinese Americans with similar demographics through a qualitative inquiry to see if similar or different themes emerge.

The themes found from the Korean American group can be compared to themes that come from Chinese American interviews. For instance, since Confucianism was founded in China, and followed by both the Korean and Chinese centuries ago, it would be interesting to find out to what degree Chinese Americans adhere to this value system at present in the United States. Do more Korean Americans or more Chinese Americans follow Confucian thought? Do both groups place emphasis and higher value on first born and only sons as in the Korean American group? Are Chinese American first born or only sons also given more privilege and burden? How do the dynamics of immigrating to America affect Confucian ethics and beliefs with regard to first born and only sons? If one group adheres to the beliefs and Confucian ethics more, why would that occur? What are the dynamics that influence how Confucian thought influences family structure and expectations?

It would be helpful to understand what a comparison group's experiences are given that there may be adaptations of how Chinese American parents raise their children with different expectations. Are roles as clearly defined in Chinese American families as they were in Korean American respondents in this study? If they differ, and roles of the first born son, are not as emphasized with expectations of being leaders, mediators, and financial support for the family, what are the implications? How does this difference in role status affect sibling relationships, the academic and career levels achieved of siblings, and who takes care of elderly parents? How is one's self-esteem acquired? Does sibling status affect self-esteem? Is there similar sibling strain as found in the Korean American participants, in Chinese Americans, based on higher expectations placed on first born or only sons? Does the first born or only son feel a burden for having more responsibilities? Does the sibling who is not a first born or only son experience a reduced status and consequent lowered self-esteem? Lastly, does this dynamic cause strain between siblings? This exploration can help inform public health policies with regards to best practices of child rearing, educating, and supporting youth and their families.

Further, a deeper exploration of the roles of the siblings of first born or only sons can be conducted. For example, how do the roles of first born or only sons affect female siblings and younger male siblings? What kinds of themes might emerge from their roles of not being first born or only sons? What kinds of differences and similarities are there between Korean American and Chinese American siblings of first born or only sons? How do their roles and statuses affect their attainment of educational levels, careers, self-esteem, and family relationships?

Another aspect that can be studied in relation to siblings can be to interview siblings in the same family who have no brothers. What does it mean to be a girl who is raised in a Confucian based household in America? Do the same values and principals of placing expectations on the first born or only son, as found in the Korean American sample, apply in these families? Do the parents in both Korean American and Chinese American families who have only daughters convey through inference or overtly that they wish they had a son? If this occurs, how does that affect the women and their self-esteem, levels of academic and career success, and interpersonal relationships?

In sum, further research can reveal other issues and concerns that were not found in the Korean American study sample.

Summary

In summary, there are deficits in services and polices addressing the needs of the Korean American community. The Korean American community would benefit from support geared towards Korean American individuals and families as related to conflicts resulting from the process of immigration, cultural clashes of bicultural worlds, traditions and cultural values influencing role expectations, universal milestones and transitions of social and psychological development, and the stressors involved with these factors. Lastly, to understand more of the dynamics of the role of sons and the effects on sons themselves, siblings, parents, and communities, further studies should be conducted to increase the sample to other groups as well as those with a diverse range of demographics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Consent Form
Investigators: Linda Francis, PhD (Principal Investigator), Karina Kim, LCSW
Title: The Experience of Korean American First Born or Only Sons in the United States: Privilege or Burden?
You are being asked to volunteer in a study.
Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of those who are first born or only sons and their siblings in Korean American families in the United States.
Procedure: If you decide to be in this study, you will participate in an in-depth interview. The interview will last for approximately between one to two hours. A total of 40 individuals will be interviewed for this study. During the interview, you will be asked questions that pertain to your experiences of **not** being the first born or only Korean American son. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. Although full participation in the study is encouraged, you do not have to answer a question or continue the interview if you feel uncomfortable.
Risks/Discomforts: There should not be any risk or discomfort involved in your participation in this study. However, some people may experience emotional discomfort in discussing certain events or thoughts. If you feel the need to be referred to a mental health professional, a list of counselors will be provided. This study will not assume responsibility for any costs associated with this additional service.
Benefits: There is no direct benefit to you by participating in this study. However, the information you share may be helpful to improving services for and understanding Korean American first born sons or only sons and their siblings in the United States.
Payments to You: You will receive a gift equivalent to about $10.00 to show our appreciation for your time.
Confidentiality: The following measures will be followed to ensure confidentiality of your personal information. Audiotapes of each interview and transcriptions, as well as demographic sheets, will be coded with numbers to link each without names or any other identifying information. In addition, although we have your name on the consent form, there will be no way to match your name to a specific audiotape or survey. The code list, consent form, transcripts, audiotapes, and data will be kept in a locked file in a limited access location. Further, data from the audiotapes will be destroyed one year after the study is completed. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation of the results of this research. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed; your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. This means that

there may be rare situations that require us to release personal information about you, e.g., in case a judge requires such release in a lawsuit or if you tell us of your intent to harm yourself or others (including reporting behaviors consistent with child abuse).

Respondent's Rights:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be.
- You have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty.
- Any new information that may make you change your mind about being in this study will be given to you.
- You will get a copy of this consent form to keep.
- You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this consent form.

Questions about the Study or Your Rights as a Research Subject:
If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Linda Francis, Principal Investigator, at 631-444-3174 or Karina Kim, LCSW at 917-447-8159.
If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Ms. Judy Matuk, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, (631) 632-9036.
If you sign below, it means that you have read (or have had read to you) the information given in this consent form, and you would like to be a volunteer in this study.

_____

Participant Name (Please Print) Date

_____

Participant Signature Date

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

Appendix 2: Flyer for Recruiting Participants

Korean American Males Wanted

Who: Korean American Males
1st born son or only son, born in the United States or immigrated to the US
You have been in the US for a minimum of 5 years and speak English

What: To participate in a research study

Topic: The experience of being a first-born or only son
All interviews are confidential
You will receive a gift for your time

Contact: Karina Kim (xxx) xxx - xxxx karinakim@anyemail.com

Appendix 3: Online Posting to Recruit Male Participants (www.craigslist.com)

Female Asian PhD student needs to interview Korean or Chinese American male ages 18-40.

Hi, I am a female Asian PhD student and need Korean American or Chinese American males to interview for my dissertation. I will give you a $10 gift (Starbucks card) for your time. The average interview can take up to 45 minutes. This is an actual research study and it has been approved by my school's ethics review committee. I have all of the proper paperwork to give you to see. This study is about understanding the roles of Korean and Chinese male first born or only sons in the family … your parents' expectations, your duties, experiences. This is ABSOLUTELY confidential and your name will not be used. It is anonymous.

If you fit any of the following, please call me or email to set up a time to meet for an interview. Call me at xxx.xxx.xxxx. I would like to meet with you as soon as possible.

1. You are Korean or Chinese American and have lived in the US for at least 5 yrs.
2. You are not an only child.
3. You are ages 18-40
4. You speak English.
5. You are the oldest son or only son (but not an only child).
6. Both of your parents are Korean if you are Korean and both of your parents are Chinese if you are Chinese.

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Guide: Korean First Born or Only Sons

Background Questions

1. Where did you grow up?

2. Were there Korean Americans in your neighborhood?

3. What was it like growing up in your neighborhood?

Siblings

4. How many brothers or sisters do you have?

- How old are they?
- What are they doing now?
- What is your relationship with them like?

Experience of Parents

5. Was there an emphasis on Korean tradition such as (e.g. certain rituals in visiting deceased family members, the first born or only son being entitled to the family inheritance or assets)

6. Was there an emphasis on Korean values (e.g. being loyal to the family, taking care of one's parents when they get older)?

7. Do you feel your parents have assimilated to American culture? (e.g. do they speak English, eat American food during holidays such as Thanksgiving, do they associate with non-Koreans)

8. In childhood, did you feel your parents had certain expectations of you?

9. Was your experience (of parental expectations) different from your siblings'?
10. Do your parents have the same expectations now as they did of you in childhood?

Career/Major

11. Are you in school?
- How did you choose this field of study?

12. If you are not in school, are you working?
- If you are working, how did you choose this field?

Marital Status

13. Are you in a relationship?

14. Do you have any children?

15. What are your and your spouse's expectations in raising him/her/them?

16. What are your parents' and in-law's expectation in raising him/her/them?

Experience of Being an Only Son/Male

17. Can you tell me about your experience as a first born or only son?

18. What is it like to be you?

19. In what ways was your role in the family made known to you by other members?

Health

20. In what ways might your health be affected by your role in your family?

21. How is your health?

Policy Issues

22. How do you think Korean American children should be raised by their parents?

23. What kinds of support or resources do you think Korean American males need?

24. Do you think other Korean first born or only sons have similar experiences?

Last Question

25. What was it like to participate in this study?

Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Guide: Korean Siblings

Background Questions

1. Where did you grow up?

2. Were there Korean Americans in your neighborhood?

3. What was it like growing up in your neighborhood?

Siblings

4. How many brothers or sisters do you have?
- How old are they?
- What are they doing now?
- What is your relationship with him/her/them like?

Experience of Parents

5. Was there an emphasis on Korean tradition? (e.g. certain rituals in visiting deceased family members, the first born or only son being entitled to the family inheritance or assets)

6. Was there an emphasis on Korean values? (e.g. being loyal to the family, taking care of one's parents when they get older)?

7. Do you feel your parents have assimilated to American culture? (e.g. do they speak English, eat American food during holidays such as Thanksgiving, do they associate with non-Koreans)

8. In childhood, did you feel your parents had certain expectations of you?

9. Was your experience (of parental expectations) different from your siblings'?

10. Do your parents have the same expectations now as they did of you in childhood?

Career/Major

11. Are you in school?
- How did you choose this field of study?

12. If you are not in school, are you working?
- If you are working, how did you choose this field?

Marital Status

13. Are you in a relationship?

14. Do you have any children?

15. What are you and your (future) spouse's expectations in raising him/her/them?

16. What are your parents' and (future) in-law's expectation in raising him/her/them?

Experience of NOT Being the First Born or Only Son

17. In what ways was your role of **not** being the first born or only son in the family made known to you by other members?

18. Can you tell me about your experience of **not** being the first born or only son?

19. What is it like to be you?

Health

20. In what ways might your health be affected by your role in your family?

21. How is your health?

Policy Issues

22. How do you think Korean American children should be raised by their parents?

23. What kinds of support or resources do you think Korean Americans who are **not** first born or only sons need?

24. Do you think other Koreans who are **not** first born or only sons have similar experiences?

Last Question

25. What was it like to participate in this study?

Appendix 6: Interviewee Demographic Survey: Korean First Born or Only Sons

Participant # _____
Date: _____
Duration: _____
Initials: _____

1. Age _____

2. What is your marital status?

a. single _____
b. married _____

c. partnered _____
d. separated _____
e. divorced _____
f. widowed _____
g. never married
h. other _____ (please explain)

3. Are both of your parents Korean? Yes _____ No_____
a. mother's job _____ father's job _____
4. Are you the only son in your family? Yes _____ No_____
If yes, do you have at least one brother or sister? Yes _____ No_____
5. Are you the oldest son in your family? If yes, do you have at least one brother or sister (your sibling(s) can be younger or older)?
Yes _____No_____

6. Where were you born?_____

7. If NOT born in the US, how old were you when you came to the US?
Age you immigrated _____
8. If born in another country and came to the US, do you plan to stay in the US?
Yes _____ No_____ Not Applicable _____
9. What is your highest level of educational attainment?
a. high school _____
b. some college _____ major(s) studied _____
c. currently in college _____ major(s) _____
d. college _____ major(s) _____
e. technical/vocational/trade program _____ type _____
f. some graduate studies (what field? _____)
g. graduate degree (what degree? _____)

10. Are you working? Yes _____ No_____
a. If yes, are you working full time? Yes _____ No_____
b. If yes, are you working part time? Yes _____ No_____
c. If yes, what field are you in? _____

Appendix 7: Interviewee Demographic Survey: Korean Siblings

Participant # _____
Date: _____
Duration: _____
Initials: _____

1. Age _____

2. What is your marital status?

a. single _____
b. married _____
c. partnered _____
d. separated _____
e. divorced _____
f. widowed _____
g. never married
h. other _____ (please explain)

3. Are both of your parents Korean? Yes _____ No_____
a. mother's job _____ father's job _____

4. Are you the only child in your family? Yes _____ No_____

5. If you are <u>male</u>, do you have an older brother/brothers?
Yes _____ No_____

6. If you are <u>female</u>, do you have a brother/brothers? Yes _____No____

7. Where were you born?_____

8. If NOT born in the US, how old were you when you came to the US?
Age you immigrated _____
9. If born in another country and came to the US, do you plan to stay in the US?
Yes _____ No_____ Not Applicable _____
10. What is your highest level of educational attainment?
a. high school _____
b. some college _____ major(s) studied _____
c. currently in college _____ major(s) _____
d. college _____ major(s) _____
e. technical/vocational/trade program _____ type _____
f. some graduate studies (what field? _____)
g. graduate degree (what degree? _____)

11. Are you working? Yes _____ No_____
a. If yes, are you working full time? Yes _____ No_____
b. If yes, are you working part time? Yes _____ No_____
c. If yes, what field are you in? _____

Appendix 8: Resources and Referrals List

Mental Health Referrals in New York

Mental Health Hotline LifeNet (English) - (800) 543-3638 LifeNet (Asian) - (877) 990-8585 **Suicide Hotlines** (212) 673-3000 (718) 389-9608	**The Asian American Federation of NY** 120 Wall Street, 3rd Floor New York, NY 10005 212 344-5878 info@aafny.org
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) 99 Hudson Street, 12th floor New York, New York 10013 212-966-5932	**The Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans (CAPA)** 12 West 18th Street, Suite 3E New York NY 10011 212-989-3610
Korean Community Services 149 West 24th Street, 6th Floor New York, NY 10011 (646) 638-0597	**Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC)** (718) 460-3800 (212) 279-6568
NY Coalition for Asian American Mental Health 253 South Street New York, NY 10002 (212) 720-4522 http://www.asinmentalhealth.org	**Asian American Family Clinic: Zucker Hillside Hospital** Glen Oaks, NY 718/516-470-8588
Hanmi Center – Asian American Mental Health 84-30 Grand Avenue Elmhurst, NY 11373 718-899-8918 / 718-426-2219	**Asian American Mental Health Services: Korean Services** 84-30 Grand Avenue Elmhurst, NY 11373 718-899-8918
William Alanson White Clinical Service 212-873-7070	**Post Graduate Center for Mental Health** 212-889-2660
The Consultation Center of NYC 212-757-9200	**Modern Psychotherapy Center** 212-228-6036
PPSC Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Study Center 212-633-9162	**The New York Counseling and Guidance Center** 212-362-1086

Appendix 9: Index of Respondents with Code Names

First Born or Only Sons

Julian (IV1): age 34, corporate lawyer (Oldest son of 1 younger brother (age 32 and married)
William (IV2): age 33, MBA graduate, financial consultant (hedge funds) (Oldest son of 1 older sister (age 36) and 1 younger brother (age 31)
Nathan (IV3): age 31, computer consultant (Oldest son of 2 younger brothers (ages 26, 19) and 3 sisters (ages 37, 35, 34)
George (IV4): age 34, lawyer of a non-profit agency (Only son of 2 older sisters (35, 37, singer and lawyer)
Victor (IV5): age 32, computer assistant (Only son of 1 older sister (age 33)
Bryce (IV6): age 27, corporate lawyer (1st born son of 2 boys (brother age 19)
Carleton (IV7): age 38, production manager (Oldest son of 1 younger brother (age 32)
Dante (IV8): age 20, college student – school of social research – education major (Only son with 1 sister, age 17)
Brent (IV9): age 24, Information Technology: Operations Coordinator (did not finish college yet) (Only son of 1 other girl (age 23)
John (IV10): age 38, corporate lawyer (Oldest son of 1 younger brother (age 35)
Sung Jin (IV11): age 34, law school student (1st born son of 2 boys, 3 years younger brother age 32)
Chul (IV12): age 27, Media - Editorial Production (1st born son of 2 boys, 24 yo younger brother)
Sung Min (IV13): age 26, investment banker, hedge funds (Only son of 2 older sisters (ages 27 and 29)
Kwang Soo (IV14): age 33, Computer Programmer (1st born son of 2 boys (1.5 yr younger brother)
Harold (IV15): age 30, Actuary (Only son of 1 other girl (age 28)
Young Kyu (IV16): age 24, 3rd year medical student (Only son of 1 other girl (age 33)
Christian (IV17): age 31, banking (Only and older son of 1 other girl (age 30)
Darren (IV18): age 21, college student (pre-med) (1st born son of 2 boys (1 yr younger brother 20)
Richard (IV19): age 21, Student in College (chemistry major) (Only son of a sister (9 yrs old)
Henry (IV20): age 20, Student in College (social sciences major) (Only son of 2 older sisters (ages 23, 25)
Charles (IV21): age 19, college student (freshman, engineering science) (1st born son of 2 boys (17 yo brother)
Kyle (IV22): age 23, Student in college – computer science (Only son of 1 other girl (age 18)
Joon (IV23): age 18, current college student – mechanical engineering (Only son of 1 other girl (age 17)
Steven (IV24): age, 31 media consultant (Only son of 2 other girls (ages 33, 28)
Connor (IV25): age 24, colleg6e graduate – communications (1st born son of 1 older sister 26, 1 younger brother 16
Aaron (IV26): age 25, actuary, (Only son of 1 other girl (age 27)
Brandon (IV27): age 27, eBusiness consultant (Only son of 1 other girl (age 25)
Min Chul (IV28): age 24, student in college (Only son of 1 other girl (age 25)
Elijah (IV29): age 36, Occupational Therapist (1st born son of 3 boys (ages 35, 33)

Ted (IV30): age 28, Business owner of two finance companies (Only son with 1 sister, age 26)
Johnson (IV41): age 29, business & finance (Oldest son of 1 younger brother (age 27, university writer for alumni magazine)
Arnold (IV42): age 28, Pre-Med Post Baccalaureate student (Only son of 3 other older sisters (ages 40 – MPH, 38 - MD, 30 - MD)
Jay (IV43): age 34, medical director of non-profit agency (Only son of 1 other girl (age 33)
Simon (IV44): age 20, College student (Only son of 1 other girl (age 14 in high school)
Hyung Oh (IV47): age 23, current college student – English (creative writing) (Only son of 1 sister age 25)

Siblings – Male - Younger Sons
Kurt (IV31): age 39, police officer, middle child of 3 kids, younger son of older brother age 42, younger sister 34)
Preston (IV35): age 36, architect (Third and youngest son of 3 boys (ages 39, 41)
Russell (IV36): age 37, police officer (Middle son of 3 boys (brothers age 39, 36)
Enzo (IV38): age 33, financial news editor (Middle Son of 3 boys (ages 34 parents business & 28 financial services)
Sebastian (IV46): age 28, seminary school student (Younger son of 1 older 33yo brother in Bayside, 26 yo sister in HKong)

Siblings – Female – Older or Younger Sisters
Ava (IV32): age 35, physical therapist and mother of 2 toddlers (Older sister of 1 younger brother who lives in the Midwest since college (age 34)
Soo (IV33): age 26, finance (older sister of 2 younger brothers, ages 24 & 16))
Jinny (IV34): age 26, elementary school teacher (Only daughter of 1 younger brother (age 24)
Iris (IV37): age 27, Homemaker of 3 children (3month, 3yr, 5 yrs) (Step-brother 35, Step-sister 33, Half-sister 16
Rose (IV39): age 26, medical student (Youngest daughter of 2 older siblings: brother 32 in military, finished law school, sister 28 in nursing school)
Minsun (IV40): age 30, social worker (only girl of 1 brother (older 33 who lives in upstate NY, in school)
Rami (IV45): age 21, college student (Only daughter of 1 younger brother 18)