Understanding the In-Law Relationship Experiences of Korean and Chinese American Women from a Psychological Perspective

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Abstract

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Even in the context of the multicultural scholarship, there is a lack of psychological research addressing the in-law relationship experiences of East Asian American daughters-in-law (DILs) residing in the U.S., specifically with regard to the emotional impacts and resiliencies that these women may experience in the face of potentially conflictual family dynamics. The primary purpose of this study was to contribute to the multicultural psychology literature by exploring the cultural, relational, affective, and coping experiences of these women, especially with regard to their unique social location and cultural contexts of Confucian and European American influences. The present study utilized a consensual qualitative research (CQR) methodology (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005) to analyze the narratives of 12 Korean and Chinese American women who identified as 1.5 and 2nd generation and as DILs within their family network in the U.S. The results shed light into the affective and relational duress that they experienced due to their in-laws' differing cultural values and traditional expectations. In particular, the participants reported that they often used indirect coping strategies to manage these stressors. The study offers multicultural training and practice recommendations for mental health service providers to consider when working with Korean and Chinese American women and their families.

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Dedication

Soli Deo Gloria!

Chapter 1: Introduction

> Stories about the suffering of new brides under the domination of a despotic mother-in-law are well known not only in Asia but also in the West. However, due to the strong tradition of extended families and the dictates of filial piety, the burden of the role in Asian societies was much less avoidable and probably more onerous… (p. 81)

In his analysis of cultural factors influencing the functioning of Asian American families, Suzuki (1980) highlighted that due to some Asian cultural elements a weightier influence is exerted from extended family members to "new brides," or daughters-in-law (DILs) of Asian backgrounds, when compared to their western counterparts. Accordingly, the above quote highlights the often inevitable, difficult, and burdened role that DILs may experience as they are expected to abide by traditional Asian cultural values. The magnitude of potential difficulties Asian DILs experience as a result of such unique cultural characteristics underscores the need for an increased understanding and knowledge from the part of counseling psychologists to provide meaningful and effective treatment.

However, scholars have noted that in general, individuals with Asian backgrounds are more likely to terminate counseling relationships because they often feel misunderstood in psychotherapeutic settings (Atkinson, Lowe, & Matthews, 1995; Leong, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1977; Uba, 1994; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Hynes, 2019). It has also been documented that one of the reasons Asian Americans do not seek mental health professionals is the lack of culturally tailored services coupled with limited understanding about health and treatment for Asian Americans who have beliefs and worldviews that are different from those of Euro Americans (Sue, Cheng, Saad, & Chu, 2012). An increased cultural sensitivity, competency, and understanding of Asian American individuals and families, as well

as the knowledge of potential psychological implications would help to better encourage Asian clients to seek and adhere to mental health care.

1.1 Importance of Multicultural Competency

When working with minority individuals, including East Asian Americans, a psychologist's multicultural awareness and competence are essential for providing culturally sensitive and effective services. However, it was not until the civil rights and social justice movements of the 1960s and 1970s that scholars started to recognize the inadequacies of conventional methods of psychotherapy in addressing the unique needs of diverse individuals. The foundation of Western psychology was formulated with the core assumptions of individualism and scientism (Sloane, 1996), which values independence, rationality, and objective truth as ideal (Hwang 2009; Marsella, 1998). These core assumptions and values imbedded in the mainstream psychological approaches were therefore critiqued as biased and insufficient (Marsella, 1998) due to their inherent roots in the values, cultural practices, and norms of European White Americans rather than those of people of color (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, & Misra, 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Sue, Sue, Neville, & Smith, 2019).

Along with the rise of the multicultural movement from various disciplines, the field of counseling psychology specifically stressed the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to best serve minority populations, including individuals of East Asian descents. Sue and Torino (2005) defined multicultural counseling and therapy as:

> [B]oth a helping role and a process that uses modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients; recognizes client identities to include individual, group, and universal dimensions; advocates the use of universal and culture-specific strategies and roles in the healing process; and balances the importance of individualism and collectivism in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of client and client systems (p. 6)

Thus, the unique cultural variables salient in the lives of minority groups were highlighted as crucial elements needed for effective delivery of psychotherapy (e.g. Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1977; Sue et al., 2019)

Important strides have been made to increase cultural competence within the counseling psychology profession. Specific guidelines from psychological associations (e.g. American Association for Counseling Development, Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; American Psychological Association, 2002) and training models of multicultural counseling competence were developed to help psychologists to increase cultural competencies (e.g. Sue, 1998; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Sue et al., 2019). In terms of research, many scholars advocating for multiculturalism have been conducting studies that better represent minority populations by recruiting culturally diverse individuals as samples instead of the historically and predominantly recruited white Euro American college students. They also recognized the Eurocentrically biased forms of measures utilized in psychological research. Thus, qualitative methodologies to investigate the lived experiences of minority population have also been increasing. Furthermore, there is an overall better awareness and understanding of systemic and structural barriers that inherently disadvantage minority individuals. For example, Hall and Yee (2012) shed light on the unfair federal mental health policies that have placed relatively low priority on and overlooked the needs of Asian Americans despite research demonstrating that many do indeed experience psychological problems such as acculturative stress (i.e. stress resulting from adjusting into a new culture in the U.S.) and racial discrimination. Hence, scholars have called attention to these systemic and structural barriers and have urged researchers, policy makers, and practitioners to take action.

1.2 Asian American Population

Although some progress has been made as evidenced by the multicultural movements, Asian Americans are still marginalized and misunderstood within mainstream society despite their growing population. In fact, Asian Americans, including East Asian American individuals, are often overlooked in the U.S. despite being one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (Kim, Lu, & Stanton, 2021). Their population has grown 72% from 2000 to 2015 and even surpassed those of the Hispanic population (Pew Research Center, 2013; 2017). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), Asian Americans constitute any U.S. citizen or resident with nativity or ethnic background from an Asian continent. Specifically, Asian Americans are defined as individuals residing in the U.S. with "origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asian, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, p. 2)—represent about 6% of the total U.S. population, which closely amount to 18 million people in the country. When excluding individuals with multiple racial backgrounds (e.g. multiracial with two or more Asian groups or multiracial with two or more Asian groups in combination with other races), more than 7 million East Asians reside in the United States (The U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Furthermore, the Asian American population is incredibly diverse with more than 40 unique and heterogeneous subgroups with their own languages, values, and religions (Sue & Sue, 2016), but the diversities are often unrecognized within mainstream society.

Although there are distinct cultural, religious, linguistic, and value differences among Asian countries, scholars from various disciplines (e.g. Sinologists, historians, and political scientists such as Edwin O. Reischauer, Nishijima Sadao, and Samuel P. Huntington,

respectively) have posited that some Asian countries may be studied together by grouping them into cultural spheres according to similarities in sociocultural and historical backgrounds, linguistic roots, and ethical and value orientations. These scholars have coined the term "East Asian Cultural Sphere" to refer to those countries that are predominantly influenced by Chinese cultural roots. Among the major countries within the East Asian Cultural Sphere, China, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan were identified. These countries are known to share similar Confucian values and ethical philosophies, religious orientations, and historically common written language based on Chinese characters (i.e. similar to how Latin is at the foundation of many of the European languages) (Holcombe, 2011; Reischauer, 1974).

Consistent with the distinctions among Asian countries, Asian Americans are similarly not all influenced by the same cultural backgrounds (Shih & Pyke, 2010; Shih, 2017). In particular, unlike other Asian groups, East Asians are predominantly influenced by Confucianism, a "philosophy that promotes the values of interpersonal harmony, knowledge and acceptance of one's place in the society and in the family, obedience, and orientation toward the group" (Kim, Atkinson, & Umemoto, 2001, p. 578). For the purposes of this study, the author investigated individuals of East Asian backgrounds in order to narrow the scope of the diverse Asian demographic. This helps to minimize ethnic variations that exist within the wider Pan Asian American group and decrease the danger of viewing all Asian individuals to be alike.

1.3 Asian American Psychology

Despite the efforts of the multicultural movements to increase cultural awareness and competency as previously discussed, scholars of Asian American psychology have consistently reported that individuals of Asian descents are still misunderstood and overlooked in mainstream psychological research and institutions. Various scholars attributed the neglect as the result of

existing stereotypes and myths. Scholars have noted that national press and media have frequently reported Asian Americans as outwitting White Americans, depicting them as successful model minorities free from psychological duress (Sue, 2010; Sue, Sue, & Sue, 2021). Similarly, Hall and Yee (2012) noted that Asian Americans are falsely believed to be: (a) small in population; (b) model minorities who do not have problems; and (c) immune to mental health difficulties and disparities. Asian Americans, however, do experience difficulties and are surely not exempt from mental health challenges.

Based on *The Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity—A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General* from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Sue, Cheng, Saad, and Chu (2012) reviewed a decade's worth of the most up-to-date research highlighting advancements and gaps in the Asian American psychological literature. Although the review found new epidemiological surveys reporting lower prevalence rates of mental illness amongst Asian Americans (Sue et al., 2012), these scholars cautioned against making definitive conclusions about the true mental health state of Asian Americans based on these surveys alone. Research-related methodological and conceptual issues were noted to be underrepresenting psychological issues of Asian Americans, which further contribute to overlooking subgroup elevations of mental health issues (e.g. heightened suicide risk of elderly Asian women and posttraumatic stress disorders of Southeast Asian refugees). The authors argued that the overall underestimation of mental health disorders based on the reported low prevalence rates may indeed do more harm by continually stereotyping Asian Americans as a model minority immune to psychological problems, thereby excluding them from receiving need-based resources and societal attention. Given the lack of clarity regarding the actual psychological state of Asian Americans, including those of East Asian descent, culturally

sensitive studies ought to be designed to better inform researchers and professionals about the unique mental health concerns that challenge them.

Culturally sensitive research may also help to inform researchers and practitioners in formulating culturally effective treatment for East Asian Americans. Sue and colleagues (2012) noted that Asian Americans have a tendency to underutilize mental health services and delay receiving professional help. Among those who did utilize professional services, however, the severity of illnesses was high, suggesting the existence of significant delays in seeking professional help. Potential reasons for delays included shame and stigma associated with seeking psychological help, problems with financial resources, lack of culturally and/or linguistically tailored services, and limited understanding about health and treatment that are different from Euro American beliefs and worldviews. These possibilities also argue for the action of future researchers to develop culturally effective treatment approaches to best serve East Asian Americans.

Some notable findings related to help-seeking behaviors are important for psychologists to take into account so that they are better prepared to meet the specific needs of East Asian Americans when they do actually seek professional help. Sue and colleagues (2012) reviewed that along with depressive and somatic symptoms, interpersonal and emotional problems resulting from family conflicts were the chief complaints reported by Asian Americans. Indeed, Sue and colleagues (2012) noted issues relating to family relationships as a frequent focus of treatment for Asian Americans when they do seek professional help:

> Individuals experiencing high levels of family conflict had a higher likelihood of seeking both medical and mental health services […]. The result indicated that the presence of conflictual family ties led to help-seeking behaviors more than did the absence of supportive linkages between family members. (p. 540)

Given the current evidence that individuals of Asian descent are more likely to seek help for problems related to family conflicts, it becomes imperative for psychologists to increase their multicultural competence in working with culturally different families and individuals. Indeed, interpersonal family relationship concerns may be an area of inquiry that could more broadly illuminate the psychological difficulties and mental health needs of East Asian American individuals.

1.4 East Asian Extended Family Relationships

Among the salient family relationships for individuals of East Asian descent is the kinship tie that is formed as a result of marriage between a DIL and her in-laws. In general, popular media and studies have suggested that the relationship dynamics between DILs and their in-laws are often conflictual in nature (Kim, 1976; Shih, 2017). However, empirical research focusing on the psychological implications of these familial relationships from the perspectives of East Asian American DILs, specifically those who were raised in the United States, is an almost completely unexamined area within the field of counseling psychology. This lack of study is unfortunate as East Asian American DILs may experience potential psychological difficulties as a result of being exposed to some elements of East Asian cultural norms that may be gender oppressive. For example, gender hierarchies as specified within East Asian Confucian teachings often consider men to be inherently superior to women and situate women in devalued positions (Haboush, 2003; Yun, 2013). In social and family contexts, these women have been traditionally subjected to oppressive practices (Son, 2006). Within the extended Asian American familial contexts, DILs may not be exempt from overt and covert forms of such oppression.

In fact, a unique challenge that East Asian DILs may face is the subordinate positions within their extended family contexts. As discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapter,

the day-to-day lives of East Asian individuals have historically been shaped by Confucianism, which ingrained the cultural practices and norms that maintain a system of devaluing women. Traditionally, when a woman was married, for example, she was expected to adopt subservient roles in the hierarchy of her spouse's extended family. As a result, a DIL was in a markedly powerless position in her relationship with in-laws, exposing them to psychological duress.

How this cultural backdrop of subordination may impact the lives of East Asian American DILs remains understudied. While the East Asian cultural background almost certainly has some influence on the mindset of East Asian Americans, the full extent to which such background may affect East Asian Americans is subject to various factors not necessarily present among non-American East Asians. For example, having been exposed to Euro American cultural contexts, East Asian Americans may have adopted certain Euro American cultural characteristics that may be at odds with the Confucian values of strict hierarchy and unquestioning obedience. By that same token, an East Asian American individual may yet embrace those Confucian cultural norms despite having been born or spent their developmental years in the U.S. While the adoption of Euro American and East Asian cultural values are not mutually exclusive, the tension between the two sets of cultural norms, particularly with respect to gender and familial subordination, may potentially manifest in various psychological sequelae. However, these psychological implications and the methods by which East Asian American DILs cope with the cultural tensions that may arise in their relationships with in-laws have not been researched.

An important factor to consider is that East Asian American DILs are exposed to the various forms of oppression, microaggression, and discrimination that accrue due to their minority statuses within U.S. contexts (Leong & Lau, 2001; Sue et al., 2021). In fact, the detrimental psychological toll that Asian American women experience due to racism and sexism

in the U.S. is well-documented (e.g., Major depressive disorders, suicidal ideations, and chronic headaches [Hahm, Ozonoff, Gaumond, & Sue, 2010]; Post-traumatic stress symptoms, depression and psychological distress [Ho, Dinh, Bellafontaine, & Irving, 2012]; Internalized negative view of self [Pyke & Johnson, 2003]; Negative body image and eating behaviors [Iyer & Haslam, 2003]). At the same time, the various cultural oppressions that East Asian American DILs may endure *within* family settings are less recognized. Hence, this study focuses on addressing the experiences of DILs within their family contexts given the potential psychological effect that DILs may experience due to the intergenerational transmission of oppressive cultural practices.

It is also important to note that not all East Asian family relationships are a result of marriages or that of heterosexual couples. Committed family relationships may be formed by close individuals who choose to become family members. For many minority populations, the definition of family may extend beyond the concept of traditional nuclear family but include community and friends who become integral members of a tight family unit. Similarly, same-sex couples of East Asian descents may also form committed family relationships, whereby the definition of marriage extends beyond heterosexual ones. Like heterosexual DILs, individuals in same-sex relationships may therefore be exposed to the same traditional East Asian cultural values that may intersect and complicate the relationships with their in-laws. It is reasonable to suspect that the psychological implications of in-law relationships from the perspectives of sexual minority individuals are expressed differently from those of heterosexual DILs. Indeed, the minority status of being in a same-sex family relationship may cause these individuals to face additional and/or separate difficulties, such as oppression and discrimination exerted by community and family members based on sexual orientation. The multiple discriminations faced

by East Asian DILs in same-sex relationships merit focused study of their own; in light of the potentially divergent experiences of heterosexual and same-sex couples, this study only addressed the experiences of East Asian American DILs in heterosexual relationships. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the psychological effects of in-law relationships from the lived experiences of sexual minorities of East Asian descents is an important area for future research.

1.5 The Study

This present study, therefore, sought to add to the body of multicultural literature by aiming to provide fresh insights, to increase understanding, and to augment culturally competent practice in working with the overlooked East Asian Americans DILs' psychological experiences, specifically those of Korean or Chinese descent, in relation to their extended family members. Relatedly, the study sought to address the resilience factors that may contribute to positive relationships, where they exist, between DILs and their respective in-law members. If negative relationships were reported, the author documented the actual strategies that DILs employed to cope with negative stressors. All of these questions were examined within a holistic framework that began with the voices of the women themselves, and which were documented of any positive, negative, neutral, and/or ambivalent viewpoints from the perspectives of DILs. As such, the purposes of this study were to help express the otherwise overlooked and silent experiences East Asian Korean and Chinese American DILs regarding their experiences with their respective in-laws and to study their perceived psychological implications.

Since it was important to understand the unique experiences and perspectives of Korean and Chinese American DILs within their cultural contexts, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methodology was well-suited for this study. CQR methodology allowed for rigorous and

in-depth analyses of participants' narratives to uncover lived experiences in light of cultural contexts that may not be adequately captured in quantitative measures (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). By uncovering the experiences of East Asian Korean and Chinese American DILs, it is the hope of this researcher to augment a greater understanding and multicultural competency of mental health professionals in serving this population.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The relationships between East Asian DILs and their in-laws have often been portrayed in popular culture as conflictual in nature (Kim, 1996; Shih, 2017). However, there is a paucity of empirical research investigating the psychological impact of in-law relationships on East Asian American DILs. This review of the literature will begin by discussing the importance of recognizing extended family relationships for East Asian individuals, especially in-law members. Second, salient East Asian cultural characteristics, values, and philosophy in relation to family relationships will be explained to provide a historical and cultural context. The specific population of interest of this study—East Asian American women, specifically daughters-in law (DILs) —will be introduced. An introductory discussion of gender oppression and disadvantaged positions that DILs may experience within social and family domains will be addressed, and psychological implications of the associated elements of oppression will be also briefly delineated. Next, important migratory concepts such as acculturation and enculturation pertaining to East Asian American populations will be outlined. Generational factors and cultural value conflicts are also discussed. An in-depth review of existing East Asian American in-law relationship studies will be provided, highlighting existing gaps in research. Since there is a dearth of research sampling from East Asian American population (i.e. non-first generation East Asian Americans who were raised in the U.S.), a few existing East Asian international research that are relevant to this study will be briefly reviewed, hinting at potential psychological implications of in-law relationships on DILs. Lastly, following an overall summary of current gaps in the American psychological literature addressing this topic, broad topical questions for this study will be outlined.

2.1 Importance of East Asian In-Law Relationships

A key interpersonal relationship within families of East Asian descent is the extended kinship ties that are created through marriage—those of in-law relations. While the family unit is recognized as particularly important for East Asian Americans (e.g. Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999; Sue & Sue, 2016), there is a paucity of research specifically addressing the psychological implications that may ensue from in-law relationships of East Asian American individuals.

Serewicz (2006) presented several potential reasons for the lack of research in this area. First, the Euro American worldview considers married couples to be entities that are autonomous, independent, and separate from extended family members. They are expected to live separately from parents and parents-in-law in order to build their own family unit and also to establish appropriate boundaries. These practices inherently reduce the influence that parents-in-law may have on the married couple. Second, in the Euro American worldview, the relationship of the marital unit trumps the parent-child and/or extended family relationships. Third, in the Euro American worldview, relationships with in-law members are established by the married couple's choice, and not by obligation, thereby naturally reducing the power and/or influence in-laws may have over them.

However, the in-law relationships of culturally different individuals, such as those of East Asian Americans, may be different from Euro Americans due to dissimilar sociocultural worldviews (Wu, Yeh, Cross, Larson, Wang, & Tsai, 2010; Hynes, 2019). Unlike Euro American cultures, extended in-law family members (i.e. parents-in-law) are of greater significance to individuals of East Asian descent, and parents-in-law may be one of the key figures influencing the lives of couples. In comparison to Euro American cultures, East Asian in-laws may be much more involved in the couple subsystems due to East Asian cultural values

such as respecting parental authorities even through adulthood. Therefore, showing respect for in-laws' involvement is culturally syntonic for many East Asian individuals. As previously discussed, while achieving the autonomy of each nuclear family is regarded as ideal within Euro American cultures, respecting and allowing the involvement of in-laws may be more normative within East Asian cultures. A more detailed discussion regarding these cultural characteristics will be further addressed below.

Mental health professionals, whose training rooted inherently in Euro American worldviews, may unintentionally neglect to recognize the potential in-law problems that can arise among culturally different East Asian American individuals. Therapists may fail to provide adequate space in counseling sessions to explore the potential psychological impact that may ensue from in-law relationships, since dominant mainstream culture places primary importance on addressing nuclear relationships. Furthermore, by misunderstanding the unique cultural family characteristics (e.g. traditions, norms, and values) and family systems (e.g. hierarchical and patriarchal family systems) that situate East Asian individuals in potentially difficult, challenging, and disadvantaged positions, mental health care providers may do additional harm by pathologizing clients as exhibiting problematic psychological and/or behavioral patterns. For example, an East Asian DIL might be viewed as exhibiting dysfunctional boundaries due to appearing seemingly enmeshed with her parents-in-law if she reports allowing them to make personal and family decisions. She might also be labeled as exhibiting communication and/or self-esteem problems if she is unable to express her discontent regarding her in-laws' frequent visits and phone calls. Such standpoints of viewing this client as needing appropriate boundary setting and assertive communication skills may lead clinicians to use culturally inappropriate interventions. For instance, a clinician might encourage the DIL to use a more direct

communication style and to set firm boundaries according to Euro American worldviews without realizing that such interventions may be culturally dystonic. Such clients may feel misunderstood due to the clinician's lack of sensitivity to the specific cultural values and potential problems that East Asian American DIL may face in relation to their extended family contexts.

2.2 East Asian Cultural Characteristics

To better understand East Asian American DILs within family contexts, East Asian cultural backgrounds, value systems, and philosophy need to be underscored. There may, of course, be within-group and individual differences among East Asians in these regards, and therefore it is important to not view East Asian individuals as solely determined by predominant cultural values and/or philosophies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be informed of the widespread cultural and philosophical influences that are similar across East Asian groups in order to facilitate a better understanding of their indigenous heritage as well as how these factors inform behavioral patterns, value systems, and family structures. In this section, East Asian cultural characteristics related to family relationships, namely collectivistic value orientation, family roles, and East Asian cultural values will be briefly outlined. Next, a background overview of Confucianism, a dominant East Asian philosophy, is provided. As noted earlier, Confucianism is at the root of many East Asian social norms and cultural traditions. It is beyond the scope of this study, however, to provide a comprehensive and detailed analysis of all elements of Confucianism. Instead, Confucian cultural characteristics relating to interpersonal and family relationships are highlighted. In particular, the oppressive impact of some Confucian elements on women, especially DILs, is discussed in greater depth as to introduce the sample of interest for this study.

2.2.1 Collectivistic value orientation. Broadly, one of the major differences between the dominant values of East Asians and Euro Americans is that Euro American individuals endorse individualistic value orientations, whereas East Asians generally practice collectivistic and group-orientated value systems. For example, studies have shown that an East Asian individual's self-worth and self-identity are closely linked to his/her family's achievements and family identity rather than merely himself/herself, reflecting a collectivistic values orientation (Kim et al., 2001; Tomita, 1994; Hynes, 2019). When an individual exhibits unfavorable social behavior, the embarrassment and loss of face (i.e. bringing shame to oneself and one's family) fall on the whole immediate and extended family rather than affecting the individual only (Sue, 1981; Hynes, 2019). For families of East Asian descent, the issue of losing face is a critical one. Each family member's responsibility is to bring honor unto the family and avoid shame (Ho, 1987; Kim et al., 2001; Sue, 1981; Hynes, 2019). Related to bringing the collective honor, individuals may devalue practicing individualistic behaviors, such as standing out and/or appearing self-centered among any groups. Therefore, collectivistic behaviors characterized by self-effacement, humbleness, and modesty are readily practiced and valued amongst individuals of East Asian descent (Leong, 1992; Uba, 1994).

2.2.2 Family roles. In line with traditional collectivistic values, individuals of East Asian descent may endorse interdependent relationships whereby roles of family members are rigidly defined and adhered to in order to minimize role conflicts (Ho, 1987; Kim et al., 1999; Sue, 1981; Sue & Sue, 1993). The father is traditionally regarded as the head of the family while the mother as generally a caretaker (Fernandez, 1988; Ho, 1987; Kim et al, 1999). Moreover, Sue (1981) explained that a son's primary duty is to care for his birth family rather than his

immediate nuclear unit whereas a traditional daughter's duty is to primarily undertake domestic responsibilities and serve the male members of the family.

2.2.3 East Asian cultural values. Another important component in East Asian family dynamics is the underlying cultural values. Since cultural values are "universalistic statements about what we think are desirable or attractive" (Smith & Bond, 1994, p. 52), they can profoundly influence individual and group behavioral patterns. Indeed, because values reflect "a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 5), an appreciation of those values can facilitate a greater understanding of the different expectations that family members may have of themselves and of others. Unlike other East Asian-related research areas, many researchers have discussed the characteristics of East Asian cultural values and some have noted that Asian individuals endorse different values orientations than those of Euro Americans. Moreover, Kim and colleagues (1999) noted that the "[i]ndividualistic concepts underlying counseling and psychotherapy, such as seeking help outside of the family unit, openly expressing feelings—especially feelings about one's family—focusing attention on oneself, and discussing family issues with an outsider" (p. 343) may directly conflict with traditional East Asian values. Indeed, the inherent individualistic value orientation imbedded in counselors and traditional psychotherapeutic services often contradicts the value orientations of East Asian Americans.

One of the empirical studies related to Asian cultural values was conducted by Kim, Atkinson, and Yang (1999). Through a three-stage research process, Kim and colleagues (1999) identified the following 14 Asian value domains: (1) *Ability to resolve psychological problems,* (2) *Avoidance of family shame*, (3) *Collectivism*, (4) *Conformity to family and social norms and expectations*, (5) *Deference to authority figures*, (6) *Educational and occupational achievement*,

(7) *Filial piety*, (8) *Importance of family*, (9) *Maintenance of interpersonal harmony*, (10) *Placing other's needs ahead of one's own*, (11) *Reciprocity*, (12) *Respect for elders and ancestors*, (13) *Self-control and restraint*, and (14) *Self-effacement* (Kim et al., 1999, p. 344). Notably, Kim and colleagues (1999) clarified that the samples used for the study were predominantly represented East Asian American participants and thus values that were identified should be regarded as mainly reflecting those of East Asian individuals rather than others of Asian descents (Kim et al., 2001). Therefore, East Asian American DILs may also endorse the above value domains. For instance, a DIL may show reluctance to share with others her experiences of psychological problems related to in-law relationships in order to avoid family shame and also to demonstrate self-control and restraint in handling stressors by herself. She may abide by the Asian cultural values of filial piety and therefore strive to maintain interpersonal harmony by avoiding direct confrontations with elders in the family out of respect and deference towards them. These cultural values are similar to the Confucian values. In fact, Kim and colleagues (2001) noted that the 14 domains that were found are interconnected by one common philosophical thread—Confucianism.

2.3 Confucianism

Given that Confucianism has had a pervasive and continuous influence on the lives of individuals of East Asian backgrounds, the following section provides a brief background of Confucian philosophy as well as relevant cultural characteristics and values that explain family dynamics and hierarchies. As noted earlier, only those Confucian concepts that are directly relevant to family relationships will be addressed, and not all aspects of Confucian philosophy. Although the gender oppressive practices derived from Confucianism will be highlighted to

demonstrate the historical background and current social and family positioning of DILs, it is not the intention of the author to represent Confucianism as negative in totality.

2.3.1 Historical background. For more than 2500 years, Confucianism has been the dominant philosophy influencing the behaviors and thoughts of East Asian individuals, their social and family norms, ethical standards, cultural practices, political ideologies, and educational systems (Yun, 2013). Confucianism was derived from the teachings and life of a Chinese philosopher and educator named Confucius who lived between the years 551-479 BC. During his time in China, princes frequently attempted to overthrow the throne. As a way to reinstate social order, Confucius created a moral code and ethical system, which is now known as Confucianism. After Confucius' death, several Chinese rulers and emperors of the Han dynasty (157-87 BCE) proclaimed Confucian doctrine as the official orthodoxy and incorporated it into the official education system in China (206 BCE-220 CE).

The Confucianism that started in China spread widely throughout other countries and has had a pervasive influence in the East Asian region. While Buddhism and Taoism have had some influence, Confucianism is believed to have had the greatest impact on East Asian cultural domains (Park & Cho, 1995). The doctrine has been modified and changed over time due to its exposure to different schools of thought and religion (e.g. Legalism, Monism, Taoism, and Buddhism) (Yao, 2000; Yun, 2013). Despite adaptations and transformations, Confucianism has persisted and shaped the psychological, intellectual, behavioral, interpersonal, and structural patterns of individual and intergenerational family relationships (Park & Cho, 1995) and influenced medical, social, political, economical, religious, educational and cultural domains in China, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and other distant East Asian countries (Yao, 2000).

2.3.2 Core value of benevolence. One of the core values of Confucianism is benevolence (Hwang, 2009; Yao, 2000). The teachings related to this core value include engaging in self-cultivation and practicing interpersonal harmony. This entailed respecting and obeying authority figures and/or superiors, which ushered in the rise of favoring kinship ties as a strongly valued principle (Hwang, 2009; Yun, 2013).

Related to benevolence, filial piety is a value that entails striving to bring about goodness to the authority, elders, and/or parental figures. It implies a strong allegiance to elders and/or parental figures including parents-in-law (Ho, 1996; Kim et al., 2001; Sue & Sue, 1993; Uba, 1994). Adult children are strongly expected to demonstrate sacrifice, devotion, respect, and honor towards parental figures. Therefore, abiding by parental needs and requests without question is expected (Chen, 1982; Murakawa, 1986). This means that while parental figures are responsible for raising children, the children are obligated to obey, fulfill expectations, and take care of their parents until their death. The duty of filial piety encompasses reverence towards authority figures (e.g. teachers, government officials, etc.) (Hynes, 2019) and ancestors as well (Leong, 1992; Sue, 1981)

2.3.3 Patriarchy and gender inequality. Not only did Confucianism implant strict family structures between parents and children, it also solidified a gender hierarchy according to which women were understood to be inherently inferior to men (Haboush, 2003). In fact, Confucianism evolved from its original philosophy of benevolence toward gender oppressive socio-cultural practices whereby strong patriarchal ideologies were gradually institutionalized. Women's subordination to men was even codified as ideal social and familial practice towards the end of the Han dynasty (Johnson, 1983; Yun, 2013).

For instance, the complementary concept of Yin-Yang derived from Taoism was incorporated into one of the most important classical Confucian texts (e.g. *Wujing*-Five Classics) and was initially well-intended, but was later misused to influence hierarchical gender relations, which placed women in disadvantaged positions (Yun, 2013). In his analysis of Yin-Yang, Yun (2013) explained that the literal meaning of *Yin* translates to the shady side of the mountain and *Yang* the sunny side and that it was originally a cyclical and harmonizing cosmic idea of human nature instead of human relations (i.e. gender) or political ethics. The Yin-Yang signified the harmony of human nature and was used as a concept to systematize various areas of disciplines such as medicine, astronomy, and biology. Yun (2013) explained:

> Despite the complementary nature of the Yin-Yang union, a Confucianized Chinese society consigned *Yang* to male and *Yin* to female, signifying hierarchal gender relations. Women were considered inferior to men in the patriarchal family system. Misinterpretation of Confucianism promoted hierarchal relationships between men and women and, as a result, dramatically affected the gender-based attitudes and behavior. (p. 582)

Thus, the Yin-Yang evolved into a contradictory, binary, and oppositional concept applied to human relations and ultimately enforcing gender hierarchy and oppression towards women.

2.3.4 Gender roles. According to Park (2015) gender roles refers to "the degree to which a person adopts the social and behavioral norms that, within a specific culture, are considered to be socially appropriate" (p. 18). For a DIL, her worth was traditionally valued via her roles as a daughter, DIL, wife, and/or mother, but not as an independent entity (Yun, 2013). To instill the model for what constitutes a good daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, and mother, one of the classical Confucian texts—*Nusishu* (i.e. Four Books for Women)—was utilized as the educational materials for women and men from the mid-Qing era (1616-1912) and beyond (Lee, 1994; Rosenlee, 2006). Some of the chapters covered in this text included topics such as serving

husbands, filial piety, yielding in humbleness, submitting, and being loyal to elders and ancestors (Morgan, 2001), which inculcated patriarchal and male-centered value and belief systems that elevated men as they subordinated of women. Women were to follow the rule of *Sam Jong* (i.e. the rule of the three-fold obedience), which entailed the "obedience to the father in childhood, to the husband during marriage, and to the son in old age" (Kim, 1976, p. 44). Due to the expectation of complete obedience, women were precluded from having their own voices, thoughts, and rights.

DILs were to embody these female gender-based virtues prescribed according to Confucian principles. Yao (2000) explained that ideal virtues included loyalty, fidelity, chastity, and filial piety, and a DIL's filial piety meant that she had to be subservient to her parents-in-law and husband while dedicating herself to rearing her children. While elite men of the time sought to cultivate themselves in line with the Confucian virtues, DILs were not allowed to develop their own autonomous identities as individuals. A DIL was expected to be the backdrop and supporter for the husband or other in-law family members so that those men could flourish, cultivate, and achieve their goals at the expense of her sacrifice.

2.3.5 Gender oppression. Hardiman, Jackson, and Griffin (2007) defined oppression as:

> A system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on social group memberships and operates intentionally and unintentionally, on the individual, institutional and cultural levels. (p. 58)

These scholars explained that members of the dominant group have the power to maintain their advantage by disadvantaging those of different social group memberships. Therefore, members of the dominant group maintain this system of advantage by intentionally and unintentionally oppressing those with less power to remain in subordinated positions. In light of their devalued

status in social and familial hierarchies, DILs could expect to experience oppression based on their gender membership.

In terms of the traditional experiences of East Asian DILs, gender oppression was exerted in many areas, including those of marriage, divorce, and physical space (Son, 2006). In describing the historical accounts of oppressive practices under Confucianism, Son (2006) described that DILs had restricted freedom in every aspect of their married lives. Firstly, unmarried women did not have the freedom to decide whom they wanted to marry, and were expected to abide by marriages arranged by parental figures. The women married into the husband's side of the family, which often meant co-residence with her husband's kin. Secondly, DILs were physically confined to their homes. They were discouraged from independently venturing out and even were restricted to certain zones within their own homes. Thirdly, DILs were disadvantaged by not having equal rights in terms of divorce decisions. Men had the ultimate privilege to initiate divorce and only needed parental approval from the male side of the family.

Additionally, women and DILs were judged according to the list of wrongdoings listed in the *Qichu* (i.e. the seven evils or seven reasons for expelling one's wife) (Kim, 1976; Park & Cho, 1995; Son, 2006). The seven evils included: 1) failing to abide by the virtues of filial piety towards her parents-in-law and/or disobeying them; 2) failing to bear sons to continue tradition of patrilineality; 3) committing adultery; 4) showing sentiments of jealousy; 5) carrying a disease; 6) being garrulous; and 7) committing theft. A DIL accused of any of these wrongdoings was subjected to the severe humiliation of being expelled from her husband's family and labeled as a divorced woman. Son (2006) noted that innocent women were often falsely accused in order to ultimately benefit men or their family-in-laws. For example, the husbands could justifiably

demand a divorce by stating that their wives were jealous of concubines. The wives would not have any right to dispute their husbands' allegations. DILs could also be expelled for not abiding to their in-laws' demands and wishes. These historical accounts of unfair treatments towards DILs reflected in various Confucian beliefs and practices were clear signs of gender oppression and discrimination.

Traditionally, women's bodies were sexually manipulated and objectified in order to be favored in the marriage market and sent off as DILs. Yun (2013) noted footbinding practices as one of many examples of sexual oppression and objectification, which were brutal and inhuman treatments towards young women. Footbinding was a Chinese institution dating back a thousand years, symbolizing oppression via physical and social constraints (Yun, 2013). Footbinding was popularized after the 12th century during the Song dynasty (960-1279) when Neo-Confucian chauvinism was at its peak (Yun, 2013). Small feet were viewed as intimate body parts with strong erotic appeal to men, which meant better marriage opportunities for young daughters. To keep their daughters' feet small, women bound the feet with tight bandages to prevent their feet from growing. As a result, young women were forced to endure extreme physical pain and their mobility was severely restricted as a consequence of deformed bones. In 1911, footbinding was prohibited but the practice still persisted in various parts of China and eventually slowly diminished (Davin, 1976; Yun, 2013).

2.3.6 Systemic oppression. The ramifications of these misused Confucian ideologies and practices can be observed in contemporary society. An example and obvious repercussion that is associated with the recent systemic oppression towards women was the practice of female infanticide. Female infanticide coincided with the one-child policy institutionalized in China for many years since the 1970s until 2016. This family planning policy prevented the majority of

married couples from having multiple children, permitting only one child per couple. Since Confucianism was deeply embedded in Chinese society and culture, individuals were apt to exhibit unfavorable sexist attitudes towards women and demonstrate favoritism towards men and male children (Yun, 2013). Indeed, it has been documented that unborn fetuses were often illegally screened with ultrasound devices for sex identification and aborted if verified as female (Hvistendahl, 2010). Yun (2013) described the dire consequences of female infanticide and the effect it had on women as well as on society as a whole:

> The unprecedented oppressive practice and trend of female infanticide in China has immeasurable negative social implications not only on gender imbalance but also on perpetuating sexism and oppression against women in Chinese society. […] [F]emale infanticide practice as a sexist response to the family planning policy, women have been played as pawns of the male dominated culture and tradition. (p. 590)

This contemporary and recent form of oppression is clear evidence of how misused elements of Confucian ideologies evolved with the passage of time into more complex and deeply entrenched forms of systemic oppression that continually reinforced women's disadvantaged positions in society.

2.3.7 Internalized gender oppression. Given the continuous exposures to intentional and unintentional individual and systemic gender oppression, DILs may internalize negative societal messages based on their gender identity membership. Pheterson (1986) defined internalized oppression as the incorporation and acceptance by oppressed individuals of the prejudices against them from the dominant society. For DILs, for example, their social identities as women places them in disadvantaged positions within their spouses' extended family system. DILs may incorporate and accept these prejudices directed towards them by members of the dominant groups.

Based on Williams (2012) review of extant literature, four processes were found to correspond to the internalization of oppression, namely "internalization, socialization, intergenerational transmission, and acceptance" (p. 37). Briefly, during the Internalization phase, subordinated individuals incorporate oppression as part of the "core identity, self-concept, and self-knowledge that subordinated group members hold about themselves and others who share that identity (Williams, 2012). During the Socialization process, the individuals learn and identify themselves as being members of a subordinate group within an oppressive system (Williams, 2012). In the Intergenerational transmission phase, the internalized oppression is reproduced, transmitted, and instilled throughout multiple generations (Williams, 2012). Finally, during the Acceptance stage, the subordinated individuals, both intentionally and unintentionally, collude and agree with the oppressive systems (Williams, 2012).

Various scholars have conceptualized and observed internalized oppression as problematic due to its association with a myriad of detrimental psychological effects. Moane (1999) argued that internalized oppression can disrupt psychological development and functioning, resulting in unhealthy behavioral patterns. Brown (1986) also explained that the psychological make-up of individuals may be negatively influenced such as their core identity and self-concept. Similarly, Pheterson (1986) postulated that:

> Internalized oppression is likely to consist of self-hatred, self-concealment, fear of violence and feelings of inferiority, resignation, isolation, powerlessness, and gratefulness for being allowed to survive. Internalized oppression is the mechanism within an oppressive system for perpetuating domination not only by external control but also by building subservience into the minds of the oppressed. (p. 146)

The above detrimental psychological sequelae are echoed by Pharr (1997), who noted additional symptoms of depression, despair, and self-abuse that are often exhibited via self-blame and self-hate, as individuals are "led to believe the negative views of the oppressor" (p. 60).

In her work *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Miller (1986) noted that in certain cases when women are subjected to internalized oppression, women reinforce the views of the oppressor by attributing superiority to males, focusing on taking care of them, and showing deference towards them. Miller described these behaviors as internalized sexism. Miller (1986) discussed how the members of the dominant group (i.e. men) define and attribute various psychological characteristics of the subordinate group (i.e. women), stating:

> [S]ubordinates are described in terms of, and encouraged to develop, personal psychological characteristics that are pleasing to the dominant group. These characteristics form a certain familiar cluster: submissiveness, passivity, docility, dependency, lack of initiative, inability to act, to decide, to think, and the like. In general, this cluster includes qualities more characteristic of children than adults—immaturity, weakness, and helplessness. If subordinates adopt these characteristics they are considered well-adjusted. (p. 7)

The ramifications of internalized oppression result in women internalizing the beliefs of the oppressors as well as colluding with their views. Therefore, women may engage in "self-policing" behaviors, such as keeping themselves in subordinated positions, without necessarily having the direct contact with the oppressors (Pharr, 1996).

In summary, elements of East Asian cultural values and Confucian ideologies (or social distortions of those elements) may contribute to the gender, systemic, and internalized oppression of women and DILs, which can negatively impact their psychological health. Yun (2013) commented such effect on individuals, noting that "the distortion of Confucianist thought did not discourage abuse and violence in the home; rather these values often contributed to denying, minimizing, and hiding the detrimental impact of oppression toward women" (p. 592). This oppression also has had a negative social impact, as evidenced by the existence, and intergenerational transmission, of historical and contemporary examples of oppression, such as the preferential treatment towards male infants through China's one-child policy. According to

these gender oppressive practices and systems, women are vulnerable to internalizing sexist messages thereby exhibiting symptoms associated with internalized oppression. In particular, DILs, as women and married to enter the male side of the family upon marriage, would also likely be exposed to gender and internalized oppression given that they often occupy the lowest positions within the generational hierarchies of their extended family systems.

Studies of the psychological experiences of DILs in relation to their extended in-law relationships seems, therefore, worthy of investigation, yet there is a paucity of research addressing this topic, especially from the perspectives of non-first generation East Asian American DILs residing in the U.S./Euro American contexts. Do East Asian American DILs exposed to biculturalism (e.g. East Asian cultural values at home and Euro American cultural values at school, workplaces, and community) have similar in-law relationship experiences to their East Asian counterparts? How do their family histories of U.S. immigration and exposures to Euro American value systems affect their relationships with in-law members? The following section addresses immigration factors and the salience of cultural heritage of East Asian Americans.

2.4 Immigration Factors

The impact of Confucianism and traditional East Asian cultural characteristics upon DILs in the U.S. may be more complex, given the additional exposure to European American culture. Some scholars have argued that more studies need to be conducted to better clarify the effect of cultural heritage on East Asian American individuals as they may be constantly challenged with European American worldviews (Park & Chesla, 2007; Yun, 2013). In this context, it is important to understand migration related concepts, such as acculturation, enculturation, and

generational factors, which may influence relationship power dynamics as well as the acquisition, adherence, and maintenance of East Asian cultural roots.

2.4.1 Acculturation. Acculturation was first broadly defined by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) as a phenomenon that occurs when groups of individuals of disparate cultures continuously influence each other via first-hand contacts. These contacts subsequently change the cultural patterns of all parties involved. However, studies have reported that there is a higher likelihood for minority individuals to change, adapt, and adhere to the dominant cultures than the dominant members to the minority cultures (e.g., Berry, 1997). Kim, Atkinson, and Umemoto (2001) thus defined acculturation as “the degree to which a person adheres to the cultural norms of the dominant society” (p. 579). According to a content analysis on acculturation research, Yoon, Langrehr, and Ong (2011) reported that, within the field of counseling psychology, the study of acculturation has largely focused on examining the attitudes towards help seeking; the effect on mental health, academic, and career development; the impact on physical health; the construct study of acculturation/enculturation itself; and the development and validation of acculturation/enculturation scales.

2.4.2 Enculturation. The concept of enculturation is related to acculturation but entails the endorsement of one’s heritage culture. Herkovitz (1948) first defined enculturation as the socialization process and maintenance of the norms and culture of an individual’s country of origin (i.e. values, norms, and beliefs). Conceptualizing enculturation as a distinct psychological construct apart from acculturation aids in understanding Asian American experiences and the process of socializing and maintaining Asian cultural norms (Kim, 2007). In fact, Weinreich (2009) studied enculturation as a process in which an individual *selectively* acquires and adheres to the elements of different cultural exposures (i.e. heritage culture, dominant/mainstream

culture, or other subcultures). In short, while acculturation is the process of adapting to dominant cultural norms, enculturation is the process of retaining the norms of indigenous culture.

2.4.3 Bilinear model. The conceptual models of acculturation and enculturation have evolved over time. Two common conceptualizations about the acculturation process exist, namely the unilinear and bilinear models. Initially, it was believed that acculturation was a linear process. According to the unilinear model, the retention and maintenance of both the mainstream and heritage cultures were conceptualized as occurring on a single continuum whereby one existed at the expense of the other. For instance, an immigrant individual's greater adherence to the dominant culture with the passage of time would mean that the individual would progressively adhere less to his/her cultural heritage (Zhang & Moradi, 2013).

Several scholars (e.g. Kim & Abreu, 2001; Miller & Kerlow-Myers, 2009) have criticized the unilinear model for failing to capture the experiential reality of biculturalism (i.e. high adherence to *both* the heritage and mainstream cultures), as observed in many ethnic minority individuals. For example, while children of immigrants are exposed to the dominant culture through school, the media and their peers, their heritage culture may remain a substantial presence in their lives both at home and through their cultural communities. It is therefore possible for one to identify, adhere, and maintain one's heritage culture as well as the mainstream culture, which some scholars have identified as biculturalism (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). In fact, recent studies have shown that the bilinear approach to acculturation and enculturation is a better fit with the experiences of minorities (e.g., Lee, Yoon, & Liu-Tom, 2006; Zhang & Moradi, 2013).

In keeping with the bilinear model, extant research demonstrates that contemporary East Asian Americans' thoughts, values, family structures, and cultural practices are still deeply

rooted in Confucianism (Yun, 2013) despite being exposed to mainstream Euro American cultures. Son (2006), who studied Korean American women, specified that a major influence of Confucianism continues to shape subordinate roles for contemporary Asian women, which in turn contributes to their "low self-esteem and a pervasive sense of shame" (Son, 2006, p. 325). Moon (1998), who studied working and non-working Korean American women, has observed that participants exhibited actions deeply rooted in Confucianism (e.g. traditional East Asian domestic roles) despite increased egalitarian attitudes due to Euro American cultural exposures. Therefore, the adherence to and maintenance of East Asian cultures seem to occur regardless of the exposures to the dominant Euro American cultures. As such, the Confucian-based values and familial and social hierarchies that predominate in East Asian culture are likely to be relevant in understanding the in-law family dynamics for East Asian American DILs.

2.4.4 Generational factors. According to Miller, Yang, Farrell, and Lin (2011), generational status denotes "the age and life status during which an individual immigrates to a new country" (p. 491). First-generation East Asian Americans (East Asian immigrants) are direct immigrants who were born and raised in their countries of origin but migrated to the U.S. as adults. 1.5-generation East Asian Americans were born in their countries of origin but immigrated to the U.S. as children or adolescents, and therefore spent most of their developmental stages of life in the U.S. Second-generation (non-immigrant) individuals were born and raised in the United States (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003; Lee et al., 2000; Miller et al., 2011). Generational status may interact with mental health in different ways depending on how many years an individual has lived in the U.S. and the extent to which the individual has been exposed and acculturated to the second culture. For example, recent first-generation immigrants might have concerns relating to English language proficiency and

adjustment to the new culture, whereas for second-generation East Asian Americans the stress in navigating East Asian and Euro-American cultures simultaneously may be more salient.

While the influence of Euro American worldviews and generational status may indeed impact the lifestyles of East Asian American families, studies have reported that they preserve, although in varying degrees, their cultural values (i.e. enculturation) regardless of generational status. For example, Kim and colleagues (1999) found that the level of Asian cultural values endorsed did not significantly differ across generations post immigration despite the fact that the younger generations appeared well-acculturated to the dominant culture. Therefore, Kim and colleagues (1999) cautioned mental health professionals and researchers, stating:

> Counseling practitioners should be aware that even though an Asian American client may evidence behaviors suggesting a high level of acculturation, that client may still retain traditional Asian values that could conflict with values inherent in conventional counseling strategies. (p. 351)

Portes and Rumbaut (2005) also found that although children of Asian American immigrants may exhibit behavioral patterns of acculturation, such as not being proficient in their culturally native language, they may still strongly identify and adhere to the values of their cultural heritage. Overall, these studies suggest that non-first generation Asian Americans may appear to exhibit behaviors reflecting Euro American values, but they may still endorse Asian cultural values as well.

In summary, we know that simultaneous endorsement of acculturation and enculturation occurs for minority individuals, including East Asian Americans, regardless of generational factors. To what degree one endorses each culture is not clearly understood but there are studies reporting differences whereby intergenerational cultural conflicts emerge between individuals and family members.

2.4.5 Intergenerational cultural value conflict. As previously discussed, both dominant and heritage cultural values may be simultaneously endorsed by a single individual as evidenced by the bilinear acculturation/enculturation model. The differences in degree of cultural adherence have been the subject of interpretation by a number of theories. Berry (2003) postulated that different statuses such as age, gender, socioeconomic, and education level all affect levels of cultural adherence. Other scholars have noted that variations in acculturation and enculturation may exist due to generational factors. For example, first generation individuals may be more enculturated to their heritage culture as compared to the dominant culture as these individuals immigrated to the U.S. as adults and had spent most of their lives in their native countries (Knox, Zusman, McGinty, & Gescheider, 2001). Tsai-Chae and Nagata (2008) have also found that individuals who immigrated at an older age tended to experience increased cultural distance from the mainstream than their younger counterparts because of their greater immersion within native culture.

Family intergenerational conflicts around cultural values have been attributed to differences in acculturation/enculturation levels and generational statuses. There appears to be a significant likelihood of intergenerational family conflict when there is a greater gap between acculturation levels of parental figures and younger individuals (Choi, Wang, Wong, Correa & Lu, 2020; Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Greenberger & Chen, 1996; Kwak, 2003; Ying & Han, 2007). Research suggests that children acculturate at faster rates than their parents due to a higher exposure to the dominant cultures through school, peers, and media (Huang, 1994; Kim & Cain, 2008). Tsai-Chae and Nagata (2008) also found that Chinese and Korean American college students who self-reported a higher cultural value difference from their parents exhibited higher levels of intergenerational conflicts. For example, parents may hold expectations that their

children will be sacrificial of their individual needs to fulfill family-oriented responsibilities, which reflect collectivistic and Confucian East Asian cultural values. Intergenerational conflict may emerge when offspring demonstrate their adherence to mainstream cultural values, such as individualism. They may choose more autonomy from family responsibilities and seek to meet their individual needs above the needs of others. Additionally, such generation gaps may contribute to diverging opinions about domestic work, parenting styles, and management of finances, thereby generating conflicts between family members (Kung, 2001; Lan, 2006).

Differences in acculturation rates among intergenerational members have been reported to be associated with negative mental health outcomes and family conflicts (Hwang, 2006; Hwang, Wood, & Fujimoto, 2010; Kalibatseva, Leong, Ham, Lannert, & Chen, 2017). Along these lines, Hwang (2006) proposed the Acculturative Family Distancing theory, which explains the distancing that may result between parents and offspring based on their different rates of acculturating to the dominant culture. Hwang (2006) found that the greater the difference of acculturation levels between intergenerational family members, the greater the distancing between them, which may put them at an increased risk for family conflicts, and psychological problems. Positing a family systems theoretical model for their research, Szapocznik and Kurtines (1993) found that acculturation differences may create a loss of emotional and social support for offspring and a loss of leadership roles for parents. Other studies have reported anxiety and depression symptoms as a result of intergenerational conflicts (Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Kwak, 2003; Ying & Han, 2007; Kalibatseva et al., 2017). Overall, cultural value variances and discrepancies between parental figures and young adults seem frequently to negatively influence family relationships and mental health outcomes for East Asian Americans.

Intergenerational conflicts and their related-mental health may be complex as power dynamics between DILs and their respective in-laws may be influenced by immigration factors and modernization. On one hand, East Asian American DILs may feel disempowered due to being subjected to the intergenerationally passed down traditional East Asian cultural values that may be oppressive. Indeed, parent-in-laws who may be more enculturated to their East Asian cultural roots may have gender role expectations that predominantly reflect East Asian patriarchal and gender hierarchies despite the fact that DILs may have egalitarian views on gender roles due to being more acculturated to the Euro American roots. Regardless of DILs cultural values, they may be expected to adhere to East Asian cultural norms and values in familial settings, especially in the presence of in-law members and may potentially feel disempowered. On the other hand, these roles and expectations may have shifted through the impact of Euro American cultural exposures and modernization on both DILs and parents-in-laws due to their immigration histories in the U.S. For example, DILs may feel empowered through employment and earning independent incomes in the U.S., which may increase financial independence and power within interpersonal family relationships. Many modern DILs may also work outside the home while parents-in-laws take on helping roles through domestic work and childcare. As such, there could be a possibility that East Asian American DILs may experience empowerment due to immigration-related factors and modernization, which may potentially contribute to DILs' positive relationship experiences with in-laws.

2.5 East Asian American In-Law Relationship Studies

There is a paucity of empirical research directly addressing the psychological impact of in-law relationships on East Asian American DILs (i.e. non-first generation DILs) who reside in the U.S., however, extant studies hint at potential psychological ramifications.

2.5.1 Gender roles and power dynamics. Lim (1997) used a qualitative research methodology and conducted in-depth interviews of 18 Korean immigrant wives (i.e. predominantly first-generation women) to explore the challenges associated with reported gender inequalities at home. This research did not directly address in-law relationships, yet one relevant finding was reported: mothers-in-law (MILs) acted as "cultural gatekeepers" by paying visits or residing with their DILs to assist in domestic work. The concept of "cultural gatekeeper" was explained as MILs' engagement in implementing traditional East Asian cultural values and standards by emphasizing East Asian gender roles. For instance, MILs prevented their sons from engaging in domestic work, while they expected and directed DILs to perform those duties. Interestingly, MILs also seemed to communicate contradictory expectations to their DILs. The participants expressed that their MILs expected them to demonstrate strong and aggressive traits in workplaces but wanted gentle and docile personalities at home. DILs failing to exhibit the latter traits in the home were viewed as controlling and aggressive, especially when DILs allowed husbands to engage in domestic work. DILs who were employed worked equal hours as their husbands but were met with differential treatment from in-law members, as DILs assumed more responsibilities for house-related chores than their spouses. Regardless of the DILs' stances on equal division of domestic work and equal treatment, DILs coped with difficult in-law relationships by not communicating their feelings about these conflicts or engaging in arguments with their MILs, but resigned themselves to accepting the East Asian traditional gender and cultural norms set by in-law members. To maintain marital harmony, DILs also did not challenge the family power dynamics vis-a-vis their MILs and husbands. According to Lim (1997), DILs essentially maintained the status quo:

> In the process of challenge to gender inequality at home, Korean immigrant wives still draw boundaries that are not to be crossed, although they are stretching those

> lines. The goal of their ongoing challenge is not to subvert the marital hierarchy itself. The Confucian patriarchal ideology, that women should submit to their husbands' authority and protect male morale as heads of families, restrains women from protesting against marital hierarchy itself. The patriarchal beliefs in women's unconditional endurance in a marriage and sacrifice for the family also overwhelm some wives' perceived right to demand men's change in family work. (p.49)

Hence, some elements of internalized gender beliefs seemed to exist in that DILs themselves unintentionally enforce their own subordinated positions and refrain from challenging the system. The possible psychological impact of DILs' silent resignations coupled with their internalized gender beliefs were not investigated in this study. Furthermore, DILs who are not first-generation and direct immigrants were not recruited in the study.

Similarly, Pyke and Johnson (2003) used grounded theory methods to study the perspectives of Korean American and Vietnamese American women regarding their navigation of gender roles across disparate cultural worldviews (i.e. Euro-centric mainstream and Asian ethnic social settings). This research did not specifically focus on DILs and in-law relationships, but themes germane to that topic did emerge from the participants' narratives. One such illustration involved a law student who married a Korean American man with a traditional family background. She reported feelings of resentment and exhaustion due to the many responsibilities assigned to East Asian DILs, especially in the presence of in-laws. Her obligations included subservient duties such as cooking, cleaning, and serving her husband's family. As a way to cope with her domestic labor, the DIL participant admitted to the following:

> When I come home, I take it all out on him. 'Your parents are so traditional, look what they are putting me through…?' That's when I say, 'You vacuum. [Laughing] You deserve it.' And sometimes when I'm really mean, 'Take me out to dinner. I don't want to cook for a while and clean for a while.' So he tries to accommodate that…. Just to be mean I will say I want this, he will buy me something, but I will return it. I want him to do what I want, like I want to be served because I serve when I'm with them… [It's] kind of like pay back time. It's [a] strategy, it works. (p. 45)

The authors concluded that the subjective accounts of their participants demonstrated some form of shift in the power dynamics from the presence to the absence of in-laws. As illustrated from the above quote, for example, the DIL coped with difficult in-law relationships by exerting some level of control and claiming power by directing her frustration towards her husband when her in-laws were absent. It is noteworthy, however, that despite any temporary power shift in the absence of the in-laws, the maintenance of subordinate positions of DILs in the context of extended in-law relationships seemed constant and not challenged. Overall, the authors of this study did not conduct in-depth analyses of potential psychological impact, such as how the resentment towards in-laws coupled with misplaced anger directed to the husband affect the participants' marriage and psychological health.

Empirical research on first generation DILs who immigrated to the U.S. report different in-law relationship experiences. Yoon, Lee, Koo, and Yoo (2009) studied the U.S. adjustment experiences of 10 first-generation Korean immigrant women using consensual qualitative research methods. The experiences of immigration and its advantages and disadvantages were identified (such as English barriers, racial discrimination, and better educational environments for children). Although this study did not specifically focus on in-law relationships, a related theme emerged in which the women reported a sense of liberation from the patriarchal and collectivistic pressures that they had previously experienced in their countries of origin. This liberation was described as the participants' experience of freedom from the demands of in-laws as a result of geographical separation during immigration. Similarly, Shin and Shin (1999) noted that female Korean immigrants in New York reported a sense of freedom from the intertangled relationships they experienced with their in-laws in Korea. Whether samples from non-first generation (and beyond) East Asian Americans would identify the same or a similar theme of

liberation from the demands of in-laws was unexplored in these two studies. East Asian American DILs who were predominantly raised and married in the United States may have direct contact with in-law members who are residing in the same country. Therefore, East Asian American DILs might not report the same freedom and therefore may have different in-law related experiences due to the absence of geographical separation from in-law family members.

However, some studies have shown that non-first generation East Asian American DILs who have contact with their respective in-laws were still exposed to the remnant influences of gender roles and power dynamics based on East Asian cultural backgrounds. For example, Shih and Pyke (2010) sampled 15 second-generation Chinese American women and investigated the power dynamics between DILs and MILs. The authors found evidence that DILs were appreciative of their MILs' help with domestic responsibilities and child care; however, they expressed resentment when such help was felt as unnecessary or intrusive. The authors postulated that some MILs have to work for and earn respect from their DILs by providing wanted domestic expertise. Additionally, DILs with children reported increased conflict with their MILs as compared to childless DILs. DILs coped with in-law conflicts by engaging in "patriarchal bargains," meaning they enlisted husbands as mediators of conflict instead of directly confronting their MILs. DILs also reported to covertly resisting and disobeying when their MILs were absent. The authors interpreted these behaviors (i.e. feigning compliance in the presence of MILs) as evidence of "backstage power" and argued that Asian cultural ideals may not necessarily dictate actual behaviors (e.g. displaying deference towards MILs) nor do they indicate DILs powerlessness. Given these findings, the level of power that DILs obtained in absence of in-laws seem legitimized, however, the oppressive system within direct contexts of in-law relationships seemed to remain unchallenged. Hence, it appears that subordinate positions

of DILs still remain, especially when there are direct contacts with in-law members, indicating some remnants of a continued relative lack of power. Overall, this research did not investigate the potential psychological implications of such "backstage" behavior of disobedience and feigning compliance.

Might DILs' enforced incongruent behaviors, such as feigning compliance while having different agendas in mind, influence their mental well-being? A quantitative cross-sectional study investigating stress levels in first and second generation Korean American caregivers of elderly parents or parents-in-law suggests this possibility. Yun (2005) utilized the Burden Interview (Zarit & Zarit, 1990), a measure designed to assess the levels of stress experienced by caregivers of elderly and/or disabled persons, in order to compare the different stress levels experienced by daughters, sons, or DILs who are caring for parents or parents-in-law, respectively. The results indicated that DILs showed a statistically significant level of stress that was much higher than those of daughters or sons. It was postulated that the DILs' obligations of fulfilling the roles as caregivers according to their East Asian cultural values coupled with lower affections toward their in-laws were potential reasons for their elevated levels of stress. Although stress levels are related to the overall mental health of individuals, this study did not specifically address potential psychological sequelae associated with the DILs' role in caring for parents-in-law.

Providing a different perspective on the DIL – MIL relationship dynamics, Shih and Pyke (2015) conducted interview analyses of 17 international Taiwanese, 10 Taiwanese Americans, and 9 Mexican Americans DILs regarding the underlying assumptions and beliefs of their respective co-ethnic MILs. The authors utilized two orienting research questions to guide their work: a) "Do stereotypes influence some women's expectations regarding their relationship with

their mothers-in-law, and prepare them for a distant or tumultuous relationship?" (p. 6) and b) "Do some daughters-in-law rely on negative stereotypes as a contrast structure in describing positive in-law relationships?" (p.6). Regardless of ethnic and national differences, all three sample groups seemed to share a "mothering ideology," which entailed "close affective bonds in evaluating their mothers-in-law, often relying on their own mothers as the standard for comparison" (p. 1). In other words, DILs used their own mothers as the yardstick by which to measure whether or not their MILs met their expectations. The authors' perspective as to problematize the "mothering ideology" by suggesting that DILs' high expectations contributed to difficult relationships with their in-laws, such as expecting their MILs to effectively maintain a balance between close affective bonds and non-intrusiveness. The study found differences across samples in that Taiwanese and Taiwanese Americans (and not Mexican Americans) employed assumptions based on race, which suggested the reproduction of racial stereotypes in reference to the roles of MILs. In other words, Taiwanese and Taiwanese American DILs often referenced typical roles of MILs derived from East Asian cultural norms whereas Mexican Americans did not specify cultural norms. While this study did explore some of the influences of East Asian cultural values, it did not address the psychological impact that East Asian American DILs might experience as a result of their relationships with their MILs.

Although non-empirical in nature, psychological implications of subordinated positions of East Asian American women, including DILs, due to the oppressive elements of East Asian cultural heritage have been postulated. In an essay entitled "*Confucianism and the lack of the development of the self among Korean American women*," Son (2006) asserted that Confucianism has had a primary influence on Korean Americans' experiences, as it was and still is deeply imbedded within every aspect of their lives. She emphasized that Confucianism has

been influential in positioning Korean American women in subordinated roles despite their broadened economic participation and enhanced degree of interpersonal power in the U.S. By using Kohut's conceptualization of the psychology of self as a reference, Son (2006) argued that the subordinated role of Korean American women impedes the healthy development of a cohesive self and further contributes to "broken relationships by causing in women grandiosity, low self-esteem, and a pervasive sense of shame" (Son, 2006, p. 325). She explained that when the development of the self in women is arrested due to the subordinated positions within society, they may exhibit low self-esteem and therefore turn to their own "exhibitionistic grandiosity" (Son, 2006, p. 331) in order to receive an affirming response for themselves and to compensate for their damaged self-esteem. Son (2006) also posited that the women who are subordinated may also experience difficulties in regulating the two extremes of self presentations (i.e. grandiosity and low self-esteem). Although this essay is conceptual in nature, Son (2006) pointed at the potential psychological sequelae of how social/familial positioning and heritage cultural practices may negatively impact East Asian American women.

2.6 International East Asian In-Law Relationship Studies

Given that there is so little empirical research investigating the psychological impact of in-law relationships on East Asian American DILs, it may be useful to note related findings from other Asian populations that share cultural similarities. International East Asian studies addressing psychological impacts of in-law relationships may be useful to note given that East Asian Americans have the same Asian cultural roots.

Amongst the available international literature in English addressing the relationship experiences of in-laws and DILs living in East Asian countries, a few studies suggest the existence of psychological ramifications. In a study investigating Korean DILs, Chung,

Crawford, and Fischer (1996) observed DILs' poor psychological wellbeing, such as negative behavioral self-blame and low self-efficacy, as a result of their relationships with in-laws. Keith and Hong (1994) similarly found negative mental health outcomes, such as elevated depressive symptoms, among DILs residing with their parents-in-law. Other studies demonstrated that DILs' perceived conflict with their respective in-laws was associated with poor marital adjustment and marital satisfaction. (e.g. Chung, Crawford, & Fischer, 1996; Wu et al., 2010).

Relatedly, Chan et al. (2009) sampled pregnant Chinese DILs from Hong Kong who were co-residing with in-laws and found a correlation between in-law conflict and IPV. The DILs who had experienced abuse from their partners in the preceding year were also more likely to have experienced conflicts with their in-laws after controlling for other covariates. Therefore, the authors of this particular study underscored the importance of obtaining information about potential conflicts with in-laws as part of routine risk assessments when screening for domestic abuse since a significant correlation between in-law conflict and IPV against DILs was found.

Chao and Roth (2000) studied Taiwanese women who were caretaking for their in-laws. One of their findings suggested that DILs coped with caretaking stressors by silencing and internalizing their thoughts and emotions in order to abide by their cultural norms and expectations. A theme of self-sacrifice emerged, where DILs reported that they were not asserting or expressing their personal feelings or needs. The authors noted that DILs coped by finding meaning and/or purpose of their sacrifices, however, they also suggested the existence of potential negative ramifications such as internalized feelings and/or repressed personal needs.

Similarly, scholars who studied the caretaking of in-laws from the perspectives of Japanese DILs demonstrated that DILs do indeed experience increased emotional burdens and relational difficulties. For instance, Sugihara, Sugisawa, Naikatani, and Hougham (2004) found

that DILs had higher emotional exhaustion than other caregivers. Arai, Zarit, Sugiura, and Washio (2002) also reported that over a one-year longitudinal study DILs were less likely to experience a decrease in their sense of caretaking burden while other caregivers (e.g. spouse) showed an alleviation of burden. Long, Campbell, and Nishimura (2009) found that both daughters and DILs reported challenges and difficulties based on their caretaking role for parents and parents-in-law, respectively. However, important differences were reported in regards to the relational and emotional aspects of caregiving. For instance, Long and colleagues (2009) noted that "[d]aughters-in-law seemed to have more difficulties with and anger toward people other than the care recipient, particularly husbands and siblings-in-law" (p. 17). Despite finding evidence of increased levels of burden, emotional difficulties, and relational struggles when caretaking in-laws, a more focused and in-depth study on the psychological impact of in-law relationships from the perspectives of East Asian American DILs is still lacking within the field of counseling psychology.

2.7 Purpose of Study and Research Questions

As indicated in the previous review of the literature, the extant research addressing DILs in relation to their in-laws seems to be largely focused on identifying gender roles and power dynamics. This research only hints at the potential psychological impact of such relationships on DILs. Additionally, resilience factors that East Asian American DILs may utilize to manage psychological stressors that result from potentially difficult in-law relationships seem to be understudied. Focused research efforts will allow psychologists to better understand DILs' coping methods, help-seeking behaviors, and protective factors – and will also expand psychotherapeutic multicultural competence in service of East Asian American clients.

The primary purpose of the study was, therefore, to explore the experiences, the psychological effects, and the individual resiliencies within the in-law relationships of East Asian Korean and Chinese American DILs in heterosexual relationships who identified as 1.5 and 2nd generations. As mentioned earlier, there is a scarcity of research specifically addressing DILs' relationships with respective in-laws from a psychological perspective. Scholars have noted that family values and practices are continually reconstructed across generations due to different cultural exposures and migration factors such as acculturation and enculturation (e.g. Chen, 2006; Lan, 2002; Shih, 2017). DILs as well as in-law family members residing in the U.S. may also be influenced by these factors. Given these dynamic influences, research addressing the psychological experiences of DILs from a U.S. context promises to provide fresh insights that will help to add to the body of multicultural counseling literature. The research questions for this study were examined within an open framework in order to allow participants to spontaneously offer any positive, negative, neutral, and/or ambivalent standpoints from their experiences.

The research questions that served to guide this study were:

1. What are the experiences of 1.5 or 2nd generation East Asian Korean and Chinese American DILs in the context of in-law relationships in the U.S.?
2. What are the elements of cultural values that conflict between DILs and in-laws, if any?
3. What is the perceived psychological impact of in-law relationships on East Asian Korean and Chinese American DILs?
4. What are the resilience factors, help-seeking behaviors, and actual coping strategies employed by these women in navigating their in-law relationships?

Chapter 3: Method

The preceding review of the literature presented the psychological impact of relationships of East Asian American DILs and their in-laws as worthy of study. The rationale for the study focused on a) its under-examination in the literature, b) its importance to an understanding of the well-being of East Asian women, and c) its potential to contribute to multicultural competence. Given the preliminary nature of research in this area and the expressed aim to convey results in the voices of participants themselves, a qualitative paradigm has been chosen as the appropriate method of study.

In particular, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method was utilized. CQR was formulated by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997), to which the author will frequently refer to as a primary source of reference to guide the methodology for this study. In this chapter, this method will be discussed, and the composition of research team will be delineated. The research sample will be introduced, as will the procedures, including recruitment and data collection. Finally, the demographic questionnaire, interview protocol, and data analysis will be outlined.

3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

There are several advantages in utilizing qualitative methods when data in a particular area is scarce. First, qualitative methods such as CQR allow a process of detailed, in-depth, yet rigorous data analyses, allowing investigators to reveal rich data from a previously unexplored phenomenon. Unlike quantitative methods, not only outcomes but also processes may be examined through research, providing nuanced information that may be overlooked in quantitative methods.

Second, qualitative researchers remain open to new discoveries and are not bound by specific and/or predetermined courses of investigation as contrary to quantitative methods (Hill

et al., 1997). It is therefore an inductive approach to research that allows investigators to discover findings as they naturally emerge from the participants' narratives. By contrast, quantitative methods tend to start research with preconceived hypotheses, categories, and/or constructs derived from researchers' theories and viewpoints (Hill et al., 1997). Hence, the qualitative research process of data collection is derived directly from the participants' language and from natural settings whereby investigators describe rather than manipulate findings. For example, in the qualitative research process, the participants' words are used to report results whereas in the quantitative research process, the participants' responses are converted to numerical data that have been manipulated to fit into psychometric measures.

Third, qualitative methods are appropriate for research investigations that require consideration of complex ideas, concepts, and covert experiences (Hill et al., 1997). The richness of sociocultural and historical contexts is included in qualitative methods (Fine, 2007), but may otherwise be lost in quantitative methods. For example, the inner experiences of minority individuals with complicated contexts, cultural values, and/or covert experiences may be more difficult to manipulate into fixed items on quantitative measures. This study sought to explore a new research topic that was centered on the overt and covert psychological experiences of East Asian American DILs who have been exposed to complex cultural values and contexts that can be difficult to be adequately captured and quantified using fixed measures, and as such, a qualitative method was determined to be beneficial.

3.1.1 Consensual Qualitative Research. CQR methodology was used for this study. Similar to other qualitative methods, CQR is rooted in a constructivist paradigm, which assumes that multiple truths exist and are valid, taking a stance of understanding individuals as constructing their own realities within their unique contexts (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et. al., 2005).

The social and cultural contexts of each individual experience are therefore incorporated as key elements to understanding research findings. Likewise, CQR was well-suited for this study given that East Asian American DILs' unique exposures to multiple cultural, social, and familial contexts necessitated a methodology that can adequately incorporate such factors.

In addition to the points discussed above regarding the usefulness of qualitative methods as compared to quantitative methods, CQR has additional strengths that make its use appropriate for this study. While qualitative methodology has been recognized as a valid and useful way to conduct research, it has been critiqued as lacking rigor as compared to quantitative methods due to concerns relating to researchers' bias, lack of consistency in the steps of research procedures and methods, and difficulty replicating results (Hill et al., 1997). To address these limitations, Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) formulated CQR.

CQR is unique in that it has features that other qualitative methods (e.g. phenomenological and/or grounded theory methods) do not have. As delineated by Hill and colleagues (1997), CQR ensures consistency by utilizing the same interview protocol consisting a of focused topic area across a carefully defined sample, which helps to avoid a too varied data set that is difficult to analyze. CQR also utilizes a team approach to arrive at a consensus of research findings and subsequently uses independent auditors to conduct stability checks in order to verify accuracy and avoid any omissions. Instead of using one researcher, a team of multiple researchers facilitates the investigation of varied viewpoints, which helps to minimize the effect of researcher bias. Next, CQR researchers code data into both topic areas and abstract core ideas to capture the essence of participants' responses. CQR utilizes a tabulation system with frequency labels from general to variant of the emergent themes in order to indicate the representativeness to the sample. Finally, CQR researchers describe findings non-sequentially

across domains instead of hierarchically arranging them into categories with relevant subcategories.

It is important to note that unlike quantitative research that prioritize higher sample sizes to obtain valid results, the validity of qualitative methods is based on the richness of information gathered from cases. Specifically, CQR evaluates " the degree to which the results of the study can be trusted" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 556), in order to determine the validity of findings rather than the number of samples gathered. Furthermore, the investigators' analytical and observational skills are viewed as important components in gathering valid results (Patton, 2002).

In sum, CQR was deemed the most appropriate to conduct this study as opposed to other qualitative methods in keeping with CQR's higher level of rigor in using "multiple researchers, the process of reaching consensus, and a systematic way of examining the representativeness of results across cases" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 519), which address limitations of some other qualitative methods.

3.2 Research Sample Criteria

Hill and colleagues (1997) provided guidelines recommending a sample size of eight to 15 participants to effectively conduct CQR and to generate workable data and valid results. CQR utilizes detailed and in-depth analyses of each participant's narratives, which can be time consuming and not feasible with larger samples. Consistent with the Hill and colleagues' (1997) guidelines, 12 individuals were recruited for this study.

Hill et al. (1997) recommended that the selection criteria for participants be defined as clearly as possible in order to avoid a diffuse data set given that the sample size is relatively small. Since CQR relies on the richness of participants' narratives to be analyzed in detail,

participants need to be carefully selected so that they are able to adequately articulate their experiences in depth regarding the phenomenon of interest (Hill et al., 1997). Accordingly, participants eligible for this study identified as East Asian American women who have cultural roots from an East Asian country. They also identified as non-first generation, specifically as 1.5 or 2nd generation (i.e. immigrated prior to age 15 or born and raised in the U.S., respectively). Both 1.5 and 2nd generation East Asian Americans are more likely to have been exposed to East Asian cultures by direct experiences of their country of origin during their formative developmental years (i.e. 1.5 generations) and/or by their immigrant, first generation parents (i.e. 1.5 and 2nd generations). Additionally, 1.5 and 2nd generation individuals are acculturated to and familiar with Western cultural values. Individuals of 3rd generation and beyond, however, may be too far removed from their cultural heritage in comparison to 1.5 and 2nd generations. Therefore, the study data were collected from 1.5 and 2nd generation East Asian American women as they were more likely to be exposed to a greater tension between East Asian and Western cultural values. This study also used such generational factors to minimize the possibility of obtaining a too varied data set.

Each participant identified as being in a heterosexual marriage for no longer than 5 years to a man of co-ethnic background (i.e. from the same ethnic group), whose co-ethnic in-law members lived within close proximity. As mentioned in Chapter 1, sexual minority individuals are likely to have in-law experiences that may be uniquely expressed due to additional factors related to discrimination and oppression based on their sexual orientation, therefore, only DILs who identified as heterosexual were recruited for this study. The duration of marriage was controlled to include participants who have been married for no longer than 5 years to reflect the early stages of marriage. Life stage transitions generally influence an individual's stress levels,

which may be expressed as more acute. For example, a DIL who has transitioned into marriage may experience higher levels of relationship difficulties with in-law members and may find it difficult to adjust to her new family roles. Therefore, mental health professionals may need to be ready to assist during the earlier stages of marriage. In terms of defining close proximity for this study, it was specified as in-law members living within approximately 100 miles, which is about 2 hours of driving distance. This geographic distance seemed reasonable to allow some forms of direct intergenerational contact amongst the participants and their respective in-laws.

In-law members were defined as any extended family members related to each participant's spouse, including mothers-in-law (MILs), fathers-in-law (FILs), sisters-in-law (SILs), and brothers-in-laws (BILs). In addition, the author was opened to explore the participants' descriptions of aunts, uncles, and elders who were part of the in-law family system, if they emerged in participants' narratives. Based on the literature review, in-law relationship research seemed to be largely focused on issues involving female members only, specifically of DIL-MIL dynamics. In fact, other scholars (Shih & Pyke, 2010; Raj, Livramento, Santana, Gupta, & Silverman, 2006; Wasim, 2014) have noted that the foci should be broadened to include other in-law family members as DILs and their in-law relationship dynamics are often "embedded in and constrained by broader systems of inequality, as is the case with mother-in-law—daughter-in-law relations, which are situated within a system of male domination" (Shih & Pyke, 2010, p. 354). The East Asian DIL-MIL relationship is indeed a complicated social issue that is rooted in Confucianism and patriarchy, involving male figures and in-law family members who are positioned to have more power within the family system. Therefore, DILs' experiences with other in-law members were also examined, which the author documented as they emerged from participants' narratives when applicable.

3.3 Recruited Sample Demographics

All participants met the selection criteria during the prescreening process, as reflected in Table 1 (see below). Table 1 also provides additional demographic characteristics of the recruited sample.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n= 12)

Characteristics	N
Sex/Sexual Orientation	
Female	12
Heterosexual	12
Race	
East Asian	12
Ethnicity	
Korean American	8
Chinese American	4
Age	M=30.17, SD=3.24
Generational Status	
1.5 generation	4
2nd generation	8
Religious Affiliation	
Christian	9
Buddhist	1
Agnostic	1
"No religion"	1
Class Membership	
Working class	2
Middle class	9
Upper middle class	1
Upper class	0

Table 1. (cont.) Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n= 12)

Characteristics	N
Highest Level of Education	
Bachelor's degree	6
Master's degree	5
Juris doctorate degree	1
Employment Status	
Full-time paid employment	9
Unemployed	3
Parent Status	6

The recruited sample was comprised of 12 female participants (*n*=12) who all identified as heterosexual (*n*=12) and in their first marriages (*n*=12) with co-ethnic male spouses (*n*=12). They all reported the duration of marriage as 5 years or less (*n*=12) and that they had co-ethnic in-laws (*n*=12) living approximately 2 hours from their residences (*n*=12). All participants identified themselves as East Asian (*n*=12), specifically as Korean Americans (*n*=8) or Chinese Americans (*n*=4). The participants identified their generational status as 2nd generation (*n*=8) or 1.5 generation (*n*=4). The participants ranged in age from 25 to 38 (M=30.17, SD=3.24). Most of the participants identified as middle class (*n*=9), while three participants either identified as lower class (*n*=2), or upper middle class (*n*=1). Half of the participants reported their highest level of education as a bachelor's degree (*n*=6), and the remainder stated that they had obtained a master's degree (*n*=5) or a juris doctorate degree (*n*=1). The majority of the participants held full-time paid employment (*n*=9), while a few participants were unemployed (*n*=3). In terms of religious identification, the participants were asked to freely note their affiliations. Most participants noted being Christians (*n*=9), while three participants reported being Agnostic (*n*=1), Buddhist (*n*=1), or having "no religion" (*n*=1). Of all 12 participants, half reported having children (*n*=6).

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 Recruitment. The recruitment strategies utilized for this study included outreach efforts to invite East Asian American DILs from a variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious community organizations. The method of outreach included telephone calls, emails, letters, and snowball sampling. Materials for recruitment involved electronic PDFs (see Appendix C), which provided a brief description of this research, the author's contact information, and participants' eligibility criteria. Once the contacts of participants were received, they were contacted by phone and screened whether they qualified to participate in this study (see Appendix D). When participants met the sample criteria, interview dates were scheduled.

Participants were informed of the confidentiality of this research. Information gathered from participants were all de-identified. To ensure confidentiality, audiotaped recordings of the interviews were safely stored and destroyed following transcription. Participants were also provided with informed consent, which detailed their rights to know the potential risks and benefits of their participation, to give consent to audiotape their experiences, and to inform them of the voluntary nature of the participation. The author ensured that participants' questions were adequately addressed and contact information shared. Helpful resources for counseling were available in case of the participants who wanted to further discuss their experiences after the interview.

3.4.2 Data collection. Semi-structured interviews were used in keeping with CQR specifications. The interviews were audiotaped, which were then transcribed verbatim for analyses. The participants were provided with the options of in-person or telephonic interviews. All 12 participants opted for telephone interviews. Although in-person interviews are generally recommended as ideal, telephone interviews are also recognized as useful modes of collecting

data due to specific situations. For instance, participants who may feel vulnerable and embarrassed about sharing sensitive topics may prefer to be contacted by telephone given the increased confidentiality and privacy (Hill et al., 2005). DILs of Asian descents may be more candid and willing to discuss their experiences related to family relationships if some form of distance is created via telephone instead of direct face-to-face contact. It may indeed help with issues relating to saving their family face, as previously discussed as a salient Asian cultural factor, and may facilitate a more candid exploration of their experiences. The participants were instructed to locate a private room to ensure confidentiality. The author was also seated in a private room to conduct the telephone interview.

3.5 Instruments

3.5.1 Demographic questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix A). The demographic questions were asked in order to verify the participant's fit to the inclusion criteria for the sample. Participants were asked to identify their race, ethnicity, age, gender, generational status, social class status, income and education level, current profession, sexual orientation, and religious identification. They were also asked to identify their marital length of time and whether they have children. Additionally, each participant was asked to check yes or no to having a co-ethnic spouse and to having co-ethnic in-laws who live within an approximately 100 miles and/or 2 hours of driving distance radius from the participant's residence.

3.5.2 Interview protocol. In conducting the interview for CQR, a semi-structured interview, consisting of open-ended questions covering a focused topic area, is recommended to minimize participants' restricted responses and to optimize spontaneous narratives (Hill et al, 1997). The interview protocol (see Appendix B) covered questions derived from the previously

discussed literature review related to the study's topic area. To ensure consistency, CQR uses the same interview protocol consisting of a focused topic area interviewed across a carefully defined sample. Asking general questions may result in overwhelmingly varied data and participants may not be able to focus on the same topic. Therefore, CQR utilizes questions that are focused on specific topics, which are better to gather useful and workable data sets.

3.6 Methodology of Data Analysis

According to Hill and colleagues (1997), after the interviews are completed and transcribed verbatim, there are three main processes in analyzing data in CQR. The following section first discussed in greater depth the composition of the research team and the three steps involved for the process of analysis, namely the development of domains, the construction of core ideas, and the cross-analysis to develop categories by common themes. The use of frequency labels and stability checks were then outlined. Finally, the team process of reducing potential research biases and expectations via team discussions were delineated.

3.6.1 Research team. In CQR, data analyses are typically conducted by a research team that consists of three to five researchers and one or two independent auditors (Hill et al, 1997). For this study, a team of three researchers were used for data analysis. The author, an East Asian, Korean American, married, heterosexual, upper middle-class doctoral student in counseling psychology, identifying as 1.5 generation, was the primary researcher. The author was responsible for recruiting, collecting data, and recruiting team members and auditor for data analyses. The recruitment of team members reflected the recommendations made by Hill and colleagues (1997). To limit group membership biases, the author actively attempted to recruit individuals who were different from her as much as possible, such as individuals with different ethnicity, theoretical orientation, class membership, or marital status. Thus, one research team

member was a Chinese American female graduate student who was pursuing a master's degree in counseling psychology. She self-identified as 1.5 generation, heterosexual, single, and working-class. The other research team member self-identified as a Korean American female master's level student, majoring in clinical psychology. She reported being a 1.5 generation, single, heterosexual, and middle-class. Additionally, one auditor was employed to review the analysis and offer feedback to the team. The auditor was the dissertation sponsor who has in-depth expertise in conducting CQR studies and is an experienced professor within the field of multicultural counseling psychology.

According to Hill and colleagues (1997; 2005), the members of a CQR team work both independently and collectively to analyze data in order to arrive at a consensus of results. Obtaining a shared understanding in reporting results reflected a feminist approach due to the process of collaboration and open dialogue amongst team members. As a result, any power dynamics amongst the team members in this study were carefully examined throughout research, which allowed researchers to have equal voice in presenting ideas. Moreover, power was shared with participants by respecting and viewing them as experts of their own experiences that researchers aimed to learn from. The team verified that findings were accurately described by frequently returning to the transcribed raw data of participants' actual words.

3.6.2 Biases and expectations. Hill and colleagues (1997) noted that candid discussions about biases and expectations are essential to minimize the potential errors that may occur due to the research team members' subjective assessment and interpretation of interview data. Accordingly, in order to adequately address researchers' biases and expectations, research team members met before starting the process of data analysis to discuss any expectations and biases that they might have regarding the study topic and/or research sample. Each team member

had the opportunity to share their cultural identifications and personal experiences that may potentially hinder the data analysis process. In doing so, team members learned about each other on a deeper level and agreed to be accountable for one another to point out any biases and expectations that may arise during the process of generating, coding, and interpreting data. In addition, group dynamics and power differentials amongst research team members were also discussed throughout the research process in order to optimize respect, to foster openness in challenging each other's assumptions, to share the responsibilities in conducting this study, and to equally contribute to research.

3.6.3 Development of domains. After all the transcriptions were completed, one or two cases of interviews were set aside for later stability check. The stability check will be discussed later. The research team's first task of data analysis was to generate an initial working list of domains that were found to be relevant from reviewing the literature and interview protocol (Hill et al., 1997). The domains were title descriptions based on emergent topical areas derived from the interviews that can be meaningfully clustered together to best represent the data (Hill et al., 2005). Once the initial domain list was generated, each research team member independently coded the first case interview into domains. The team then met to discuss the findings of their coding and worked through a consensus process towards a list of domain titles that best described the study data. Keeping these title domains in mind, the remainder of participants' interviews were coded, except for one or two case interviews that were later used for stability check. As the team worked to code the remainder of the interviews, the domains were amended to accurately capture the raw data of participants' descriptions.

3.6.4 Construction of core ideas. Once the research team coded the transcripts into domains, each team member worked independently to abstract core ideas (or brief summaries)

that best captured the essence of the domains. The aim of developing core ideas was to find concise descriptions that can accurately capture the essence of the participants' experience without making interpretations (Hill et al., 1997). This domain was further refined into a core idea, describing as accurately as possible the participants' experience. After each team member finished abstracting core ideas, the team members reconvened to discuss their list of core ideas to arrive at a consensus. When the team members were satisfied with their list of domains and core ideas argued through a process of consensus, they sent the document to an auditor for review in order to check the accuracy of each domain and core idea. The auditor's feedback was then discussed and incorporated to revise the domains and core ideas.

3.6.5 Cross-analysis. A cross analysis was conducted by developing categories according to common themes that have emerged across participants' experiences. The team members worked to find similar themes that emerged from comparing participants' experiences. Categories were created based on the core ideas found that could be clustered together across participants. Once the cross-analysis process was completed, the document was sent to the auditor for review and feedback.

3.6.6 Frequency labels. The CQR method allows researchers to systematically compare data across samples, which can be tabulated into case frequencies for each emergent category. Consistent with Hill and colleagues' (1997; 2005) recommendation, the labels such as *General, Typical,* or *Variant* were used to describe the representativeness to the sample in relation to the frequency of a particular description of experience across cases. *General* was used when the particular experience applied to eleven to twelve participants. *Typical* was used when the experience applied to seven to ten participants. Finally, *Variant* was used if the experience represented two to six participants. If the experience pertained to only one participant, the

experience was classified as *Rare* and excluded from the analysis (Hill et al., 1997). Consistent with the CQR method, the findings were arranged in a non-sequential or non-hierarchical manner across domains.

3.6.7 Stability check. As previously discussed, one or two case interviews were left for later analysis in order to conduct a stability check. The stability check determines whether the findings remain reliable despite the introduction of new case interviews. The research team coded the two remaining transcripts for analysis, which the team considered the findings to be stable. Then, the stability check was sent to the auditor, who also confirmed that the results of the study were stable. In other words, the domains, core ideas, categories, or frequencies of the categories remained unchanged and stable despite adding new cases for analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results of the study data using the CQR analysis process. This results section is organized into the recommended structure provided by Hill and colleagues (2012) according to domains and categories. Frequency labels were assigned to each category in order to delineate how common the experiences were across the 12 research participants (See Table 2). Categories that applied to the experiences of 11 to 12 participants were labeled as *general*, categories that represented seven to ten participants were labeled as *typical*, and categories that applied to two to six participants were labeled as *varian*t. The categories that only represented the experiences of one participant were considered to be unrepresentative of the study data and therefore were not reported.

Of the 12 participants, six identified as having children and therefore shared relationship experiences with their in-laws specifically as parents. This differentiation among participants was deemed to be of significant interest in keeping with the family-oriented nature of the study's research questions. For this reason, a post-hoc decision was made to conduct a secondary analysis to create an exploratory domain called *In-Laws' Impact on DIL as a Parent* (See Table 3) to represent the experiences of those six participants. The creation of this domain should be considered exploratory, in that such a procedure is not a feature of conventional CQR guidelines and includes fewer participants than is traditional in CQR (which typically extends down to eight participants). In exploratory fashion, therefore, this domain considered categories that applied to all six participants to be *general*, while categories that pertained to four to five participants were labeled as *typical*, and categories applicable to two to three participants were labeled as *variant*. The categories that represented only one participant discarded from secondary analysis report. The results of this domain will be reported after the results of the primary analysis. Following the

secondary analysis, an additional supplementary interpretation of the results is presented. This final interpretative step -- a conceptual organization of domains into broader themes – is offered to further clarify the results via the use of a visual diagram. This step is not part of established CQR methodology and is presented here in exploratory fashion.

4.1 Typical Case Narrative

Hill (2012) noted that it is helpful to illustrate a prototypical case across the study sample at the beginning of the result reports. A prototypical case is a composite narrative created to document the commonly represented experiences that were shared by the majority of the participants. As such, the typical DIL in this study is a woman in her early thirties who identifies as heterosexual, Christian, and as a second generation East Asian American, born and raised in the U.S. She is married to a co-ethnic spouse for less than five years, has a child from this union, and lives close to her parents-in-law. She holds a bachelor's degree, is currently employed at a full-time paid job, and identifies her class membership as middle class. Culturally, she values the American ideals of equal rights and independence. She believes that decisions and household responsibilities should be equally shared amongst family members. Her in-laws, however, uphold East Asian cultural ideals and traditions as they are reportedly more East Asian than American in terms of their cultural identities. With respect to in-law relationships, she had heard about difficult experiences with Asian in-laws from her friends and family members. While growing up, she also saw her mother having both positive and negative in-law related experiences. In terms of her own in-law relationship experiences, she explains that she is expected to abide by her in-laws' traditional ways and follow their family-oriented values. She sees these expectations as coming from her in-laws' sense of entitlement and authority. For example, her in-laws expect their time and space to be prioritized over hers. She has to often

invite them over for dinner or go visit them frequently. For the wedding, her in-laws wanted her to abide by their traditional practices, such as gift-giving according to their dowry list and performing traditional ceremonies for them. Her in-laws also wanted her to fit into certain qualities of being a DIL or wife, such as being a quiet stay-at-home wife who knows how to serve her husband and elders. In addition to these qualities, her in-laws reportedly expect all the household chores, such as cooking and cleaning to be her responsibility because she is a woman and a DIL. Her husband is often caught in the middle between family members. For example, her in-laws frequently communicate their expectations of what she should or should not do as a DIL via her husband. Despite her efforts, she is often criticized, mistreated, and disliked for failing to meet her in-laws' expectations. These experiences make her feel frustrated, angry, anxious, depressed, hurt, and disregarded, and she often finds herself questioning whether she can fully meet her in-laws' standards. She admits feeling inadequate as a wife and DIL as well. As a means of self-coping for the past difficult in-law relationship experiences, she has tried to avoid, dismiss, ignore or let things go in terms of the difficult in-law relationship. She also has sought out others to cope by sharing her experiences with her friends and family members. Regardless of her reported negative experiences, she still considers her in-law relationship to be good overall. For example, although her in-laws often criticize and impose their own ways of parenting, which puts a strain on the relationship, she feels closer to her in-laws because of their love and care towards her child. As factors that may contribute to a more positive in-law relationships, she believes that a supportive, affirming, loving, and respectful stance from her in-laws may help to increase positive relationships. She also believes that when in-laws are more hands-off and try not to impose traditions, these efforts will positively influence the DIL/in-law relationships.

4.2 Primary Analysis: Domains and Categories

As illustrated in Table 2 (see below), the CQR analysis team found a total of 17 domains that emerged from the study data within the primary analysis. The 17 domains entailed discrete topics that were used to understand and organize the participants' experiences. Within domains, the study data was subsequently cross-analyzed via categories, which described the interview content in greater detail. The terms DIL(s) and participant(s) are used interchangeably to describe the study sample, and the category titles are noted in the text in italics.

Table 2.

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
1. DIL's Observations of General East Asian Cultural Values	I think it's customary for DILs to enter into and become part of the in-laws' family	Variant
	Based on my impressions, accepting domestic and caretaking roles is common for DILs	Variant
	In an Asian household, I think it is important to show that you are doing well through your children and wealth	Variant
	In our culture, it is common to respect and care for elders	Variant
	I think that there are stigmas around having mental health issues and receiving treatment in our culture	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
1. DIL's Observations of General East Asian Cultural Values (cont.)	It is common in our culture for the wife to perform traditional ceremonies and give dowries to the husband's family	Variant
	I think living together or having children before marriage is a big no-no in our culture	Variant
2. DIL's Cultural Self-Identification	I identify as a Christian	Variant
	I am more Americanized than traditional East Asian	Variant
	I am more East Asian than American.	Variant
	I am in the middle of East Asian and American	Variant
3. DIL's Values Regarding Family Roles and Practices	I value having independence, education, equal rights, and shared decision-making and household responsibilities	Typical
	It's important for me to respect and serve elders, including my in-laws	Variant
	I believe in following wedding traditions, such as wearing traditional clothes, accepting gifts from guests, and doing things for the husband's family	Variant
	I consider the whole extended in-law family as my family and believe that getting along with them will make my life easier because I am married into the in-law family	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
4. In-Laws' Cultural Identification	My in-laws are more East Asian than American	Typical
	My in-laws are both Americanized and East Asian	Variant
	My in-laws are Christians	Variant
	My in-laws are not Christians	Variant
5. In-Laws' values regarding family roles, practices, and their expectations of DILs	My in-laws expected me to abide by their traditional ways due to their sense of entitlement and authority	Typical
	My in-laws have family-oriented values and follow traditions	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to follow their ways of traditional wedding practices, such as giving dowries and performing ceremonies	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to prioritize their time and space over mine	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to fit into the qualities of an ideal DIL and wife, such as being quiet, serving my husband and elders, and being a stay-at-home wife	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to do all the household chores, such as cooking and cleaning for them as a woman and DIL	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to bear sons to carry the family name and take care of children	Variant
	My in-laws follow strict gender roles, such as valuing the steady housewife type of woman who takes care of her family	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
5. In-Laws' values regarding family roles, practices, and their expectations of DILs (cont.)	My in-laws told me to manage my relationships with SILs as an authority figure as I am married to the eldest son, while younger SILs are expected to listen to me	Variant
	My in-laws did not expect me to follow the traditional ways of being a DIL, such as serving, cleaning, or cooking for them	Variant
6. Immigration and Generational Factors	My in-laws and parents immigrated to the U.S. and they have adjusted to the American ways	Variant
	As immigrants, my in-laws and parents made sacrifices and struggled in America	Variant
	My in-laws and parents immigrated to the U.S. but weren't able to let go of their East Asian ways	Variant
	I had conflicts with my in-laws because of the generational differences	Variant
7. Financial and Living Circumstances	I had conflicts with my in-laws because of money	Variant
	Living together with my in-laws exacerbated my relationship with them	Variant
	I lived with my in-laws to save money	Variant
	My in-laws are not financially well-off but they are still giving and supportive	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
8. DIL's Perceptions of Own In-Law Relationships	I have a good/close/comfortable relationship with my in-laws	Typical
	I have a distant/strained relationship with my in-laws	Variant
	I have an okay/civil/co-existing relationship with my in-laws even though they drive me crazy at times	Variant
9. DIL's Perceptions of Others' In-Law Relationships	I heard about difficult Asian in-law relationships from friends and family members	Typical
	I saw that my mother had a great relationship with her in-laws as she was obedient, caring, respectful, and patient towards them	Typical
	I saw that my mother had rocky in-law relationships as she experienced a lot of bitterness/resentment due to their harsh treatment	Typical
	My mother's positive in-law relationships made me respect her and also helped me to better relate with my own in-laws	Variant
	My impressions of my mom's/friends' in-law relationships have little to no effect on me	Variant
	I've learned how crazy East Asian in-law relationships can get by watching TV dramas	Variant
	My mother's negative in-law relationships impacted the way I view and would react to things	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
10. In-Laws' Influence on DIL's Marriage	I have conflicts with my husband because my in-laws interject themselves into our marriage and want to make decisions for us	Variant
	I argue a lot with my husband because my in-laws brought him up to value things differently	Variant
	I butt heads with my husband because he prioritizes my in-laws over me	Variant
	I think that my in-laws have a positive effect on marriage as they impact us to confront family-related hurdles together	Variant
	My in-laws are not a daily influence in our marriage because we are pretty independent	Variant
11. Triangulation	My husband gets caught in the middle between my in-laws and I	General
	I was caught in the middle of/ pulled into family struggles	Variant
12. DIL's Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Positive In-Law Relationships	My in-laws are supportive/ affirming/ loving/ respectful, which I think contribute to our good relationship	Typical
	My in-laws do not really impose traditions and are more hands-off, which contribute to a positive relationship that I'm appreciative of	Typical
	I was already familiar with my in-laws before marriage, which contributed to a more welcoming and comfortable relationship	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
12. DIL's Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Positive In-Law Relationships (cont.)	My in-laws help me with childcare and household responsibilities, which contribute to a more positive relationship	Variant
	I think spending quality time and communicating well with my in-laws contribute to our positive relationship	Variant
	I think having similar values and goals of wanting positive in-law relationships help us to relate better	Variant
13. In-Laws' Emotional Responses	My in-laws disliked/ criticized/ lashed out their anger at me because they felt like I did not meet their expectations	Typical
	My in-laws were jealous/ sad/ needy due to feeling like they have lost their son/brother to me	Variant
14. DIL's Emotional Responses	I felt frustrated/ angry/ disrespected/ confused/ stressed/ anxious/ tearful/ trapped because of my in-laws' traditional expectations of me	Typical
	I questioned myself and felt inadequate as a wife/ DIL because I was unsure whether I was marriage/ wife material according to my in-laws' standards	Typical
	I felt broken/ depressed/ offended/ hurt/ livid/ exhausted/ disrespected/ disappointed/ humiliated because of my in-laws' blatant disregard for my well-being and treatment towards me	Typical
	Overall, my in-laws do not affect how I view myself	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
14. DIL's Emotional Responses (cont.)	I felt upset/ furious/ scared/ stressed/ frustrated/ anxious/ disliked/ bitter because of my in-laws' expectations around our wedding invitation, planning, and ceremony	Variant
	I felt frustrated/ annoyed/ hurt/ mad/ depressed due to my in-laws' overly dependent personality/ strong personality/ passive aggressiveness	Variant
	I felt good/ less emotional/ less anxious/ happier/ more affectionate/ loved because my in-laws were welcoming, loving, affirming, and accepting of me	Variant
	I felt more worthy, confident, and deserving of love because of my in-laws' encouragement, words of affirmation, and acceptance	Variant
15. Perspectives on Seeking Professional Help	I did not seek professional help for in-law related issues because I feel like the problems have never gotten to a point beyond what I could handle	Variant
	I have reservations in seeking help because having mental health issues and taking medications are not accepted in my culture	Variant
	If my in-law relationships get worse, I would explore more into going to a mental health professional	Variant
	I went to therapy for problems unrelated to my in-law relationships, which helped me to heal from my past issues	Variant
	One of my concerns in seeking help is not being able to find someone who can empathize and understand all the nuances of my culture	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
15. Perspectives on Seeking Professional Help (cont.)	I went to counseling to address in-law related problems, which was helpful in having someone to talk to and applying the things I learned in therapy	Variant
16. Coping Strategies	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by avoiding/ letting things go/ dismissing/ ignoring	Typical
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by sharing with others	Typical
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by thinking things through and reflecting on different perspectives	Variant
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by engaging in spiritual/ physical/ work activities	Variant
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by submitting and giving into their ways	Variant
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by letting out my emotions	Variant
17. Resilience, Lessons Learned, and Growth	I grew to rise above the situation, become more independent, and not feel defeated anymore through my in-law relationships	Variant
	I've learned to better react, understand, and relate to my in-laws over time	Variant
	I've learned to focus on my husband and have more conversations with him about issues related to my in-laws	Variant

**Note.* Total of n = 12. General (11-12 cases), Typical (7-10 cases), Variant (2-6 cases)

4.2.1 Domain 1: DIL's Observations of General East Asian Cultural Values.

This domain captured the DILs' descriptions of any cultural elements that they perceived or observed as coming from East Asian societies in general, such as the norms, expectations, and roles that are commonly practiced. Seven categories emerged from the DILs' narratives, which all fell within the variant range. The first variant category included the participants' observations that *they think it's customary for DILs to enter into and become part of the in-laws' family*. A case in point is one participant who explained that, "In East Asian cultures, when a female gets married, you marry into the husband's family. It is also common in my culture to announce the marriage in front of people at church and inform that a newlywed woman is part of the in-law family now." This idea of entering into and becoming part of the in-law's family was echoed by other participants who also highlighted that the in-law families are generally prioritized over the DILs' families of origin. Indeed, as one DIL remarked, "It is believed in East Asian culture that a woman leaves the house of her family to join the husband's side of the family, to the point that her own family does not exist anymore and [is] not a priority."

The second variant category captured the participants' descriptions that *based on their impressions, accepting domestic and caretaking roles is common for DILs* within East Asian cultures. For instance, a participant noted that "a typical East Asian DIL thing to do" is "washing the dishes at the in-laws' house." Other participants also commented on the commonly observed domestic and caretaking roles in East Asian cultures as, "It is typical for DILs to be obedient to in-laws and to take care of them," or "It is common for DILs to be hardworking and do house-chores when going over to their in-laws' house in order to impress them." Similarly, a participant further explained that DILs take on these domestic and caretaking responsibilities because "Women learn to accept their specific roles as part of marriage and being the DILs."

The third variant category captured the participants' observation that *in an Asian household, it is important to show that you are doing well through your children and wealth*. A DIL stated that "Parents from Asian cultures want to show off to everyone that their daughters are really well-mannered," and explained that "It is probably like a competition between whose children are doing the best as the parents are vicariously living through them." Another participant reported that "In an Asian household, it is important that the children have gone to a more esteemed college and do well" and "it is considered serious to not have good grades and not finish college." With respect to showing that one is "doing well" through wealth, a DIL remarked that "It is part of Chinese culture that people show off their wealth through purchasing expensive name brand items."

The fourth variant category pertained to the participants' observation that *in their culture, it is common to respect and care for elders*, consistent with common East Asian cultural roles and social rules based on eldership hierarchy. One participant explained that "It is common to respect elders as heads of the household." Along with respecting elders in general, DILs were commonly expected to take care of their in-laws as their elders; as one participant noted, "In Korean culture, it is typical for DILs to take care of their elderly in-laws." Another DIL explained, "In Chinese culture, people are expected to be very respectful, bow down, and bite their tongues in front of elders," which highlighted the way in which elder respect is commonly practiced. The younger individuals, including DILs, are expected to bow down and keep personal opinions or objections to themselves in front of their elders and in-laws.

The fifth variant category captured the participants' observation that *there are stigmas around having mental health issues and receiving treatment in their culture*. This category included the general stigma associated with mental health, using psychological services, and/or

taking psychotropic medications that the participants observed in East Asian cultures. A case in point is a participant who remarked, “A stigma exists in Korean culture regarding seeking mental health services.” Another participant similarly noted, “Due to the stigma of mental health in Chinese culture, Chinese people hesitate to seek professional mental health help.” Along with having mental health problems and seeking psychological services, stigma also exists in taking psychotropic medications, which is consistent with a DIL’s explanation that “anti-depressant medication is not accepted in our culture.”

The sixth variant category addressed common East Asian wedding practices, which included the participants’ observation that *it is common in their culture for the wife to perform traditional ceremonies and give dowries to the husband’s family*. One DIL noted that the “wife performs traditional wedding ceremonies for the husband’s family.” Another DIL explained the common dowry practice for the husband’s side of the family as:

> It’s Korean traditional dowry practice for the bride to bring gifts to the husband’s family for the wedding. While the extended in-law family members such as aunts, uncles, and cousins receive smaller gifts like blankets, the immediate family gets bigger gifts such as new outfits, cash, or jewelry.

The final variant category captured the participants’ observation that *living together or having children before marriage is a big no-no in their culture*, which included the stigmas that exist for East Asian women, specifically during premarital phases. In fact, one participant commented, “I think living together before marriage is a big no-no in Korean culture.” Along with the stigma of premarital cohabitation, having children out of wedlock is commonly not accepted within East Asian cultures. As a participant underscored, “Having a child before marriage is disgraceful and humiliating in the Korean community. Because the Korean community is small, people shame and reject those who have children out of wedlock.”

4.2.2 Domain 2: DIL's Cultural Self-Identification. This domain captured DILs' descriptions of their reported cultural identities during the interview. As such, the participants explained their identities by often comparing East Asian versus American cultures and identifying which culture they predominantly align with. Some participants voluntarily shared their religious affiliation during the interview even though they have already identified themselves on the paper format demographic questionnaire. This domain yielded four variant categories. The first variant category captured the participants' spirituality, specifically as *they identify as Christians*. Some participants shared that their upbringing and parents' influence shaped their own Christian beliefs and values. One participant explained that she is a Christian because she "grew up having a Korean Christian pastor." Another DIL commented on her Christian values that go against the common Buddhist traditions from East Asian cultures:

> When my parents came to the States, they became Christians and let go of Korean Buddhist traditions of bowing to ancestors and rather found it important to honor them by talking about memories passed on through the family. Because of this, bowing down to spirits goes against my Christian and personal values.

Other participants commented that their Christian identities and beliefs shaped their behaviors towards their in-laws, as one DIL remarked, "Based on my Christian faith, I do not want to be bitter and want to be loving, nonjudgmental, and respectful of my in-laws." Another DIL similarly expressed, "Due to being a Christian and knowing that life is temporary, I know to pick my battles and learn to understand my in-laws when we have disagreements."

The next variant category centered around the participants' identity descriptions that *they are more Americanized than traditional East Asian*. Despite phenotypically appearing as Asians, some participants noted that they did not identify as East Asians and emphasized that they aligned more with their American identity. One DIL reported, "I am Americanized even though I look Korean and I do not identify with Korean culture. I only started to appreciate my Korean

heritage from college and work." Another participant explained, "While I look Asian and understand Asian culture better than other Americans, I was exposed to and adapted to Western influences at a young age and therefore I identify as Asian American with more emphasis on the American."

Conversely, another variant category clustered around identity descriptions that the participants saw themselves as *more East Asian than American* because of their family upbringing or the traditional values that they uphold. For instance, some participants shared their traditional family background, which influenced the way they culturally identified themselves, as one participant remarked, "Since my family is very Koreanized, I see myself as Korean." Another DIL admitted, "Although I will not be fully Korean like a girl from Korea, I identify myself as Korean than American. I am more Korean than my in-laws' children and I think that my parents are a lot more Korean than my in-laws." A third participant noted, "Even though I am Korean American because I was born and raised in the U.S., I do hold, follow, and agree with traditional Korean values and so I identity myself as more Korean."

The final variant category addressed the participants' descriptions that they see themselves being *in the middle of East Asian and American* identities instead of aligning more with one or the other. A case in point is a participant who stated, "I don't identify deep with my Korean cultural roots but rather feel like I'm in the middle of Korean and American. While I understand and respect Korean traditions, I don't 100% agree with them and am not sure if I want to pass them down to my children." A DIL also explained that she "walks the line" between Americanized and Chinese cultures. Another participant described herself endorsing both cultures as, "I am Americanized in my ways of thinking and sharing my opinions, so about half and half because I also identify as Korean for my views on family and work."

4.2.3 Domain 3: DIL's Values Regarding Family Roles and Practices. This domain documented the DILs' descriptions of their values and what they considered important to them, specific to their roles and practices within family relationships. The family relationships were reported in the context of the DILs' relation to their husbands, extended family members, or in-laws. Four themes emerged from this domain, which contained one typical and three variant categories. With respect to the first category, it was typical for the participants to *value having independence, education, equal rights, and shared decision-making and household responsibilities*, which highlighted their personal values around sharing equal responsibilities and of obtaining education or jobs to maintain a sense of independence from their parents, spouses, or in-laws. For instance, a DIL asserted:

> I grew up independent and expect equal distribution of roles with my husband in terms of bills, childcare, and chores, like my parents. However, I understand that my in-laws are more used to their own ways. We don't need his family to be the center of our lives as we have our own nuclear family now, and I don't believe in completely uprooting myself from my own family after marriage.

With respect to valuing education and career, one participant reported, "My mom instilled in me the value of good education and career to provide for myself and not depend on a man to survive." Another DIL commented that she is not the "feminine, submissive, Korean type of DIL" and emphasized, "I value my career and am the breadwinner of my family."

A variant category captured the DILs' descriptions that *it's important for them to respect and serve elders, including their in-laws*, which included proper manners in addressing in-laws and parents. As one participant noted, "My mother taught me to properly call my MIL 'mom,' and I do think that I should as well but it still feels awkward. My parents are very proper and ingrained in me to properly greet and connect with elders in Chinese, wait until they are seated first at the table, and not eat before them." Another participant similarly shared:

> I think it's important for me to abide by DIL expectations such as taking care of my FIL's birthday. I value being respectful towards my in-laws. How they may perceive what I say or how I react as I have carried with me since young to respect my elders, not eat before them, and greet them in proper terms.

The next variant category entailed the participants' values that *they believe in following wedding traditions, such as wearing traditional clothes, accepting gifts from guests, and doing things for the husband's family*. The participants noted that their values of following and keeping wedding traditions were based on their parents' influences. As one participant explained, "My parents and I wanted Korean traditions and ceremonies at my wedding, such as wearing hanbok [traditional Korean attires], bowing, and doing things for my husband's family." Another participant commented on her belief in following cultural practices of accepting monetary gifts from wedding guests, as she stated, "In terms of wedding gifts, my parents and I believe that we should just accept the gifts as a blessing from guests and send gifts back when they get married."

The final variant category addressed the DILs' values around family, specifically that *they consider the whole extended in-law family as their own family and believe that getting along with them will make their lives easier because they are married into the in-law family.* A participant said that she sees her family to include a large extended in-law family, as she commented, "I consider my in-law family to include aunts, uncles, and cousins since my husband comes from a large family." Another DIL explained that she values her in-laws as part of her own family and puts an effort to establish a good in-law relationship based on her upbringing:

> I do think that I have married into my in-laws' family and they are my family. I also welcome the idea of living with my in-laws. I approach my MIL the way I was brought up, such as if my MIL is happy and we get along then my marriage will be easier and life will be good.

4.2.4 Domain 4: In-Laws' Cultural Identification.

This domain captured how the participants described their in-laws' cultural identities. The in-laws' religious affiliations were included in this section as the participants spontaneously shared this information during the interview. This domain contained one typical and three variant categories. It was typical for participants to describe that *their in-laws are more East Asian than American*. For example, a DIL emphasized, “My in-laws are absolutely more Chinese and not influenced by American culture.” Regardless of the in-laws' move to the U.S., the participants' typical descriptions included that their in-laws are “still very traditional Korean,” or that their “in-laws are more Chinese than American despite having moved to the U.S. a while ago.”

Of the three variant categories under this subdomain, the first variant category addressed the participants' description that *their in-laws are both Americanized and East Asian*. A DIL expressed that her in-laws are “Americanized” but “Koreanized around the household.” Another participant noted, “While my in-laws are Americanized, they are traditional as well. For example, my MIL would pull out Chinese ways of being an elder and mother, while not really being the stereotypical Chinese women who would cook Chinese food, and so on.”

With respect to the participants' identity-related responses, specific to their in-laws' spirituality, some DILs described that *their in-laws are Christians,* while others reported that *their in-laws are not Christians*. These responses both fell within the variant ranges. For example, a participant noted, “I married into a Korean Christian family. My FIL is a pastor from my church.” Conversely, some participants compared their in-laws' spiritual background to theirs, as one DIL stated, “My in-laws aren't Christians unlike me.”

4.2.5 Domain 5: In-Laws' Values Regarding Family Roles, Practices, and their Expectations of DILs.

This domain captured the DILs' descriptions of their in-laws' values,

specific to family/gender roles and cultural practices. The perceived in-laws' expectations placed on DILs were also documented in this domain. This domain yielded ten themes, which contained six typical and four variant categories. With respect to the first typical category, the participant described that *their in-laws expected them to abide by their [the in-laws'] traditional ways due to their sense of entitlement and authority*. The DILs perceived their in-laws to have a sense of entitlement and exercised authority over them according to their traditional values. By way of example, as one participant noted:

> I feel a sense of entitlement from them [in-laws] that of course I should help out money-wise. Also, my MIL was upset and corrected me when I apparently failed to show appreciation of her with a gift for Mother's Day. Another thing is that my in-laws want me to bow to them out of respect when I greet them.

Another participant stated, "My in-laws have a lot of say when we make decisions for things. Like they bow to ancestors according to Buddhist customs, which they forced me to do." Other participants also spoke of the in-laws' expectations of treating them as authority figures, such as allowing them to shape decisions, following their lead, asking permission, and properly addressing them as parents. In fact, a DIL summarized this experience as:

> My in-laws told me to treat them like my parents and they'll treat me like their own daughter now that I've become part of their family. My FIL has a strong influence as the male authority and head of the household partly because he is opinionated and knowledgeable, but also because he is able to shape our decisions. My in-laws expect me to include them in decisions like buying a house or going on a trip. I am expected to listen and abide by their opinions, and know how to fulfill the responsibilities as a DIL. I am also expected to ask permission from my in-laws and make sure that they are okay with me visiting my own family. For instance, my MIL voiced her concerns about me visiting my parents and spending 2 weeks away from my husband, so I ended up going only for 1 week.

Another DIL reported:

> They [in-laws] put me in a position where I have to respect them as my parents and elders, and call them mom and dad. While living together, they expected me to abide by their wishes in what I did, how I dressed, and how I moved around the house. They

> continued to inject their opinions and had unspoken expectations of me and my husband to pick up after them. So, their responsibilities just became ours.

Another typical category encompassed the participants' responses that *their in-laws have family-oriented values and follow traditions*, as one participant explained that her in-laws' familial values centered around her FIL and the large extended family network:

> They really value family and are the typical Asian parents who like to offer and pack us food. Extended family even have keys to my FIL's house because he is the head of family, the only son, and everything is centered around him during large family gatherings. His sisters come over to help with chores when my MIL is not available.

Another DIL commented that her in-laws are also "very intertwined with the entire family and often have large family gatherings." A third participant explained that family-oriented values extended to honoring family ancestors and community members as well:

> My in-laws are from a small village in XXX Island [an island in East Asia], where people value everyone as family and know everyone's business. As such, they are caring and generous. They honor and bow to their ancestors according to Buddhist customs.

The next typical category addressed wedding-specific expectations, as the participants described that *their in-laws expected them to follow their [the in-laws'] traditional wedding practices, such as giving dowries and performing ceremonies*. As part of traditional ceremonies, some participants spoke of their in-laws requesting a "Chinese wedding, a tea ceremony, Chinese food, and brushing with pomelo leaves [on the married couple]," or for the couple to wear "traditional clothes" of a certain color "for good luck." As part of dowry-giving practices, a DIL provided her in-laws' detailed requests:

> My in-laws didn't help out with the wedding except for requesting the Korean traditional dowry. It was really frustrating to see my in-laws take advantage of the wedding to collect cash and gifts from my family when they only handwrote cards for my family because apparently they couldn't afford to buy us gifts. As dowry, my in-laws asked for a lot of materialistic gifts, such as diamond rings for my MIL, new suits for my FIL and BIL, and new gifts for my SIL. My in-laws made the wedding all about them and their own party instead of celebrating the marriage.

Some participants noted that their in-laws expected them to abide by their traditional practices of inviting wedding guests, as one participant admitted, “There was a lot of bitterness surrounding the wedding invitation because my in-laws posted our wedding announcement in the Korean newspaper without our consent, so people who weren’t personally invited also became invited.” Another participant similarly shared:

> They [in-laws] wanted to invite random people whom we’ve never met for the guest list. And they were not used to having a definite number of guests attending the ceremony as guests do not typically RSVP for invitations. So, some guests just showed up unannounced.

Other typical category responses clustered around the participants’ description of *My in-laws expected me to prioritize their time and space over mine*. Some DILs spoke of having to prioritize the in-laws’ wishes of spending time with them, such as one participant who said, “My in-laws make me visit often and expect too much from us by wanting to live close by.” Another DIL remarked, “I am expected to see and invite my in-laws over for dinner once a week.” A third participant also shared, “My in-laws expect to see my children and insist on meeting them in their house. They complained that they don’t see us often even though we just saw them last week.” Not only did the in-laws want their visits to be prioritized, they also expected to occupy the DILs’ personal space. For instance, one participant commented, “My in-laws expect to live with us when we get our own house.” Another DIL similarly explained:

> My MIL considers our time and space to be hers, and expects us to live with her and accommodate her whenever she visits. I am expected to often invite my in-laws over for dinner. If I don’t, they would think that I don’t want to see them instead of my husband.

Another typical category captured the participants’ responses that *their in-laws expected them to fit into the qualities of an ideal DIL and wife, such as being quiet, serving the husband, and elders, and being a stay-at-home wife*. The participants described that they were aware of the “criteria that the in-laws would want for a spouse for their son,” or the in-laws’ expectation of

them "to fit into these norms of an ideal wife and of marriage material." The DILs cited such qualities as "being quiet and porcelain doll-like," being "a stay-at-home mom and wife," and "serving elders and husbands." When DILs do not embody these "ideal qualities," they are reportedly disliked, as a participant remarked:

> My BIL disliked me for being too strong headed. He thought that my husband was "whipped" because of listening to me rather than the other way around. He said that my husband changed too much because of me.

The final typical category entailed the DILs' descriptions that *their in-laws expected them to do all the household chores, such as cooking and cleaning for them as women and DILs*. A pregnant DIL living with her in-laws expressed, "As a woman and a DIL, I am expected to do all the housework for the whole household even with physical challenges." Another participant commented that she felt like a "servant" due to the domestic responsibilities placed on her, "I am expected to cook for everyone like a servant and do housework like cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping," and further clarified that she was expected to take on these responsibilities on behalf of all family members, including her parents-in-law, her husband, and unmarried BILs co-residing in the house. Similarly, some DILs noted that their in-laws expected them to "take care of the housework," "cook dinner for them," and as one additional participant commented, "My in-laws feel comfortable asking a lot and call me directly to do some household chores for them at their house."

Of the four variant categories, the first addressed the participants' descriptions that *their in-laws expected them to bear sons to carry the family name and take care of children*. A DIL explained, "As a woman and a DIL, I am expected to take on the responsibilities of childrearing and bearing a son to carry the family name." Another DIL also shared, "My in-laws expect me to

bear children." Once the DILs have children, the childcare responsibilities often fell on them, as one participant stated, "My MIL expects me to take care of children."

The second variant category captured the participants' descriptions of their in-laws' values that *they follow strict gender roles, such as valuing the steady housewife type of woman who takes care of her family*, which highlighted the gender specific values that the in-laws hold. For example, a participant noted, "My in-laws hold Korean traditional values from the 70s, such as adhering to strict gender roles. My MIL's identity seems to be based on her role as a caretaker of her son, even through adulthood." Another participant stated, "My MIL values the steady housewife type of a woman who takes care of her son and stand by his side to support." A third participant explained that her in-laws endorse gender roles:

> My MIL does all the chores like cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping, while my FIL works and brings home the money. She likes taking care of her sons and does everything for them even well into their adulthood. She even did laundry for us.

The third variant category addressed the DILs' expressions of what the in-laws expected the participants to do, specifically noting that *their in-laws told them to manage their relationships with SILs as authority figures as they are married to the eldest sons, while younger SILs are expected to listen to them*. A case in point is a participant who said, "I was told to manage my SIL relationships as an authority figure because these are the responsibilities that come from being married to an eldest son." While the DILs married to the eldest sons of the in-law family are expected to have such authority of "managing" their SIL relationships, a participant noted that the younger DILs of the household are "expected to listen to" the eldest DIL's "directions and follow her demands" because she is "considered as a parental figure."

Unlike the previous categories, the last variant category entailed some participants' descriptions that the *in-laws did not expect them to follow the traditional ways of being a DIL,*

such as serving, cleaning, or cooking for them. In fact, a participant explained that this was unexpected:

> Whenever I go over to my in-laws' place, they want me to relax and just be their family rather than serving and cooking for them. It was especially unexpected when my in-law parents didn't even let me do the dishes or bring food to them. When I do push my in-laws into letting me do those things, they get touched and say I'm diligent. The few times I do go to the kitchen to do stuff, my husband always helps me out and encourages me to be myself.

Another participant said, "My in-laws do not let me wash the dishes after we eat or want me to do any clean up afterwards."

4.2.6 Domain 6: Immigration and Generational Factors. This domain pertains to DILs' descriptions related to any generational and immigration factors that they have observed or heard from their parents or in-laws, including the post-immigration experiences or the conflicts that arose due to any generational differences between family members. This domain yielded four categories, which all fell within the variant ranges. As the first variant response, the participants described that *their in-laws and parents immigrated to the U.S. and they have adjusted to the American ways*. Some participants reflected that their parents and in-laws adjusted well to the U.S. given that they immigrated at young ages, as one participant explained, "My immigrant parents came here when they were younger, which perhaps allowed them to let go of their past traditional values." Another DIL stated, "My FIL immigrated to the States when he was young, so he is very much Americanized." Other participants reported that due to the passage of time, some traditional East Asian cultures were lost, as one DIL noted, "My in-laws immigrated to the U.S. a long time ago, so they've adjusted to the American ways and don't remember all of the Korean traditional expectations."

By contrast, some participants also variantly reported that *their in-laws and parents immigrated to the U.S. but weren't able to let go of their East Asian ways*, as one participant

stated, “Even though my in-laws immigrated to America in the 90s, they didn’t let go of Korean traditions.” Another participant similarly noted, “Although my parents tried to adapt to the culture here, they weren’t able to let go of their Korean ways.” Other participants spoke about their in-laws or parents living only within their own ethnic communities, minimally requiring the knowledge of English and holding unto the languages and cultures of their country of origin.

Other participants provided variant responses that *as immigrants, their in-laws and parents made sacrifices and struggled in America*. A participant expressed, “I believe as immigrant children, we should give back to our parents due to their sacrifice.” Another participant said, “As my parents were both immigrants and worked long hours, I did not see them much and so I grew up independent.” Likewise, a DIL also commented on the impact such struggles and sacrifices had on her husband:

> My in-laws immigrated to the U.S. when my husband was young and they had to work hard because they didn’t know English. They also weren’t able to help my husband. He had to figure out a lot of things on his own as a 1.5 generation.

The last variant responses clustered around the participants’ narratives related to the impact of generational differences, specifically that *they had conflicts with their in-laws because of the generational differences*. A DIL illustrated this generational conflict:

> There is frustration and conflict due to generational differences between my in-laws and I because the older generation is used to traditions and think that new generation kids don’t know what they’re doing. Unlike in-laws’ generation, we wouldn’t invite the whole extended in-law family over for dinner all the time.

Another participant remarked, “I’m a second generation Korean American so my in-laws and I don’t see eye to eye because I don’t really understand the traditional values that well.”

4.2.7 Domain 7: Financial and Living Circumstances. This domain captured the participants’ narratives, specific to circumstantial factors that are unrelated to any East Asian cultural elements, which influenced the DILs’ in-law relationships. For instance, the participants

spoke about their living and financial circumstances as impacting their relationship with in-laws. This domain contained four variant categories. The first variant category addressed the DILs' descriptions that *they had conflicts with their in-laws because of money*. As one participant acknowledged, "Money was a source of conflict between our families." Another participant explained money-related tension as:

> I feel there are negative feelings and tension around finances where I tend to save while my husband and in-laws tend to spend as they were initially well off. One instance is helping to cosign my BIL's car lease at the request of my in-laws, which ended up damaging my credit score due to his late payments. We do not have a huge salary, so it is difficult to financially support my in-laws.

Some participants variantly responded that *living together with their in-laws exacerbated their relationship with them*, which highlighted that the co-residential living circumstances were not helpful for their in-law relationships. As one DIL remarked, "Living with my in-laws until recently was difficult as I felt trapped in not being able to do things freely. So, my husband and I want some separation from my in-laws where living in the same town is okay, but not under the same household." Another DIL stated that living together with her in-laws was "awkward" and "inconvenient" and said, "My MIL gave me a lot of push back when we eventually decided to buy our own place instead of living with her."

Other participants variantly reported that *they lived with their in-laws to save money*, highlighting the fact that co-residing with their in-laws helped them financially. One participant stated, "My husband and I voluntarily chose to live with my in-laws to save money." Another participant said, "I lived with my in-laws before marriage to save money."

The final variant category under this domain noted the participants' experiences that *their in-laws are not financially well-off but they are still giving and supportive* to them. For example, a DIL commented, "Even though my in-laws are struggling financially, they never show that and

they are still very giving to me." Another DIL said, "My in-laws are not well-off so I was more appreciative that they gave us financial support for the wedding."

4.2.8 Domain 8: DIL's Perceptions of Own In-Law Relationships. As part of the first interview question, participants were asked to describe their relationship with their in-laws in general. Three categories emerged, containing one typical and two variant categories. The participants typically responded that *they have a good/close/comfortable relationship with their in-laws*, regardless of whether they predominantly reported difficult relationship experiences with their in-laws throughout the interview. One DIL said, "While at times my in-laws ask a lot of me because they feel too comfortable, I am actually pretty close and have a friendly relationship with them. I even have dinner with them without my husband, which I thought would be unlikely before I got married." Another DIL commented that she has a "overall good relationship" with her in-laws because there is a language barrier, which she described to be a "blessing in disguise." She further explained, "I feel thankful that my in-law relationship can only go so deep because of language barriers, so we do not argue much and have an overall good relationship." Some participants spoke of having a "surprisingly close relationship" or "pretty good relationship compared to others" because their in-laws' qualities, such as being "loving" or "not too difficult."

Conversely, some participants described that *they have a distant/strained relationship with their in-laws*, which fell within the variant range. The participants spoke of difficult experiences with their in-laws as bases of their poor relationships, as one DIL explained, "My relationship with my FIL has become strained ever since his angry reaction and he thinks I don't like him. I do things for my FIL out of obedience and bitter heart, but not out of care like I would for my parents." Another DIL also commented, "I have a distant relationship with my in-laws

because they treat me as a foreign person married to their son instead of a daughter-parent relationship."

Another variant category entailed the participants' description that *they have an okay/civil/co-existing relationship with their in-laws even though they drive them crazy at times*. A case in point is a DIL who expressed:

> While my in-laws drive me crazy sometimes, we have an okay relationship. I have more to say with my MIL than my FIL but overall, they are nice people and we co-exist. I don't really talk to them except when necessary. While my husband likes to visit his family and my in-laws would offer opinions on what to eat or house renovations, they don't affect me daily because we moved out to our own house and don't talk much.

Another participant stated:

> I have an overall okay relationship with my in-laws because it's not awesome but not terrible. While I don't consider them to be my second parents, I don't think poorly of them or have negative feelings toward them. There's definitely room for our relationship to grow and that it will take time. I don't necessarily seek out my in-laws' company but I visit them once a month and have let them know my door is always open for them. My relationship with my in-laws leading up to marriage was formal and okay, too.

4.2.9 Domain 9: DIL's Perceptions of Others' In-Law Relationships. This domain pertains to the participants' quotes related to any images or impressions that they have obtained from others about in-law relationships, including friends, family members, or media. The participants' descriptions of any influences that such perceptions had on them were also documented. This domain yielded seven themes with three typical and four variant categories. The first typical response entailed the participants' description that they heard about difficult Asian in-law relationships from friends and family members, as a DIL reported, "My sisters say it's tiring and overwhelming to have their in-laws text weekly and expect them to do a lot of housework for them." Another DIL noted, "Among the crazy in-law stories that I've heard, the overly intrusive parent is usually the MIL who expects the DIL to come visit all the time, which

is a source of conflict." A third participant compared Asian versus Caucasian in-laws and shared her impressions:

> My friend also has a difficult relationship with her in-laws. I think Caucasian in-laws are different from and not comparable to Asian in-laws. Caucasian MILs seem more hands-off and respect separate living spaces while it is unheard of in Asian households where my space and time are theirs.

In another typical category, the participants stated that they saw that their mother had a great relationship with her in-laws as she was obedient, caring, respectful, and patient towards them, as one participant commented, "I thought my mother tried to be respectful and patient to her MIL by avoiding arguments as much as possible and keeping her feelings in." Another participant explained:

> My impression of my mother is that she is a typical Korean obedient DIL who takes care of her elderly FIL. I am sure that my mom's relationship with her in-laws was not perfect and that she had her differences and annoyances towards her in-laws. I also know that she had a good relationship with her MIL, though she passed away early. I never heard my mom speak negatively about her MIL.

However, it was also typical for the DILs to note that they saw that their mother had rocky in-law relationships as she experienced a lot of bitterness/resentment due to their harsh treatment. For example, a DIL described the impressions of her mother's in-law relationship as, "Due to my mother's in-laws having different expectations for their son, my mother was initially unwelcomed and experienced a lot of bitterness from her FIL. My mother received harsh words from him because she didn't bear any sons." Another participant explained her mother's negative in-law relationship as, "My mom's MIL was very opinionated and critical of my mom's cooking and the way she runs the household because her MIL acted like the head of the household. This contributed to their rocky relationships." Similarly, a third participant stated:

> My mother lived with her in-laws and had conflicts with them, particularly her FIL as he was rough and rude to her. He acted like the master of the house, expecting my mother to serve him like a king. She got a lot of rebuking from her MIL for miniscule stuff.

Of the four variant categories under this domain, the first addressed that the participants' mothers' positive in-law relationships made them respect their mothers and also helped them better relate with their own in-laws. The participants spoke of wanting to emulate their mothers' positive stance in relating with in-laws, as one participant stated, "Seeing my mother's respectful attitude makes me want to imitate and make my own in-laws happy." Another participant acknowledged, "Although I can only see myself take care of my in-laws out of obedience and bitter hearts right now, I am humbled by my mother when I see her truly care for her in-laws." A third participant explained the impact that her mother's in-law relationship has on her:

> I always saw my mom helping around the kitchen and making sure her in-laws were healthy. So, I try my best to help out my own in-laws. Seeing my mom's interaction with her in-laws has also taught me the role of a DIL.

The second variant category documented the participants' description that *their impressions of their mom's/friends' in-law relationships have little to no effect on them*. The participants reported that their impressions of others' in-law relationships, whether positive or negative, had no effect on them. For example, a participant stated, "My impressions of my mom's fantastic in-law relationships or my friends' difficult in-law relationships have no particular impact on me." Another participant said, "I did not see anything out of the norm in my mother's in-law relationships. My impressions were neither positive or negative, so they had no particular effect on me."

The next variant category entailed the participants' impressions of in-law relationships through media, as *they've learned how crazy East Asian in-law relationships can get by watching TV dramas*. The participants cited difficult in-law relationships portrayed in soap dramas. For example, one DIL explained, "I grew up watching Korean dramas, so it gave me a

sense of how crazy in-laws can get and learn that I'm not the only one dealing with in-law problems."

The final variant category addressed the participants' quotes that *their mother's negative in-law relationships impacted the way they view and react to things*. As participant stated, "Seeing my mom's negative relationship with her in-laws and her being treated harshly subconsciously impacted how I view things as an adult." Another participant acknowledged the impact her mother's difficult in-law relationships had on her: "I did not have a great relationship with my dad's side and closer to my mom's side of the family because I was reflecting what my mom was doing."

4.2.10 Domain 10: In-Laws' Influence on DIL's Marriage. This domain captured the DILs' descriptions of in-law related experiences that impacted their marriage, which contained five variant categories. Of the five categories, three addressed that participants' comments that their in-laws had negatively impacted their relationships with their husbands. The first variant category documented the participants' narratives that they have conflicts with husbands because their in-laws interject themselves into their marriage and want to make decisions for them. The DILs spoke about their in-laws' tendencies of being overly involved or interfering with their marital relationships, thereby, causing difficulties, as one participant explained, "Partly due to my FIL's emotional detachment, my MIL heavily relies on my husband and interjects herself into our relationship, which cause a lot of marital conflicts." Another participant said, "It is a point of conflict between my husband and I because my in-laws assume that they're going to live with us. I think this decision should not be made by my in-laws but by us."

The next variant responses clustered around the participants' quotes that *they argue a lot with their husbands because the in-laws brought them up to value things differently*. Some DILs

stated that their husbands' different upbringing regarding finances caused difficulties in their marriage, as one participant shared, "The way my husband spends money because of how he was shaped by his own parents makes me angry and so we have arguments." Another participant also commented, "An interesting struggle of helping to financially support my in-laws has spilled over to our marriage because his [my husband's] parents taught him to value money differently." Other participants reported the marital struggle stemming from their in-laws' expectations, as one DIL explained:

> My husband and I argued a lot about the expectations my in-laws had toward us and myself as a DIL. I was expected to come over after work at least 4 times a week to cook for and eat dinner with them. I found these expectations hard to meet because I had other commitments and wanted to spend time with my family as well. So, I didn't have nice things to say about them to my husband, which really did not sit well with him.

Another variant category entitled *I butt heads with my husband because he prioritizes my in-laws over me*, encompassed the participants' description that they fight with their husbands due to feeling second and sidelined. For example, a participant shared:

> We [my husband and I] had fights because my husband wanted to buy a bigger car so that he can drive my in-laws to family events that happen twice a year, which I think is unnecessary for our own family's needs. When I objected to buying a bigger car or when I suggested to leave my in-laws' house first, my husband brought it back to me not liking my in-laws. I think it's because he takes on the responsibility of taking care of his parents like an oldest son at the expense of taking care of his immediate family. And wants me to have a close relationship with them like the one I have with my own parents. Another time was when I was dealing with postpartum depression as a new mother and my husband was pre-occupied with his mother's anxiety and depression. And so, I felt like he was choosing her over us. So, we had a big fight and I told him that he cannot leave his child and me in order to take care of his mother and that we should be his first priority.

Another participant expressed, "A rift occurred between my husband and I due to him frequently visiting his family even after marriage. I felt upset because he did not prioritize our own family, and how we would be affected if he just went along with his parents."

Unlike the previous three variant categories noting the negative impact of in-laws on the participants' marriages, some DILs variantly reported that *their in-laws have a positive effect on marriage as they [in-laws] impact them to confront family-related hurdles together*. For example, the DILs shared that their in-laws gave them encouragement, support, and advice to face any marital challenges, as was the case for a participant who reported:

> I am open with my in-laws with the issues I have with my husband and they always encourage me. My in-laws also help me to better understand where my husband is coming from and why we disagree. Based on her own marriage, my MIL told me that husbands' habits don't change, you have to pick your battles, and not fight over everything. They also tell me that I'm an impressive wife and are a good influence on my marriage.

Another DIL also commented:

> My in-laws have been pretty supportive even with the challenges I have with my husband. There's less pressure and stress in my marriage because my in-laws take my side over their son and tell my husband to treat me with respect. I also think my in-laws help my marriage and make it easier in subtle ways because my in-laws approve of me, which in turn make my husband comfortable.

The last variant category addressed the participants' quotes that *their in-laws are not a daily influence in their marriage because they are pretty independent*. Along with their own sense of independence from in-laws, the DILs spoke of their in-laws giving them independence as well, as one participant remarked, "My in-laws trust us. They're not forceful and let us run our lives the way we want to." Another DIL similarly explained that the in-laws do not have much influence on them on a daily basis as a married couple:

> Although we live close by, my in-laws are not a daily influence in our marriage because we don't see them as much and we are pretty independent. While they would like to have things to say like when to have children, for the most part they just let us live our lives.

4.2.11 Domain 11: Triangulation. This domain entails the participants' descriptions of relationship dynamics, particularly when one member is caught in the middle of two parties. Two themes emerged in this domain, containing one general and one variant category. The general

category entitled My husband gets caught in the middle between my in-laws and I captured the DILs' descriptions of the husbands' triangulation, which occurred within their family dynamics. One participant described this experience as follows:

> My husband sometimes feels he is stuck between his mom and I, like when I told him to put his foot down and stand on my side when making decisions. My MIL is constantly trying to triangle my husband into a space with her. For instance, she wants us to live with her, makes my husband run errands for her, and invites herself on our couple trips to spend time with my husband.

Another participant said, "My husband was caught between his parents and I, as he had to care of his mom and I at the same time. So, he struggled with prioritizing our own family over my in-laws. Triangulations also occurred when the in-laws communicated their expectations of DILs mostly through the husbands. In fact, a participant noted, "My MIL communicated her expectations of what I should not do as a DIL through my husband. She also indirectly expressed that she was upset at me through my husband." Another participant reported, "My SIL communicated her discontent regarding the seating at the wedding via my husband and indirectly told me to change it. I wish my in-laws can just say things outright as they have the tendency to tell me after the fact."

With respect to the variant category, the DILs described that *they were caught in the middle of/pulled into family struggles*, which included the DILs being triangulated as a result of the struggles between in-law family members or between their parents and parents-in-law. For example, a DIL reported, "I got dragged into my BIL's financial troubles and got into a huge argument between my husband and my MIL." Another participant explained that she was triangulated between her in-laws and parents:

> I was caught in the middle when my in-laws were upset at my parents due to business decisions that they did not agree with. I was pulled into this as my in-laws confronted me instead of directly going to my parents. They lashed out their anger at me.

4.2.12 Domain 12: DIL's Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Positive In-Law Relationships. This domain included DILs' responses related to what has contributed to satisfying or positive in-law relationships based on their experiences and perspectives. Six themes emerged from this domain, which contained two typical and four variant categories. The participants typically responded that *their in-laws are supportive/affirming/loving/respectful, which they think contribute to their good relationship*. A case in point is a DIL who explained:

> I think that my in-laws have had a positive effect on our relationship because they are great means of support and they go out of their way to do things solely for me and not just for their son. Also, my in-laws would take my side over my husband when we have challenges. My in-laws always greet me with a hug, and they're very warm, caring, and welcoming. I never feel judged by my in-laws. My in-laws' words of affirmation and their respect towards me make the relationship better and comfortable, which makes me want to do more things for them. My in-laws make me feel comfortable and cared for, which contribute to our satisfying relationship.

Another DIL cited the reasons for her positive in-law relationship:

> My in-laws treat me like their own daughter especially because they only have sons. I like that they praise me for being an awesome wife and mother. When I make food for my in-laws, they are very grateful for my efforts. She [MIL] is also kind, deep, and attentive towards me.

In another typical response, the participants stated that *their in-laws do not really impose traditions and are more hands-off, which contribute to a positive relationship that they're appreciative of.* A DIL provided her thoughts on why she has a positive in-law relationship:

> My in-laws allow my husband and I enough privacy of having our own living space. They let us live our lives without being overprotective or imposing different things on us, and my MIL's been more hands-off and less controlling, so I think these things contribute to a good relationship.

Similarly, another DIL commented, "My MIL is not overbearing and does not impose things on me, which contribute to a pretty good relationship."

Of the remaining four variant categories in this domain, the first captured the participants' description that *they were already familiar with their in-laws before marriage,*

which contributed to a more welcoming and comfortable relationship. The participants spoke of their pre-existing relationships with their in-laws as the bases of a more positive relationship. For instance, a participant noted, “I was familiar with my FIL since I knew him since childhood as my pastor, so I was more comfortable with him already.” Another participant stated, “My parents knew my in-laws prior to marriage and our families met several times when we were engaged, so my in-laws were always pretty welcoming.”

The second variant category entailed the participants’ quotes that *their in-laws help them with childcare and household responsibilities, which contribute to a more positive relationship*. The DILs reported that their relationships with in-laws are positive because they are grateful for their help, as one participant expressed, “I really appreciated my in-laws stepping in to care for my daughter when I’m at work. This contributed to a closer relationship with them.” Another participant explained:

> I am grateful for my in-law relationships because I can go to my MIL for help. She would drop everything and come help me. I feel comfortable asking for her assistance as she is very good at sewing, making DIYs, fixing jobs around the house, and cooking homemade food.

The third variant category addressed the participants’ expressions that *spending quality time and communicating well with their in-laws contribute to their positive relationship,* as a participant explained:

> My MIL would take me out to get food that I love eating. I think spending time alone with my in-laws without my husband as part of their own family is one of the most satisfying factors of our relationship. The key contributor to our positive in-law relationship includes the fact that our families spent time together.

Another participant reported, “Spending a lot of time together helped my relationship with my in-laws as we got to know each other better. What is most satisfying about our relationship is my MIL is able to be open and confide in me about family issues and her own struggles as a DIL.”

Being able to communicate well with in-laws in a common language was also cited as a factor contributing to positive in-law relationships, as one participant remarked, "As I can speak Korean, my MIL finds it fulfilling that we can communicate well."

The last variant category entailed the participants' narratives that *having similar values and goals of wanting positive in-law relationships help them to relate better* with their in-laws. One participant shared two reasons for her positive in-law relationship:

> We share the same goals about wanting a good relationship especially because my MIL had a negative experience with her in-laws and therefore was deeply aware of in-law dynamics. Our shared common grounds of Christian values also help our relationship.

Another participant said similarly:

> Having similar values with my in-laws contribute to our cordial relationship that is less argumentative and not frustrating, as we both want a good relationship. The key contributor to our positive in-law relationship also includes taking my mom's advice of trying to strive for a good in-law relationship.

4.2.13 Domain 13: In-Laws' Emotional Responses. The DILs' narratives describing their in-laws' emotional responses towards them were coded under this domain, which included the in-laws' (e.g. MIL or SIL) sense of loss, jealousy, anger, grief, and mourning due to having to accept DILs into their lives and feeling threatened by the formation of new relationships. This domain yielded one typical and one variant category. The responses of *My in-laws disliked/criticized/lashed out their anger at me because they felt like I did not meet their expectations* were typically reported by the DILs, as one participant explained:

> My MIL would make negative comments when I don't offer to help clean fast enough. I recall the most negative aspect was her pushback and dislike about moving in together and not being supportive of my relationship with my husband. My older BIL also directly said to my husband that he didn't like me even before he met me as an adult.

Another participant said, "My in-laws got upset with my father but exploded and lashed out their emotions at me. They were also upset that we were not spending enough time with them."

With respect to the variant category, the participants stated that *their in-laws [MIL or SIL] were jealous/ sad/ needy due to feeling like they have lost their son/brother* after marriage. For example, a participant described:

> My MIL had a difficult time with the transition of marrying her son and accepting me into the family. She still cries out for attention due to her jealousy towards me and needing time to mourn, grieve, and cutting off ties with her son.

Another DIL said, "My MIL was weird and needy because she didn't like a new woman sharing her son's love and attention." A third participant commented on her SIL's jealousy as:

> Due to her motherly protectiveness having taken care of my husband since young and her responsible older sister personality, I feel my SIL is experiencing growing pain of letting [go] of her brother and jealousy towards me because I know other sides of him that she does not.

4.2.14 Domain 14: DIL's Emotional Responses. This domain addressed the DILs' descriptions of their emotional responses based on their relationship with in-laws. For example, quotes related to their in-laws' influence on their psychological well-being, including any perceived impact on their self-concept (i.e., self-confidence, self-worth, self-doubt, etc.) and emotional, relational, occupational, and academic functioning, were all documented under this domain. Eight themes, containing three typical and five variant categories, were found. The first typical response captured the participants' quotes that *they felt frustrated/ angry/ disrespected/ confused/ stressed/ anxious/ tearful/ trapped because of their in-laws' traditional expectations of them*, which highlighted the DILs' negative emotional experiences caused by their in-laws imposing traditional ways on them. For example, a DIL expressed, "I was very angry that I would scream and curse when my in-laws treated me and my family poorly because we do not fit into my in-laws' traditional and religious expectations." Another DIL also stated, "I felt disrespected when my in-laws thought that my family and I did not meet their expectations. I felt sad, upset, and confused for having to go over to my in-laws' place to cook for them as this

wasn't why I married my husband." A third participant shared the emotional impact of her in-laws' expectations:

> I felt trapped and unable to do things freely when I was living with my in-laws. Them having a lot of say over what I do, how I dress, and how I move around the house was suffering, restricting, and challenging. My in-laws did not really leave the house, so I could not leave either. Given the fact that I was living with my in-laws, I also felt lonely and isolated when I was taking care of my baby. Also, I feel frustrated and confused by my in-laws' unspoken expectations of having my husband and I to pick up after them.

Another typical response captured the participants' narratives that *they felt broken/ depressed/ offended/ hurt/ livid/ exhausted/ disrespected/ disappointed/ humiliated because of their in-laws' blatant disregard for their well-being and treatment towards them*. As a participant remarked, "I felt hurt by my MIL's blatant lack of respect and disregard for my well-being and myself as a human being." The negative emotional consequences also extended to the participants' relational, occupational, and academic functioning, as one DIL explained:

> I felt broken, furious, exhausted, and humiliated because of my MIL's treatment towards me, which contributed to my deep depression. As a result of my difficulties with my in-laws, my school, work, and other relationships were negatively affected. I was shocked and livid when my MIL made distasteful comments about my family and myself because of me coming from a divorced family.

It was also typical for the participants to express that *they questioned themselves and felt inadequate as a wife/ DIL because they were unsure whether they were marriage/ wife material according to their in-laws' standards*, which underscored the DILs' negative experiences related to their self-concept, such as feeling inadequate or having self-doubt due to their in-law relationships. A case in point is a DIL who shared:

> I felt inadequate as a wife and as a DIL because my in-laws had traditional values and expectations. I questioned myself and thought that I was the problem. So, I tried to fix it. All these expectations placed on me seemed unrealistic and I felt inadequate and unsure of myself whether I could fulfill these duties as a wife and DIL.

Another DIL reported:

> I felt broken as I started to doubt and question myself due to being unsure whether I was marriage or wife material according to my in-laws' standards. I received harsh treatment from my MIL. And this shaped and twisted my view of womanhood and affected my self-confidence as a woman.

Unlike the typical responses related to the negative psychological impact of the in-laws on the participants, some participants noted that *overall, their in-laws do not affect how they view themselves*, which fell within the variant category. The participants mainly provided short statements, such as "Overall, my in-laws do not affect how I view myself." Some participants spoke of their independent minds that protected them from being influenced by their relationship with in-laws, as one DIL commented, "Overall, they didn't affect how I viewed myself because I am strong-minded and independent, which protected me from feeling like I was inadequate and incompetent." Another DIL said, "My in-laws have no effect on how I view myself as I came into the relationship having already developed my own opinions about his family."

A separate variant category within this domain entailed the participants' reports that *they felt upset/ furious/ scared/ stressed/ frustrated/ anxious/ disliked/ bitter because of their in-laws' expectations around their wedding invitation, planning, and ceremony*, which specifically addressed wedding-related emotional stressors. As one participant explained the emotional toll of the wedding banquet she had to participate in China:

> My travel to China proved to be a disaster. The wedding banquet was planned by my in-laws along with our family trip there. I spent the most extensive time with them there but I felt lonely because I didn't know anyone nor could I communicate and I was at the mercy of my in-laws' plans. I was also pregnant at the time and I was scared to death for my baby because my in-laws provided cigarettes at the wedding table for guests to smoke. My in-laws told me that in order to hold a proper banquet, they needed to offer cigarettes. I was furious at them because the guests were smoking all around me. So, I thought they didn't care for their grandchild and I broke down crying because I could not breathe and had headaches.

A participant also said, "I was stressed and frustrated during the wedding planning because my husband and I did all this work only for my in-laws to up-root everything with their strong

opinions. It was also frustrating how they think that we are kids and don't know what we are doing with our wedding planning."

Another variant response captured the participants' quotes that *they felt frustrated annoyed/ hurt/ mad/ depressed due to their in-laws' overly dependent personality/ strong personality/ passive aggressiveness*, which underscored the emotional experiences participants feel as a result of their in-laws' traits. For instance, a participant said, "My MIL has a strong personality and her own way of doing things, so I have a constant inner battle because I can be a pushover." Another participant explained that her MIL's specific traits, such as being dependent, passive-aggressive, and using an infantile tone of speech had a negative emotional impact on her:

> I am really frustrated that my MIL is overly dependent on my husband. My MIL's passive aggressiveness is also frustrating for me. It is also very annoying when she speaks in an infantile tone of speech that comes from her childhood upbringing and her need to be the center of attention.

The next variant category addressed some participants' assertions that *they felt good/ less emotional/ less anxious/ happier/ more affectionate/ loved because their in-laws were welcoming, loving, affirming, and accepting of them*. A participant illustrated how her in-laws positively influenced her emotional wellbeing:

> My in-laws definitely made me happier and it has been a joy to hear from them. Therefore, I do not have any ill feeling towards them. I feel supported and loved by them. So, I felt less anxious about marrying into his family because they were so welcoming, loving, and accepting from the beginning.

This was also reflected by another DIL who said, "A lot of people I know say that I became less emotional, happier, and more affectionate after meeting my in-laws. And I feel like they helped me go through a healing process" as she explained her in-laws' support and acceptance helped her to move past the hurt she experienced from previous romantic relationships.

Similarly, the last variant category captured the DILs' narratives that *they felt more worthy, confident, and deserving of love because of their in-laws' encouragement, words of affirmation, and acceptance*, which highlighted their elevated self-worth and self-confidence due to their experiences with in-laws. A DIL explained:

> My in-laws' encouragement helped me to persevere and to become more confident as a woman and working-mom. Since meeting my in-laws and receiving their warmth, I'm becoming a person who is gentler and more patient. I also used to be dark and isolated from people, but now it's less torturous to be social and am more myself. Their acceptance and words of affirmation made me feel worthy, confident, and deserving of love despite thinking that I was tainted and degraded. My MIL encouraged me to reconnect with my Christian values and made me feel more competent as a pastor's wife.

Another DIL reported:

> I gained a sense of increased self-worth just because of my in-laws' affirmations as I am respected, valued, and treated as part of my in-laws' family. Even though I was initially worried about whether I was good enough to marry my husband and enter his side of family, my in-laws gave me a sense of security that I lacked nothing.

4.2.15 Domain 15: Perspectives on Seeking Professional Help. This domain documented the DILs' perspectives on seeking professional mental health help, including their experiences and/or reservations to seeking such services. This domain contained six variant categories. The first variant category captured the participants' narratives that *they did not seek professional help for in-law related issues because they feel like the problems have never gotten to a point beyond what they could handle*. As one DIL commented, "I have never sought out mental health professionals as I have never gotten to a serious enough state to need their services." Another DIL also remarked, "It is partly due to things never getting to a point where I cannot handle. I think of difficulties with my in-laws as the norm and part of marriage, and not something long term that will affect me enough to need to seek out help."

The second variant category addressed the participants' quotes that *they have reservations in seeking help because having mental health issues and taking medications are not*

accepted in their culture. For example, a DIL stated, “It never crossed my mind to seek out professional help due to the stigma in Korean culture about that.” Another participant said, “I thought that depression is not real and antidepression medication is just not accepted in my culture,” as she explained the reasons for her reservations in seeking professional help.

The third variant category entailed the participants’ descriptions that *if their in-law relationships get worse, they would explore more into going to a mental health professional*, as one participant noted, “If my in-law relationships get worse, I would explore more into going to a mental health professional.” Another participant shared, “There are still a lot of emotions related to my in-laws that we [my husband and I] struggle with, so once things settle down, we may seek counseling.”

The fourth variant category encompassed the participants’ experiences that *they went to therapy for problems unrelated to their in-law relationships, which helped them to heal from their past issues*. Some participants dealt with “depression” due to losses or “own family issues,” and reported that therapy was helpful. Other participants spoke about receiving therapy for past relationship problems or trauma. For example, a DIL shared:

> I initially went to counseling for 3 months because I was raped at work, which emotionally and physically broke me down a lot. After that, I went to therapy when I broke up with my ex-boyfriend because of his parents. Therapy sessions helped me to heal from these experiences and planted the seed again that I’m worthy of being happy.

The fifth variant category captured the participants’ assertions that *one of their concerns in seeking help is not being able to find someone who can empathize and understand all the nuances of their culture*. In fact, a participant explained that she initially tried seeking help with her husband but discontinued due to concerns that the counseling seemed “American, especially with the idea of detaching from our biological families to create our own new family.” Another participant also asserted, “One of my concerns in seeking professional help is not being able to

find someone who can empathize with my situation and understand all the nuances of Korean culture."

The final variant category entailed the participants' descriptions that *they went to counseling to address in-law related problems, which was helpful in having someone to talk to and applying the things they learned in therapy*. For example, a participant reported, "Before we got married, my husband and I did premarital counseling for a few weeks to address in-law related family differences. I thought our sessions really helped and the things we learned could be applied to our lives." This was also reported by another participant who said, "I sought out a therapist for two years about problems I had with my MIL. It was nice and helpful having someone to talk to and give me a neutral third point of view about why I felt the way I did."

4.2.16 Domain 16: Coping Strategies. This domain captured the participants' quotes related to any strategies that they have utilized to cope with in-law related experiences. The reported strategies included self-coping methods, seeking help from friends, family members, and respected elders, and receiving non-mental health help from spiritual leaders and clergy members. This domain contained a total of six categories, including two typical and four variant categories. Of the two typical responses, the first addressed the participants' descriptions that *they coped with difficult in-law relationships by avoiding/ letting things go/ dismissing/ and ignoring*, which encompassed their self-coping strategies. One participant noted that she dealt with "in-laws' hurtful and demeaning words by letting them roll off my shoulders," and another participant similarly said, "I smile, ignore, and let them roll off my shoulders because there is no point in getting upset." A third participant explained her self-coping method as follows:

> I cope by spending a lot of time isolating in my room to avoid them. I also stay silent and pretend to not understand what my in-laws say. I'll listen to them smiling and nodding, but not actually follow through with what they want me to do.

It was also typical for the participants to state that *they coped with difficult in-law relationships by sharing with others*, which included husbands, friends, family members, and pastors. A case in point is a DIL who shared that she seeks out her mother and sisters:

> I go to my mom or sisters to vent out my feelings. It's nice to be heard and make jokes with my sisters because they are dealing with similar experiences. I share a lot of my struggles with my pastor or his wife to gain advice from their experiences.

Another participant reported, "I vent to my husband and talk to my girlfriends who understand me because they have similar difficult in-law relationships," highlighting seeking support from her husband and friends.

Of the four variant categories under this domain, the first addressed the DILs' assertions that *they coped with difficult in-law relationships by thinking things through and reflecting on different perspectives*, highlighting their self-coping methods. For example, a DIL commented, "I try to mull things out and look at my in-law problems from multiple angles. I also coped with my in-law related issues by reflecting on the little good things." The self-coping strategy of self-reflection and thinking through difficult situations was also reported by a participant who explained:

> I try to see from my in-laws' perspective despite different expectations and opinions, and I realize that they want the best for me. Also, thinking about others' experiences and how they've handled things helped me to compare and reflect on how I'm feeling too.

The second variant category addressed the DILs' use of self-coping strategies as *they coped with difficult in-law relationships by engaging in spiritual/ physical/ work activities*. Some participants prayed or attended church to cope with in-law related problems, as one DIL stated, "I coped by praying for my MIL to heal and for me to show her love as I knew that my negative feelings were not helpful." Other participants exercised or focused on work, as one participant

commented, “I exercise to cope with in-law difficulties.” Another participant said, “Work keeps me distracted as something that I have outside my marriage that is my own.”

The third variant category captured the DILs’ acknowledgements that *they coped with difficult in-law relationships by submitting and giving into their [in-laws’] ways*, as one DIL admitted, “I changed into submission in order to cope with my in-laws.” Another DIL similarly noted, “I gave into my in-laws due to difficulties but regret doing so.”

The final variant category addressed the DILs’ experiences that *they coped with difficult in-law relationships by letting out their emotions,* highlighting their attempts to utilize self-coping methods to release emotional tensions. One participant remarked, “Anger was my coping mechanism as I would scream and curse out loud when my in-laws were not there.” Another DIL commented, “I cope with difficult in-law experiences by letting out my feelings.”

4.2.17 Domain 17: Resilience, Lessons Learned, and Growth. This domain pertained to DILs’ narratives indicating their resilience, lessons learned, and growth that they have observed in themselves due to the relationship experiences with their in-laws. Three variant categories emerged. The first variant response addressed the DILs’ self-resilience and growth as *they grew to rise above the situation, become more independent, and not feel defeated anymore through their in-law relationships*, as a participant commented, “My hardship with my in-laws challenged me to rise above the situation.” Another DIL described her resilience in terms of independence:

> My strong-mindedness and independence have helped me to pick my battles and focus on the bigger picture. I’ve learned and realized that I don’t have to change anything about myself because I am not inadequate.

Another participant described:

> I also slowly realized that despite differences I have with my in-laws, there is something I can learn from the process and to not feel defeated. I think it is good that I have so many

> different experiences, which equipped me with the strength to handle my in-law relationship difficulties.

The second variant category entailed the participants' assertions that *they've learned to better react, understand, and relate to their in-laws over time*. For example, a DIL stated, "I learned to empathize with my MIL by trying to understand her reasoning behind her words and actions. I learned to temper my emotions in relation to my in-laws." Another participant reported, "I learned how to react better, be more proactive, and preventative rather than letting things happen. I try not to be bitter and judgmental, but instead learned how I can be more loving and respectful to my in-laws based on my Christian values."

The last variant category pertained to the participants' descriptions that focusing on the relationship with their husbands helped them overcome problems with their in-laws together, as one participant stated, *I've learned to focus on my husband and have more conversations with him about issues related to my in-laws.* Likewise, another participant explained:

> Even though my in-law relationship was difficult at times, I really love my husband, who matters most. As we talked more, he understood my feelings. Knowing this helped me to look beyond the hurt I felt. He also promised to make up for the hurt feelings and so I was able to focus on our goal to build a happy life together.

4.3 Secondary Analysis: Exploring In-Laws' Impact on DILs as Parents

Of the twelve participants in this study, six participants identified themselves as having children in the demographic questionnaire, and these participants all provided information during the interview related to the experience of being parents. The number of participants comprised within this group was fewer than is usually specified for CQR; in order to examine trends, therefore, an exploratory analysis of this material was conducted. The resulting exploratory domain captured the DILs' descriptions of raising children in the context of in-law relationships

and any impact the in-laws have on the DILs as parents. This domain yielded two general and two variant categories (See Table 3 below).

Table 3.

Exploratory Domain with Categories and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
ED 1. In-Laws' Influence on DIL as a Parent	I appreciate my relationship with in-laws because of their love and care for my children	General
	My in-laws' criticizing and imposing their ways of parenting were difficult experiences	General
	I appreciate that my in-laws are hands-off and respect the way I parent my children	Variant
	Overall, I don't think my in-laws affect the way I parent my child because I just ignore or dismiss their comments	Variant

**Note.* Total of n = 6. General (6 cases), Typical (4-5 cases), Variant (2-3 cases)

4.3.1 Exploratory Domain 1: In-Laws' Influence on DIL as a Parent. As the first general category within this domain, all six participants described that *they appreciate their in-laws because of their love and care for the children*. As one DIL explained:

> My in-laws come over to babysit my daughter twice a week. They really dedicate themselves to watching and caring for her when I am at work, for which I am really appreciative and feel blessed. This contributed to a closer relationship with them as we can find laughter together and positivity related to my daughter.

Another DIL shared, "I'm grateful that my MIL babysits and enjoys taking care of my children. They also like to support my kids by buying them toys and clothes."

The second general category concerned the reports by all participants with children that *their in-laws' criticizing and imposing their ways of parenting were difficult experiences*, as was the case for one DIL who said:

> My in-laws affect how I parent my child because they would insist on their Chinese ways of parenting. I was already feeling insecure and had difficulty adjusting and proving myself as a new mother to them. However, I realized that my in-laws have different values and beliefs around parenting, so my husband and I want to avoid them becoming the parents. We want to parent our child with our own values and beliefs.

Another DIL stated, "My MIL would interject and impose different parenting rules, and made me think I was being too restrictive with my daughter."

Of the two variant categories, the first variant response noted the participants' quotes that *they appreciate that their in-laws are hands-off and respect the way they parent their children*. For example, a DIL commented, "I appreciate that my in-laws respect the clear boundaries of their roles as grandparents and let me be the mom who disciplines my son." Other participants were grateful that their in-laws "learned to respect" and be "pretty hands-off" in terms of the ways the participants parented their children.

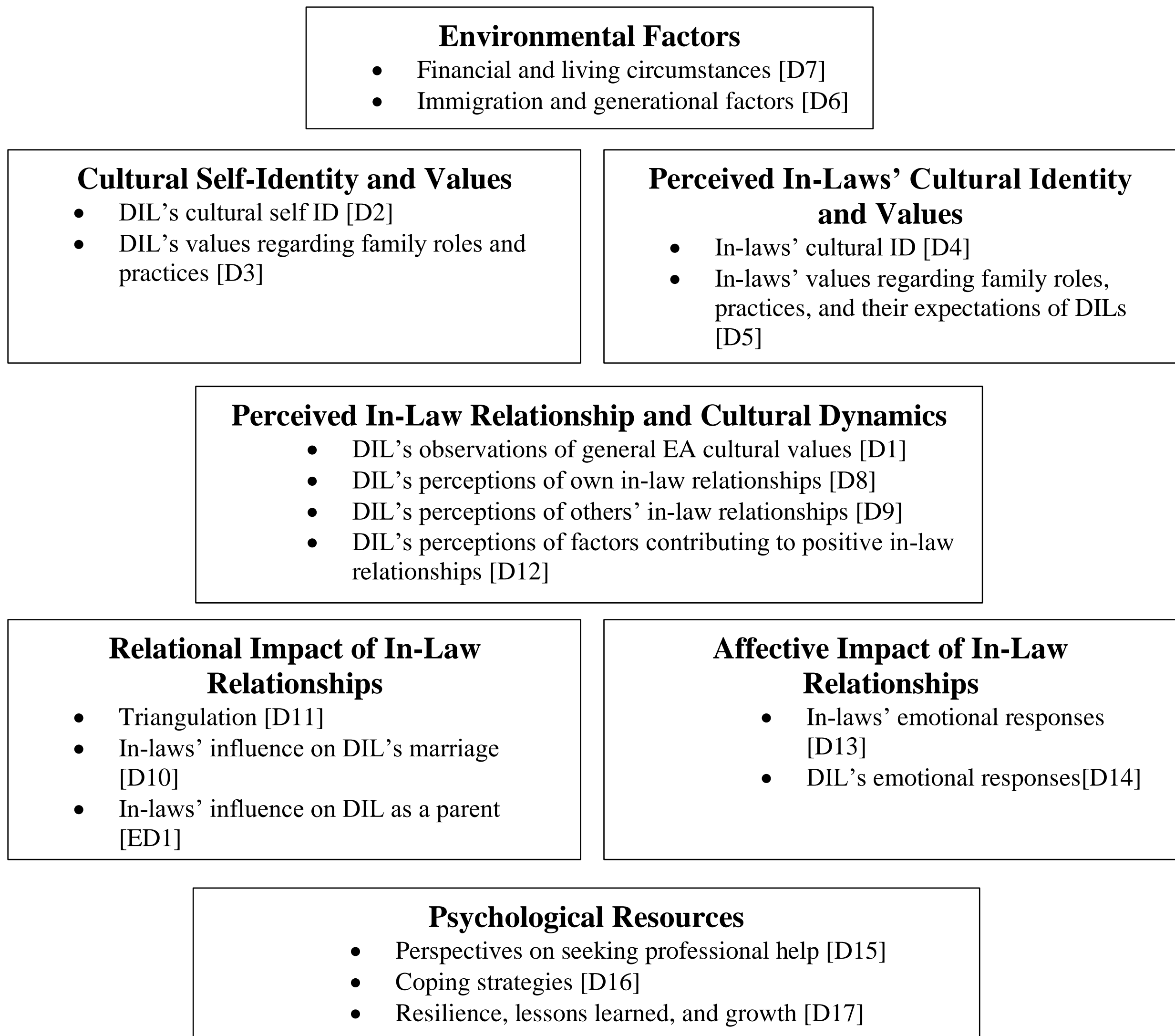
The second variant category addressed the participants' assertions that *overall, they don't think their in-laws affect the way they parent their child because they just ignore or dismiss their in-laws' comments*. As a DIL reported, "Even though my in-laws say that my husband and I aren't allowed to travel anymore due to having a child, we don't let them get in the way of us traveling." Another participant said, "Overall, I do not think my MIL affects me as a parent because I just ignore and dismiss passing comments my MIL makes about my parenting, as she has no grounds to say those things."

4.4 Third Analysis: Exploratory Organization of Domains

As a final exploratory analysis of the data, the following framework or domain organization is proposed (see Diagram A below) in order to provide a better understanding and clarity of the results. This organization is based on the overarching topics that the participants shared during the interview, which naturally clustered into broader themes that could be grouped

together. These larger grouping of themes included topics related to the environmental/situational factors that impacted the participants' in-law relationships, their own and in-laws' cultural identities and values, their perceptions of in-law relationships and general cultural dynamics, the relational and affective impacts of their in-law relationships, and psychological resources that the participants employed to cope with stressors. The term *organizational theme* is used to indicate these larger domain groupings and will be bolded below. The results of 17 domains and the exploratory domain will be italicized.

Diagram A. Organizational Chart of Themes



The first organizational theme entitled **Environmental Factors** groups the domains addressing the DILs' environmental or situational circumstances, such as their *financial and living circumstances* (D7) and/or any *immigration and generational factors* (D6).

The second organizational theme, **Cultural Self-Identity and Values**, specifically groups all the domains that pertain to the participants' identities and their values. Thus, *the DIL's cultural self-identification* (D2) and *DIL's values regarding family roles and practices* (D3) were grouped together as DILs frequently explained their self-identities in the context of their values.

Similarly, the third organizational theme entitled **Perceived In-Laws' Cultural Identity and Values** combines the domains related to the in-laws' identity, their values, and expectations, as the DILs often referenced their in-laws' identities in the context of their cultural values and expectations. As such, *the in-laws' cultural identification* (D4) and *in-laws' values regarding family roles, practices, and expectations of DILs* (D5) were grouped together.

The fourth organizational theme titled **Perceived In-Law Relationship and Cultural Dynamics** captures the domains addressing the DILs' perceptions and/or observations of in-law relationship and cultural dynamics in general. *Therefore,* the *DIL's observations of general East Asian cultural values* (D1), *the DIL's own in-law relationships* (D8), those of *others'* (D9), and their perceived *factors contributing to positive in-law relationships* (D12) were grouped together as each related to DILs' perceptions and observations of in-law relationship dynamics.

The fifth organizational theme, **Relational Impact of In-Law Relationships**, groups the domains specifically addressing the in-laws' effect on DILs' relationship dynamics. Thus, the domains *triangulations* (D11), the *in-laws' influence on DIL's marriage* (D10), and the *in-laws'*

influence on DIL as a parent (ED1) were grouped together as they all related to the effect that the in-laws had on DILs' relationships.

While the previous organizational theme addresses the relational impact of in-law relationships, the sixth organizational theme entitled **Affective Impact of In-Law Relationships** groups the domains related to the emotional experiences of DILs and their in-laws. Therefore, *the in-laws' emotional responses* (D13) and *DIL's emotional responses* (D14) were grouped together due to their affective component.

The final organizational theme is called **Psychological Resources**, which groups the domains that address the resources that DILs employed. The participants' thoughts or experiences of receiving professional mental health services, taking psychotropic medication, employing coping methods, or utilizing their own resiliencies were included. Therefore, their *perspectives on seeking professional help* (D15), *coping strategies* (D16), and *resilience, lessons learned, and growth* (D17) were grouped together under this organizational theme.

Chapter 5: Discussion

There is a paucity of research addressing the in-law relationship experiences of non-first generation Korean and Chinese American DILs residing in the U.S., specifically with regard to the psychological impacts and resiliencies that these women experience in the face of potentially conflictual in-law relationship dynamics. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to increase understanding and add to the body of multicultural counseling literature regarding the unique cultural elements, relationship dynamics, psychological impacts, and resiliencies that non-first generation Korean and Chinese American DILs experience in the context of their in-law relationships in the U.S. As such, the following research questions were employed to guide this study:

1. What are the experiences of 1.5 or 2nd generation Korean and Chinese American DILs in the context of their in-law relationships in the U.S.?
2. What are the elements of cultural values that conflict between DILs and in-laws, if any?
3. What is the perceived psychological impact of in-law relationships on Korean and Chinese American DILs?
4. What are the resilience factors, help-seeking behaviors, and actual coping strategies employed by these women in navigating their in-law relationships?

This chapter explores these research questions via an examination of the themes that emerged from the participants' narratives. First, the key findings will be discussed according to the organizational framework that was proposed in Chapter 4 (See Diagram A Organizational Chart of Themes). Throughout these discussions of key themes, the author will bring attention to how the current findings confirm, contradict, or contribute to the extant counseling psychology and multicultural literature. Then, the results will be synthesized and summarized to directly address

the research questions. Next, the discussion will turn to relevant clinical implications of the findings in relation to psychological theory, training, and practice, and a summary of recommendations for best practice in working with Korean and Chinese American women will be proposed. The chapter will conclude with sections on the limitations of this study and potential directions for future research.

5.1 Key Findings

In the previous chapter, the domain results were grouped together according to how they naturally clustered into overarching topics and thus a conceptual framework of organizational themes was proposed to aid understanding (See Diagram A for Organizational Chart of Themes). As this framework illustrates, the participants primarily discussed the following topics impacting their in-law relationships: the situational/environmental factors of financial and co-residential circumstances, their own and in-laws' differing cultural identities and values, their perceptions of in-law relationships and general cultural dynamics, the relational and affective impacts of their in-law relationships, and the psychological resources employed to cope with their in-law related stressors. The following section discusses the key findings of this study according to this framework of organization.

5.2 Environmental Factors

5.2.1 Financial stressors and co-habitation. Among situational/environmental factors, the participants identified immigration and generational factors and the responsibilities for financial and living circumstances as variables impacting their in-law relationships. The responses related to immigration and generation ranged from topics related to their parents and/or parents-in-laws' adjustments to American culture to topics addressing the retainment of the cultures from their country of origin. A few participants noted the struggles and sacrifices

their parents and/or parents-in-laws had made as first-generation immigrants. The typical responses, however, concerned participants' financial and co-habitational stressors, which they saw as negatively impacting the in-law relationship. These stressors included having to financially support their in-law family members and/or maintaining co-habitative living arrangements with their in-laws.

Previous mainstream psychological literature (e.g. Kootchel, Astle & Markham, 2020; Chethik, 2006; Oggins, 2003) has documented that finance-related conflicts were a common cause of difficult extended familial and marital difficulties for African and/or European American couples, although these studies were not specific to in-law relations. International research on in-law relationships documented the correlations of East Asian DILs' relational and co-residential conflicts with in-laws (e.g. Chan et. Al, 2009; Keith & Hong, 1994). As such, it was not surprising to find that the Korean and Chinese American DILs of this present study also regarded these sensitive factors related to financial and co-residential living arrangements as impactful variables in in-law relationships.

5.3 Cultural Self-Identity and Values

5.3.1 DILs' European American ideals and biculturalism. The participants primarily considered the values of independence and equality as important, reflecting their endorsement of European American ideals. They discussed the importance of having a good education and job to maintain their independence and believed that shared responsibilities in decision-making and household chores were important. However, some participants simultaneously exhibited behaviors reflecting elements of East Asian cultural values as well, suggesting their bi-cultural endorsement. For example, the participants believed that household chores should be equally divided amongst family members, yet they also assumed a more subservient role in taking care

of the whole household and in serving their elders, husbands, and in-laws in line with traditional East Asian gender roles and cultural values.

These findings were consistent with previous studies related to bi-culturalism (e.g. Portes & Rumbaut, 2005; Kim & Abreu, 2001; Miller & Kerlow-Myers, 2009; Yoon et al., 2020), which have noted that even though Asian Americans may appear to be acculturated and may report endorsement of European American ideals, they may nevertheless exhibit elements of East Asian cultural values that are deeply rooted in Confucianism.

With respect to the participants' other identities, half of them noted their religious/spiritual identities as Christians on the demographic questionnaire but some also spontaneously shared during the interview. They referenced this identity in the context of how they were brought up and grew up with either Christian parents or a pastor. For instance, a participant noted how her Christian values taught her to be more "loving, non-judgmental, and respectful" towards her in-laws. Another participant said that she learned to "pick [her] battles and learn to understand" her parents-in-law better due to her Christian beliefs. However, these themes were briefly mentioned during the interview by only a few participants; therefore, questions still remain regarding the influence of the intersectionality of spiritual and ethnic identities in the context of these in-law relationships. Are there any overlaps or distinctions between the participants' Christian beliefs and Confucian/East Asian cultural values? How do these intersections of identities impact their in-law relationships? Gathering data to uncover this intersectionality would be an interesting area of future research.

5.4 Perceived In-Laws' Identity and Values

5.4.1 In-laws' traditional values. The participants perceived that their in-laws endorsed traditional East Asian cultural values and described their identities to be "more East

Asian than American." As a result, the participants reported experiencing cultural and intergenerational clashes with their in-laws.

5.4.2 Intergenerational clashes. The differences in cultural values and intergenerational clashes between the DILs and their in-laws were evident as participants provided many examples of how they were subjected to their in-laws' traditional East Asian cultural expectations, which were typically regarded as negative experiences. For example, the DILs reported that they had to abide by such requirements as paying dowries, performing ceremonies to the male side of the family, relinquishing their own time and space to accommodate the in-laws, and performing the characteristics of a subservient, quiet, docile DIL and wife. Insofar as these demands contradicted the participants' own expressed values of independence and equality, they seemed to generate conflicts and difficult experiences.

Previous research has also indicated that conflicts among family members can result from generational cultural clashes (e.g. Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Kwak, 2003; Ying & Han, 2007; Kim & Cain, 2008; Choi et al., 2020). For example, Tsai-Chae and Nagata (2008) found that Korean and Chinese American college students reported higher cultural value differences from their parents, and therefore, exhibited higher levels of intergenerational conflict. Similar studies have suggested that generational gaps may result due to diverging opinions on domestic responsibilities, parenting styles, and financial management, which in turn contribute to conflicts between family members (Kung, 2001; Lan, 2006). These previous studies were consistent with the present findings as some of the participants of this study also reported conflicts with their in-laws, specifically due to intergenerational differences and cultural clashes.

Nonetheless, the present study helps to confirm these results and also extends them to in-law family dynamics, such as those of DILs and their parents-in-law. The intergenerational

clashes that were found between DILs and their parents-in-law reflect the existing intergenerational conflict studies of parent/child dynamics. These similarities were not surprising given that within the Confucian and East Asian cultures, a number of traditional child and parent relationship roles apply to adult DILs and their husbands, as they are expected to assume the roles of children (i.e. daughters and sons) within their extended family network as long as their parents or parents-in-law are still alive. In particular, they are expected to fulfill roles of serving and respecting elders, to demonstrate filial piety, and to assume subservient roles as children even throughout adulthood (Chen, 1982; Murakawa, 1986; Ho, 1996; Kim et al., 2001; Sue & Sue, 1993; Uba, 1994). This is the case even as DIL participants suggested that their identities and values were largely dissimilar to their in-laws, as they aligned more with the European American ideals while their in-laws were perceived as "more traditional East Asian than American." It is likely that the differences in their levels of acculturation within the U.S. may have contributed to the increased intergenerational tensions that were reported by the participants in this study.

5.4.3 Oppressive cultural contexts. In addition to the aforementioned clashes based on cultural and intergenerational differences, the present study's results suggested that underlying oppressive dynamics contributed to the difficulties that the participants experienced within their family systems. Although the participants did not use specific terminologies to name their difficult experiences as gender-based oppression, they provided many examples of how they were subjected to traditional expectations that reflected gender-oppressive elements of East Asian sociocultural practices derived from Confucianism.

In fact, the results of this study indicated that it was typical for participants to describe their in-laws as enforcing traditional East Asian customs, which were experienced in association

with the in-laws' perceived sense of entitlement and authority. As previously noted, participants felt that they were expected to express traditional qualities of wifely docility and subservience to the husband and elders and to assume the traditional role of a stay-at-home wife. In addition, the in-laws were perceived as expecting that DILs would undertake gender-based tasks that included the domestic chores of cooking and cleaning for the whole household, including for the whole in-law family, regardless of whether they were co-residing or not. Traditional wedding practices were also typically expected and the DILs were required to offer expensive gifts as part of dowries and to perform traditional ceremonies for the husband's side of the family. When these expectations were not met, the participants reported that the in-laws typically exhibited strong emotional responses. Their in-laws reportedly disliked, criticized, and/or lashed out in anger when DILs were seen as failing to meet traditional expectations. In sum, the participants felt that they were seen as unimportant, less prioritized, and subservient within their extended family networks in keeping with in-laws' cultural values and traditional expectations.

The traditional expectations imposed on the participants in this study were consistent with findings from the extant literature. These findings have documented the association of these expectations with misapplied cultural ideals that have perpetuated misogynistic ideologies throughout multiple generations. For instance, Yun (2013) explained that one of the most important classical Confucian texts, Wujing-Five Classics, documented that Confucianism was misused to negatively affect hierarchical gender relations, which ultimately placed women in disadvantaged positions within their patriarchal family systems. Similarly, Yao (2000) noted that East Asian DILs were expected to be a backdrop and take on the role of supporters for their husbands and in-law family members to cultivate and achieve goals at the expense of their sacrifice. Additionally, an important East Asian virtue of filial piety applied to DILs as well,

which meant that they were expected to be subservient to their husbands and parents-in-law while dedicating themselves to childrearing. As such, the extant literature on commonly practiced East Asian cultural and Confucian-based expectations reflected the present study's results.

5.5 Perceived In-Law Relationships and Cultural Dynamics

5.5.1 Negative perceptions of others' in-law relationships. While participants listed many general characteristics of traditional East Asian cultural values and gender roles, their perceptions of in-law relationships obtained specifically from friends, family members, and media were regarded as negative. These perceptions were consistent with the portrayal of negative in-law relations extant in popular media and scholarly research highlighting the often problematic and conflictual in-law family dynamics of East Asian descents (e.g. Kim, 1976; Shih, 2017).

5.5.2 Mixed perceptions of mother's in-law relationships. The perceptions of in-law relationships that DILs obtained from their mothers specifically were mixed, as the results indicated that participants held both positive and negative impressions of their mothers' in-law relationships. On one hand, the participants reported positive impressions of their mothers' in-law relations based on their mothers' abilities to maintain good relationships by following traditional DIL roles. On the other hand, the participants had negative perceptions of their mothers' in-law relationships due to hearing or observing the harsh treatment that their mothers received from in-laws. To the best of the author's knowledge, there is no previous research that has sought to capture DILs' perceptions of their mothers' in-law relationships.

5.5.3 Positive perceptions of own in-law relationships. While the participants' perceptions of in-law relations obtained from others and their mothers were typically reported as

negative and/or mixed as previously noted, the perceptions of their *own* in-law relationships were evaluated as mainly positive. Previous research suggested that DILs may evaluate their in-law relationships by using their own mothers as "yardsticks" to assess their mothers-in-law, which were termed as "mothering ideologies" (Shih & Pyke, 2015). The results of this study, however, neither confirmed or disconfirmed this notion of "mothering ideologies," as the participants did not mention such additional information during the interviews.

As will be apparent, the results of this study revealed interesting and contradictory findings worth highlighting. When asked, the participants of this study described their in-law relationships as positive, yet they predominantly reported many difficult in-law relationship experiences throughout the interviews, and reported that these experiences caused them significant affective and relational duress. Specifically, the participants were asked to, "Please describe your relationship with your in-laws," followed by the prompts, "Why would you describe your relationship as such?" and "Can you tell me a story (or an example) about that?" These questions were asked at the very beginning of the interview. The interview protocol also included a section, which asked the participants to elaborate if they had previously reported any positive experiences. Participants mostly provided brief answers to these questions. For example, they denoted a "friendly relationship" as one where they had meetings or dinners with in-laws without their husbands at times, or that they regarded the language barriers between them as a blessing in disguise because it limited their relationship to "only go[ing] so deep." In hindsight, a follow up question that explored the contradictions in these reports would have been useful to clarify our understanding of why they initially reported positive in-law relationships, yet predominantly expressed negative relational and affective duress throughout the interview.

Notably, one of the possible reasons for these contradictions may be related to the enactment of learned cultural values; for example, participants may have wanted to avoid losing face, which entails the avoidance of bringing shame to themselves or their immediate/extended family members (Sue, 1981; Ho, 1987; Kim et al., 2001; Hynes, 2019). Within East Asian cultures, it is important to save face and avoid family shame, so discussing family matters with outside parties is regarded as culturally inappropriate and often unacceptable (Kim et al., 1999; Hynes, 2019). Given that the interviewer asked the participants to share their perceptions of their in-law relationships at the very outset of the interview as part of the first question asked, the concept of saving face and the reluctance of sharing personal family information with a stranger may have been in effect. As the interviews progressed, however, the women divulged more personal in-law relationship dynamics and predominantly expressed negative sentiments as they voluntarily provided many examples of difficult in-law related experiences.

5.5.4 Perceived factors contributing to positive in-law relationships. The present study gathered information regarding participants' thoughts on what factors contributed to positive in-law relations, specifically. The results indicated that in-laws' ability to take a supportive, affirming, loving, and respectful stance towards the DILs was perceived as contributing to positive in-law relationships. In addition, many participants identified the in-laws' qualities of being communicative, helpful with childcare, and refraining from imposing traditions on them as important to positive relationships. Previous research did not adequately investigate the specific factors that contribute to positive in-law relationships from the perspectives of non-first generation Korean and Chinese American DILs.

5.6 Relational Impact of In-Law Relationships

5.6.1 Triangulation of husbands and impact on marriage. The results of this study revealed that it was common for the participants' husbands to be triangulated within their in-law family dynamics. The husbands were reportedly "caught in between" their in-laws and themselves. This triangulation constituted the DILs' and/or in-laws' tendencies of communicating to each other via their husbands rather than directly confronting or relaying information to one another. Additionally, this dynamic illustrated the husbands' reported difficulty in navigating competing requests and allocating their priority to their wives or their parents, which also contributed to marital difficulties.

This triangulation is similar to the extant research documenting that such in-law family dynamics are commonly associated with problems within a couple's marriage. Terry (2001) found that triangulation with MIL and FIL were negatively related to marital adjustment for European American couples. She explained that problems within marriages can occur when a spouse supports and aligns with his parent more than his partner in the face of in-law difficulties or spends more time with his parents than his partner. Moreover, Shih (2017) studied the power dynamics of second-generation Chinese American women and their respective MILs and found that the DILs used their husbands as "mediators" of conflict instead of directly confronting their MILs when problem arose. This is akin to the current study regarding triangulation whereby the husbands were "caught in the middle" to relay information on behalf of DILs or in-laws.

5.6.2 Mixed experiences of DILs as parents. In the exploratory data from the parents in the study, participants reported that they were generally appreciative of their in-laws' childcare help but unanimously expressed unhappiness with their in-laws' criticisms and imposition of different parenting and family values on them. These findings were akin to

previous research conducted by Shih and Pyke (2010) who recruited 1.5 and 2nd generation Chinese American DILs. These scholars found evidence that while their DIL participants were appreciative of their MILs' help with domestic and childcare responsibilities, they also expressed resentment when such parenting help was perceived as unnecessary or intrusive. Although exploratory in nature, these themes were similar to the reports of DILs of the present study as they expressed both positive and negative impacts of in-law relationships as parents.

5.7 Affective Impact of In-Law Relationships

5.7.1 Negative psychological impact of in-law relationships. As previously noted, the contexts in which the participants reported their negative in-law experiences seemed to be associated with the misogynistic, culturally oppressive application of elements of East Asian cultural values and Confucianism. Participants' reported affective responses illustrated the consequences of these family dynamics.

The results indicated that the non-first generation Korean and Chinese American DILs of this study typically experienced difficult in-law relationships, specifically due to their in-laws' traditional expectations, which negatively impacted their psychological well-being, such as generating difficult emotions, diminishing their self-esteem and self-worth, and increasing self-doubt. Specifically, the DILs reported feeling frustrated, angry, disrespected, confused, stressed, anxious, tearful, and trapped as a result of the traditional expectations their in-laws imposed on them as DILs. In addition, participants reported that they were often exposed to their in-laws' emotional responses, such as the in-laws' blatant disregard, disliking, criticizing, and lashing their anger at them for not meeting expectations.

Previous research has only hinted at such potential psychological impact. While Pyke and colleagues' (2003) study did not focus on the emotional effects of in-law relationships, their DIL

participants did report exhaustion and resentment because their in-laws assigned them many domestic responsibilities. Similarly, Yun's (2005) research measured the stress levels of DILs versus daughters and found that DILs who were caring for in-laws experienced increased levels of stress in comparison to the daughters taking care of their own parents. Again, these scholars did not focus on the psychological impact of in-law relationships. In fact, within the counseling psychology field, the impact of in-law relationships on non-first generation Korean and Chinese American DILs from a psychological perspective within U.S. contexts has not been adequately addressed. The present findings provide evidence as to the relevance of understanding the potentially detrimental psychological duress that can be associated with these family dynamics.

Additionally, the results of this present study indicated that the DILs' in-law relationship experiences had typically led them to question themselves, produced feelings of inadequacies as a wife and DIL, and increased doubts about whether they were "marriage or wife material." They furthermore reported feeling broken, depressed, offended, hurt, livid, disrespected, disappointed, and humiliated, as well as being physically exhausted. These reports suggest the generation of feelings of self-doubt, diminished self-worth, and lowered self-esteem among these women.

In a related conceptual essay, Son (2006) postulated that Korean American women who are expected to embody subordinated roles may develop a lack of cohesive self, which may result in low self-esteem and a pervasive sense of shame. The results of this current study point to the fact that Korean and Chinese American DILs residing in the U.S. may indeed experience negative self-concept, such as decreased self-esteem, increased self-doubt, or diminished self-worth, as a result of difficult in-law relationships.

5.8 Psychological Resources

5.8.1 Indirect coping strategies. While some participants described finding resilience in the form of having learned lessons or "rising above" their in-law related issues, the participants of this study typically reported using indirect coping methods, such as minimizing or ignoring in-law related issues, which suggested the use of avoidance strategies to cope with in-law related stressors. Another typical coping strategy was seeking support from others by sharing their experiences with friends and family members rather than formally seeking out professional services to address the distress that was associated with in-law relationship struggles.

Given the extant studies documenting that East Asian individuals commonly address stressors using indirect forms of coping and seeking non-professional individuals (e.g., Sue et al., 2012; Lei & Pellitteri, 2017), the current findings related to the indirect forms of coping and seeking support from friends and family members were consistent with previous literature and therefore not surprising.

5.8.2 Help-seeking perspectives. While a few participants reported seeking mental health services and finding them helpful, most participants postponed seeking professional help, explaining that they would consider seeking counseling in the future if their "in-law relationships got worse." These reports may indicate that their in-law problems were not overwhelming; at the same time, as noted, many of the same participants expressed significant in-law related difficulties and reported emotional duress during the interview. This juxtaposition suggests the possibility that they may have minimized or avoided problems and delayed seeking potentially helpful professional services. In fact, some participants specifically mentioned that their reservations in seeking help were based on the cultural stigma associated with receiving mental

health treatment and the lack of prospects in finding professionals who would be able to "understand all the nuances of their culture."

These findings are consistent with the well-documented research on Asian Americans and their tendencies to delay or not seek psychological services because of the stigma associated with mental health and the lack of culturally tailored services within mainstream society (e.g. Sue, Cheng, Saad, & Chu, 2012; Atkinson, Lowe, & Matthews, 1995; Leong, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1977; Lei & Pellitteri, 2017). These results can also be understood within the contexts of Asian cultural values that emphasize avoiding family shame at all costs (Kim et al., 1999; Hynes, 2019).

5.9 Summary: The Research Questions and Study Findings

The above discussions of key findings can be synthesized and summarized to address the research questions.

1. **What are the experiences of 1.5 or 2nd generation Korean and Chinese American DILs in the context of their in-law relationships in the U.S.?**

The results indicate that the participants' experiences are complex and at times contradictory. Common stressors that are often associated with conflicts in couples include finance-related issues, and similarly, the participants of this study identified financial circumstances as contributing to in-law relationship difficulties. Relatedly, co-habitative living arrangements with in-laws were expressed as causing struggles. Participants reported many instances of intergenerational conflict with their in-laws due to the differences in their cultural identities and values. Their perceptions of others' in-law relationships were regarded as negative, and their own mothers' in-law relations were viewed as largely negative. While participants offered statements early in the interview that their own in-law relationships were positive, their

subsequent reports included numerous difficult experiences that contradicted their stated evaluation of their in-law relationships. Such difficult experiences were associated with affective and relational duress for which participants utilized indirect coping methods to deal with in-law related stressors. With respect to attributes associated with positive in-law relationships, the participants identified in-laws' qualities of being supportive, communicative, respectful, along with not imposing traditions and assisting with childcare.

2. **What are the elements of cultural values that conflict between DILs and in-laws, if any?**

The participants and their in-laws often endorsed dissimilar cultural identities and values. These results suggested that participants' expressed values reflected European American ideals as much or more than traditional East Asian cultural ideals. Their independence and equality were reported to be of primary importance although they followed some elements of traditional East Asian cultural values. By contrast, their in-laws were viewed as adhering more strictly to traditional East Asian values. Participants provided numerous examples of how their cultural identities and values differed from those of their in-laws, such as being negatively exposed to the traditional expectations their in-laws placed on them as DILs. Examples of these expectations included domestic and subservient gender roles centered around their husbands' side of the family, which contradicted the participants' expressed cultural values.

3. **What is the perceived psychological impact of in-law relationships on Korean and Chinese American DILs?**

The results suggested that the participants did experience a variety of affective responses due to their in-law relationships, typically generating negative emotions and diminishing their own self-concepts. These difficult experiences were reported to be associated with their in-laws'

adherence to traditional East Asian cultural values and the corresponding expectations that were imposed onto them. These expectations were likely to have been intergenerationally passed down, which allowed the oppressive ideals derived from misused elements of Confucianism to prevail in the lives of the participants. These results suggest that the participants felt that they had been placed in devalued positions, often situating them at the lowest rank within their in-law family hierarchy. These conditions, according to participants' reports, were associated with a variety of forms of psychological distress.

Participants expressed both positive and negative experiences with respect to triangulations and the parenting of their children. Triangulations that formed as a result of indirect communication (i.e. participants relaying information to their in-laws via their husbands) were expressed to be generally positive. On the other hand, the triangulations that occurred when the husbands were "caught in between" the in-laws and DILs created difficult conflicts for all parties involved. Participants described the conflicts as stemming from the husbands' prioritizing the in-laws over them and their in-laws' influence on the husbands' values due to different styles of upbringing. While the dynamic of triangulations amongst in-law family members can be part of every family constellation, the unique cultural contexts that characterize Korean and Chinese American individuals add nuance that should be better understood with regard to multicultural theory, training, and practice (as will be further discussed in a subsequent section). In terms of the relational impact of parenting, the exploratory findings revealed both positive and negative experiences. The participants reported that while they appreciated their in-laws' childcare support, they experienced many difficulties based on their in-laws' imposing different parenting rules on them.

4. **What are the resilience factors, help-seeking behaviors, and actual coping strategies employed by these women in navigating their in-law relationships?**

Participants' discussion of psychological resources suggested that they typically used indirect coping methods and expressed reservations in seeking professional mental health help. Participants often reported using avoidance coping strategies, such as minimizing, ignoring, and dismissing in-law related stressors. They also typically coped with difficult in-law relationships by sharing with others, such as friends and family members. The participants commonly expressed reservations in seeking professional help as they viewed their in-law related stressors as insignificant despite the significant affective and relational duress that they described throughout the interview. Some participants specifically expressed reservations in seeking mental health assistance due to stigma but also because of their perceived lack of prospect in finding a service provider who would be able to empathize and understand the nuances of their culture.

5.10 Implications for Psychological Theory

The findings of this study have implications for multicultural psychological approaches as they currently exist. They indicate the cultural complexities of Korean and Chinese American family dynamics, which also suggests the importance of developing conventional psychology theories to better capture these unique experiences and sociocultural contexts. Such advances would be consistent with the emphases of feminist and multicultural counseling psychology, which advocate the critical assessment of existing theory to determine whether it is fitting and applicable for individuals with marginalized group memberships (e.g., Sue et al., 2019; Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Hynes, 2019).

One common dynamic that was underscored by this study was the generational triangulation of husbands, which must be culturally contextualized rather than relying on mainstream psychological theories alone. Family systems theories (e.g., Structural Family Therapy, Systems Therapy) explain that triangulations between family members can be problematic because they create unhealthy boundaries and family patterns (Minuchin, 1974). Mainstream European American psychological theories furthermore tend to assume that direct (versus indirect) forms of communication are always healthier ways of relaying information as they circumvent the triangulation of individuals. However, these theories, which are rooted in the worldviews and beliefs of European Americans, are inadequate to fully capture the cultural complexities of the behavioral and communication patterns of East Asian American individuals. In fact, the Korean and Chinese American participants who chose to communicate indirectly via their husbands, thereby creating triangulations, may have not necessarily exhibited negative behavioral or communication patterns within their cultural context.

As mentioned, the triangulations that resulted primarily via these indirect communication patterns may well have been culturally syntonic to the participants and perhaps even protective given their cultural and sociopolitical contexts. Specifically, the participants of this study did not identify these indirect communication patterns as problematic but rather as an effective way to relay information to their in-laws. For example, one participant noted that it was better that information was passed to her in-laws via her husband as she found the outcome to be better than communicating directly herself. East Asian cultural values view individuals as well adjusted (and thus favorably looked upon) when they maintain interpersonal harmony by indirectly communicating to another (Kim et al., 1999). It is also culturally appropriate to avoid direct confrontations, especially with elders (Kim et al., 1999). Despite the participants' exposures to

(and stated endorsement of) European American cultures, they were inherently situated within their East Asian familial contexts and were placed in devalued positions within oppressive systems. Therefore, their uses of indirect communication via the triangulations of their husbands may have at times been protective and effective in order to successfully navigate their family relationships. Mainstream theories that assume triangulations to always be pathological and as patterns that must always be reconstituted into "healthier" family dynamics do not capture the complexities of Korean and Chinese Americans' realities and their cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, it is also important to consider that the participants themselves considered certain aspects of the triangulation as problematic, specifically when it involved the husbands' prioritization of one member over the other (and not merely indirectly communicating information to another). The husbands were placed in a position to prioritize either the participants or their parents, which reportedly created difficult experiences for all parties involved. This form of triangulation, when identified as problematic, may be more appropriately captured by conventional psychological and family therapy models, yet the various elements of East Asian cultural contexts must be taken into account as well.

The dynamics of triangulation may have been particularly challenging and complicated for the husbands to navigate as they may have learned traditional East Asian values, such as the virtues of filial piety or respecting elders based on Confucian ideals. The virtue of filial piety assumes that the husbands' primary duty is to attend to their biological parents (Sue, 1981; Hynes, 2019). The triangulation dynamic is further complicated when traditional Confucian values are exhibited in the contexts of a European American cultural backdrop. As previously mentioned, the participants of this study reported an alignment with the European American

ideals of independence and equality, and as such, participants may have regarded their husbands' struggle as undermining their own independence as a couple.

In sum, the findings related to family triangulation among East Asian American participants are complex and contradictory. On the one hand, triangulation as exemplified by indirect communication was regarded as helpful and protective to participants and their in-law relationships. On the other hand, triangulation due to their husbands' difficulty in allocating priorities was deemed problematic within their familial contexts, creating personal distress and marital difficulties. Given that there is a predominantly negative understanding and connotation of triangulation within mainstream psychology, perhaps a new terminology and language that can capture the complexities of East Asian triangulation dynamics should be considered.

Generally speaking, extant theories on triangulation must move away from hastily deducing that East Asian American women are exhibiting problematic behavioral or communication patterns solely based on existing European-centric models. Rather, cultural variables must be brought to bear on the understanding of these concepts. It is important to carefully listen to the reports of clients to assess whether triangulations and indirect communications are protective or are resulting in difficult conflicts amongst family members. As such, critically and flexibly approaching existing conventional theories and utilizing multicultural counseling psychology theories would be necessary to minimize pathologizing and mislabeling minority individuals' dynamics and communication patterns.

5.11 Implications for Training and Practice

Goodman and colleagues (2004) explained that the feminist and multicultural counseling psychology emerged as critiques of conventional approaches that were monocultural and ethnocentric in nature. They analyzed mainstream psychology's failure to incorporate the

potential for cultural oppression to undermine the psychological development and functioning of minority individuals (Espin, 1992; Sparks & Park, 2000; Sue & Sue, 1990). These scholars explained that feminist and multicultural counseling psychology modalities highlight (a) different forms of oppression as important factors contributing to detrimental mental health effects (Brown, 1994; Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994; Helms & Cook, 1999), (b) the errors that can happen in terms of mislabeling clients' patterns as pathological instead of viewing them as survival responses within their oppressive contexts (Brown, 1994; Gunnings & Lipscomb, 1986; Worell & Remer, 1992), and (c) the ways in which mental health providers can help clients to directly combat these oppressive conditions (Brabeck, 2000; Brown, 1994, 2000). Indeed, feminist and multicultural counseling psychology approaches provide a basis for equipping educators and practitioners with culturally sensitive treatment methods and also help to effectively meet the needs of East Asian American DILs who may undergo negative affective and relational duress because of their in-law relationships.

Goodman and colleagues (2004) provided the following set of principles to inform clinical practice and training: (a) ongoing self-examination, (b) sharing power, (c) giving voice, (d) facilitating consciousness raising, (e) building on strengths, and (f) leaving clients the tools to work toward social change. They noted that these principles are interconnected and made clear that "distinctions become artificial in the social justice context because each type leads seamlessly to the others" (p. 6). The sections below are organized according to these interconnected principles to present relevant implications for training and practice in specifically working with Korean and Chinese American DILs. For each section, the principle itself will be described, followed by its application to the current study and its implications.

5.11.1 Ongoing self-examination. Goodman and colleagues (2004) noted that it is important for clinicians and educators to engage in an ongoing process of self-examination in order to increase awareness of the inherent worldviews and beliefs that they hold. It is especially vital for practitioners and educators to critically examine their biases and stereotypes, as these shape feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that can impact the way in which they conceptualize clients' problems and provide treatment (Helms & Cook, 1999). Goodman and colleagues (2004) also explained that feminist and counseling psychologists urged training programs to offer coursework and supervision that are designed to be safe environments where clinicians-in-training can learn to recognize their different identities and candidly uncover their assumptions and beliefs. In so doing, clinicians-in-training would be better equipped to serve clients with marginalized identities. Likewise, licensed practitioners are also encouraged to continue to engage in the process of ongoing self-examination by seeking colleagues and peer consultations to increase their awareness of their worldviews, identities, and biases.

With respect to the findings of this study, the need for clinicians and educators to espouse the process of ongoing self-examination is underscored. From a Western worldview, the recognition of in-law relationships as highly salient and influential in the lives of East Asian American DILs may be easily missed because European American DILs may interpret the importance and/or the influence of in-law relationships differently. For instance, although they might similarly find the intrusions annoying, they might be less vulnerable to their in-laws interjecting their views because of the mitigating influences of European American cultural values that affirm the primacy of the nuclear (as opposed to the extended) family. Without critical self-awareness, practitioners or educators holding European American beliefs and worldviews may fail to recognize, highlight, or provide ample space for Korean and Chinese

American clients to discuss or explore in-law related issues in therapy and effectively address the various impacts this relationship can have on their clients' psychological well-being.

Additionally, the results of this study indicated that the participants' cultural identities were non-linear and complex in how they differently exhibited both the East Asian and European American values in varying degrees. As previously discussed, the participants of this study reported that they primarily endorsed the values of independence and equality, reflecting European American rather than traditional East Asian ideals. However, they simultaneously exhibited behaviors deeply rooted in traditional East Asian cultural values when relating to their in-laws. Therefore, making broad assumptions that all Asian Americans are culturally alike, or viewing them solely in the contexts of East Asian or European American ideals, may contribute to misunderstanding individuals' complex identities.

The process of ongoing self-examination can also help prevent the inappropriate pathologizing of minority clients. As previously discussed, this study results revealed that the participants and their in-laws engaged in indirect communication patterns by triangulating the husbands to relay information to one another. These behavioral and communication patterns may be protective for DILs in light of their sociocultural contexts. However, clinicians and educators who rely on European American psychological paradigms may make the mistake of mislabeling these DILs as exhibiting pathological or dysfunctional communication patterns.

5.11.2 Sharing power. Goodman and colleagues (2004) explained that two of the key goals of feminist and multicultural counseling are (1) to be cognizant of the power dynamics within the therapy room and (2) to facilitate shared power between the providers and their clients by allowing equal decision making as much as possible throughout treatment. Therefore, clinicians are regarded as "co-learners" rather than experts on their clients' problems. The

assumption is that both the clients and therapists mutually contribute and grow within therapy. Providers and educators also need to espouse the concept of sharing power with minority clients in therapy in order to provide beneficial treatment as the sociopolitical and cultural contexts of these clients may often place them in devalued positions within their families and societies. It is important that therapy is not a place where clients' powerlessness is replicated in any way.

Along these lines, the results of this study suggested that the participants typically experienced psychological duress due to the traditional expectations that were imposed upon them. These expectations reflected the misuse of Confucianism elements, which were misapplied to create an oppressive dynamic by which DILs were situated in the lowest and most devalued positions within their extended family hierarchy. Given that issues of power dynamics were central in generating difficult affective and relational experiences, clinicians are encouraged to avoid reproducing a corresponding expert-driven or power-over dynamic within the therapeutic room.

5.11.3 Giving voice. Goodman and colleagues (2004) noted that theories of feminist psychology were premised on the belief that women's voices have been historically and continually silenced due to the patriarchal systems maintained in societies. As such, feminist psychologists aim to advocate and amplify the voices of oppressed groups inside and outside of the therapeutic room so that their clients may ultimately feel empowered to effect change. Similarly, multicultural counseling psychology seeks to understand marginalized individuals by recognizing their unique belief systems in light of their cultural contexts (Sue et al., 2019; Sue & Zane, 1987), which includes conceptualizing their problems within the context of oppressive cultures as well.

The present study likewise indicates that giving voice to the unique in-law related family experiences in light of the cultural and sociopolitical contexts of Korean and Chinese American DILs would be essential in therapy. When asked, participants initially labelled their in-law relationships as positive, yet they subsequently detailed significant affective and relational duress. It would be important to bear in mind that Korean and Chinese American clients may initially deny difficulties and report positive relationships in order to save face or to avoid any negative portrayal of their family members in therapy. Therefore, clinicians are encouraged to carefully listen and observe for signs that reflect their clients' willingness (or hesitancy) in sharing difficult family relationship experiences. When clients are willing to discuss, it may be helpful to bear supportive witness as clients give voice to difficult family experiences and to help them explore these issues by providing ample space and time in therapy.

5.11.4 Consciousness raising. According to Goodman and colleagues (2004), feminist and multicultural counseling psychologists can facilitate consciousness-raising in their clients by helping them understand their difficulties in the contexts of larger historical and sociopolitical systems (Helms, Cook, 1999; Ivey et al., 2002). These scholars explained that feminist and multicultural counseling psychologists work to help clients to consider external sources as influencing their difficulties and not mistake them as their personal failings. They support women in increasing their awareness of the operations of male privilege and sexism and to better understand their difficulties within these contexts (Ballou & Brown, 2002; Brabeck & Brown, 1997). Thus, these consciousness raising efforts contribute to alleviating distress that clients learn to properly externalize the oppression-related elements of their distress rather than internalize responsibility for them.

As previously discussed, the participants of this study reported that their in-law relationships generated negative affective experiences, such as feeling anxious, angry, confused, and tearful, due to the traditional expectations their in-laws imposed on them. The participants reported that they felt broken, depressed, hurt, exhausted, and humiliated due to the treatment that they received from in-laws. Furthermore, the participants reported that these relationships generated negative affective responses related to their self-concept, such as lowered self-esteem, diminished self-worth, and increased self-doubt. As such, clinicians are encouraged to assist such DIL clients in better understanding that contextually-related relational duress is not based on individual failures but rather are impacts caused by oppressive cultures maintained within their family dynamics. Additionally, clinicians may find it useful to assist DIL clients in increasing awareness of the patriarchal systems that place their MILs in subordinated positions--because their MILs are also women and might have had their own experiences as DILs at one time. These efforts may help to increase DIL clients' empathy towards their MILs as they recognize the underlying systemic forces at play that maintain women's roles within patriarchal family hierarchies. It would be important that this consciousness raising be done after fully providing empathy and time for clients to process their own lived experiences.

Related to increasing clients' self-awareness of the underlying patriarchal family systems, a clinical exploration of the clients' internalized gender oppression can be further addressed in therapy. As mentioned previously, the participants reported that personal and relational distress arose due to their husbands' difficulties in allocating priorities; for example, when the husband was triangulated between the participant and MIL with regard to choosing a side. Regardless of how difficult this dynamic was for the husband, the power of choosing a side in the first place ultimately lay with the husband. This dynamic is, therefore, the manifestation of how systems of

oppression thrive where the women of the family are viewed as and/or led to believe that they are the problematic members of the family-- despite the fact that they were pitted against each other and placed in a position to fight over the man in power. Indeed, women are “led to believe the negative views of the oppressor” (Pharr, 1997, p.60), which Miller (1986) noted as women being subjected to internalized sexism. She further explained that women with internalized sexist beliefs will reinforce the views of the oppressor by regarding males as superior (or as prized), focusing on taking care of them and showing deference towards them. With regards to this study, the participants and their MILs were placed in a position to fight over the attention and affection of their “prized” son or husband, which resulted in triangulation. Given the negative psychological ramifications associated with internalized gender oppression, it would be essential for clinicians to help clients identify who holds and maintains power within their families, and to further explore, unpack, and raise self-awareness regarding the internalized sexist messages that they were subjected to, especially within the context of their in-law family dynamics.

5.11.5 Focus on strengths. Goodman and colleagues (2004) explained that the main goal of feminist and multicultural counseling psychologists is to highlight their clients’ strengths to help them recognize that they are more than capable and powerful individuals who can find solutions to their own problems. Feminist psychologists use techniques such as cognitive reframing that help their clients understand their seemingly problematic patterns as adaptive behaviors in responses to oppressive contexts. Multicultural counseling psychologists assist clients to identify coping methods by highlighting their internal sources of resilience and strength.

In keeping with strength-based approaches, the results of this study revealed useful coping strategies and resiliencies employed by participants. The participants reported that they

typically sought out support from others, including family members, by sharing their experiences instead of isolating themselves, which indicated their resourcefulness. Some participants engaged in reflective thinking in trying to better understand their in-laws from different perspectives, while others engaged in productive activities, such as actively participating in spiritual, physical and work activities. In terms of resilience, the participants reported that they "grew to rise above" and learned to better react, understand, and relate to their in-laws. With a positive and strength-based psychological perspective, the findings related to the participants' coping methods and resiliencies support clinicians' recognition of the strengths that the Korean and Chinese American women possess.

5.11.6 Leaving clients with tools. The last principle provided by Goodman and colleagues (2004) entails providing clinical training and practice from a social justice framework, which emphasizes the work to go beyond individual therapies to extend to the clients' familial and societal levels. In therapeutic settings, the feminist and multicultural counselors' aim is to equip their clients with tools to help them continually thrive outside therapy. One of the ways in which clinicians can provide their clients with such tools is to assist them in accessing their own support systems, such as their family, community elders, and religious groups, so that they can continue to engage in their ongoing developments with the support of their own networks outside therapy. Furthermore, feminist and multicultural counseling therapists work to empower clients to use their learned tools to effectuate changes within their communities and social settings as well.

As previously noted, participants in this study reported that they already attempted to use various coping strategies, and clinicians can help such clients to fully recognize their powerful resilience by highlighting and making explicit the clients' own tools. For example, clinicians can

encourage the clients to keep increasing their consciousness around the issues of power dynamics and understand their problems within the contexts of their sociopolitical, cultural, and familial systems. They can be encouraged to continually externalize their in-law related issues by viewing these problems within their culturally oppressive contexts instead of internalizing them as personal failures. Not only will these efforts help clients leave therapy with knowledge and tools to face their in-law related problems on an individual level, the clients may also be inspired to initiate changes within their families and communities to combat the underlying oppressive forces that many other Korean and Chinese American women may face.

5.12 Training and Practice Summary: Best Practice Recommendations

The following recommendations for best practice that follow build with more specificity upon the feminist and multicultural counseling psychology approaches discussed above.

1. Clinicians are encouraged to continue working towards increasing multicultural competency, particularly with regard to the cultural elements, backgrounds, and histories that are unique to East Asian clients. For example, they can seek out scholarly research and literature that provide valuable information on the various elements of Confucianism and East Asian cultural values that have been historically and socio-politically misused to disadvantage women, especially DILs.
2. Critically approach existing conventional psychological theories from a feminist and multicultural counseling perspectives in order to best inform treatment and to avoid misconceptualizing and/or pathologizing clients. In this way, clinicians can move away from hastily concluding that their clients are exhibiting problematic behavioral or communication patterns based on existing Eurocentric models.

3. Be mindful of conceptualizing the presentations of the issues facing Korean and Chinese American DILs within the context of oppression and internalized oppression. Feminist and multicultural counselors are aware of oppressive forces and are knowledgeable on how the various social structures (e.g., racism, sexism, etc.) can marginalize minority individuals, including those of Korean and Chinese American descents. However, clinicians are also encouraged to consider the oppressive family dynamics that can be maintained intergenerationally. Oppressive dynamics were evident in the narratives of the participants of this study, and it would be important for clinicians to understand these stressors from the context of oppression rather than as solely the results of intrapsychic individual factors.
4. Unique nuances of immigration and generational factors should also be studied to better understand Korean and Chinese American individuals and families with regard to intergenerational conflicts may exist within extended family relationships generally and between DILs and their respective in-laws specifically. Be mindful that these conflicts do not just apply to nuclear family dynamics. In so doing, clinicians can take a not-knowing stance and learn from their own clients regarding any intergenerational issues that can exist within in-law relationships. They can show curiosity and ask their clients to educate them on the different cultural elements that are important to consider in the course of their work together in therapy.
5. Be aware that individuals of Korean and Chinese American descents may express bicultural identities even when they endorse European American values. As such, clinicians should consider their clients' cultural identities and values as non-linear and fluid.

6. Be prepared to explore and address the various negative psychological sequelae that can result from difficult in-law relationships among Korean and Chinese American descents. The participants of this study reported negative affect and diminished self-concept due to their relationship difficulties with in-laws. These difficulties were mainly based on traditional expectations that were imposed on them, which caused depressed mood, anxiety, anger, low self-worth and self-esteem, and increased self-doubt, to name a few. Clinicians who are aware of the East Asian cultural and sociopolitical forces influencing negative in-law family dynamics can use interventions that support their clients' consciousness and assist them to recognize the oppressive cultural contexts for their problems. In turn, these efforts will help clients to externalize these dynamics instead of internalizing them as personal failures or inadequacies.
7. Know that the traditional handling of financial matters can contribute to conflictual in-law relationships amongst Korean and Chinese American family members, as evidenced by this study's findings. Clinicians are encouraged to be mindful that in-law family members may fully expect financial support from their DILs and husbands, who may be expected to take on the financial responsibilities of parents and/or co-reside with them, practices that are consistent with the value of filial piety. This arrangement can have negative consequences for the DILs as they may lack their own freedom and independence, even within the confines of their own homes.
8. Utilize interventions from positive psychological perspectives to highlight clients' resilience, strengths, and skills. The participants of this study reported that they already use various coping strategies to address their in-law related stressors. Strength-based

approaches can indeed assist clients in recognizing their own strengths and feeling empowered to effect changes in their lives.

9. Engage in social justice and advocacy work. Clinicians are encouraged to expand their professional roles to serve as advocates in support of Korean and Chinese American women so that they have access to equal opportunities within their workplaces and educational settings. More specifically, organizational and counseling psychologists working with companies and educational institutions can make positive impacts in support of minority women. They can provide consulting and advisement to leadership so that they are able to identify and make changes to the unfavorable policies within their companies and institutions. As such, these advocacy and social justice efforts can help to minimize the obstacles that Korean and Chinese American DILs may face in their educational and career pursuits.

5.13 Study Limitations

Despite carefully adhering to the recommendations provided by experts of CQR to effectively conduct this research (e.g. Hill, 2012), there are several limitations that merit attention. Qualitative research typically recruits relatively smaller sample sizes, and their findings are not meant to be generalized to a broader, more diverse sample. It is important to caution, therefore, against generalizing the results of this study to populations beyond the scope of the study (Hill et al, 2012). Moreover, although the author of this study reached out to numerous East Asian American ethnic groups, the participants who volunteered for this study consisted of only Korean and Chinese American women. Thus, this study's results may not be applicable to other East Asian American women even though they may share similar cultural roots and backgrounds.

Similarly, beyond the selection criteria, several additional demographics of the participants clustered around certain characteristics. The majority of the participants identified themselves as middle class, highly educated, Christian women who were working full time at a paid employment. It is possible that those dimensions of homogeneity within the sample played a part in the participants' descriptions of their in-law relationships. For instance, it is possible that the participants of highly educated, middle-class backgrounds may have had different experiences than individuals living in poverty or those without higher levels of formal education. Likewise, individuals of different faiths may report disparate experiences due to the possibilities of religions impacting their values and beliefs differently.

With respect to the analysis team, the three research team members identified themselves as East Asian Americans and as students attending elite graduate programs, which may have impacted the way in which they interpreted the data. It is possible that another research team with other social identities and backgrounds might have produced variations in their interpretation of the data. Nonetheless, as outlined in the method section in detail, the author closely followed the guidelines provided by Hill and colleagues (1997) to minimize potential errors that may occur due to the research team members' subjective assessments and interpretations. Research team members actively engaged in candid discussions regarding their identities, biases, and assumptions throughout the analyses process of this study, and an auditor who was not East Asian (the auditor identified as a White American) entered the process to offer critique and suggestions. These efforts allowed the team members to point out each other's biases and subjective experiences and helped to minimize potential errors in the analyses of this study data.

5.14 Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research are suggested. First, future researchers are encouraged to purposefully investigate East Asian American individuals of different ethnicities, education levels, and social locations beyond the characteristics of the recruited sample of this study. For example, researchers may specifically recruit Japanese American DILs to expand or qualify the findings produced from this study. Another potential area of research would be to gather information regarding the experiences of East Asian American DILs who identify with other social class memberships. DILs who identify as poor or upper class may provide different experiences of their in-law relationships given their social locations. Additionally, investigating the in-law experiences of 3rd generation (and beyond) East Asian American DILs would be an interesting area of study that may shed light into the psychological sequelae that were highlighted in the current results.

Another potential area of research would be to study the lived experiences of East Asian American individuals within same-sex relationships in the context of family relationships, given that this present study only focused on heterosexual married DILs. East Asian American individuals within same-sex relationships may be exposed to the same traditional East Asian cultural values but may report different psychological experiences. Their relationship status may cause them to face additional and/or different challenges, such as being exposed to oppressive family dynamics and discrimination based upon their sexual orientation. The experiences of these individuals merit focused study of their own.

Future studies should also more fully examine trends of the East Asian American DILs who identify as parents to confirm the results of the exploratory analysis of this study. As previously noted, the participants who identified as parents only pertained to six individuals,

which were not enough to interpret trends according to the Hill and Colleagues' (1999) CQR guidelines. Therefore, additional gathering of data from parent DILs would be a fruitful area of research as the in-law related experiences as parents may provide important implications for clinical practice, such as how to effectively conduct family therapy with DILs and their in-laws when children are also involved.

Lastly, future research might also adopt a different paradigm in recruiting a larger sample size and including quantitative measures to assess the kinds of psychological duress reported by the Korean and Chinese American DILs in this study. Quantitative instruments measuring these psychological concepts with a larger sample would provide additional and useful data to expand the understanding of Korean and Chinese American DILs' psychological wellbeing in light of their in-law relationships.

Conclusions

The results of this study illuminated the in-law relationship experiences of non-first generation Korean and Chinese American DILs, specifically from a psychological perspective within U.S. contexts. This study revealed the unique cultural and family dynamics that impacted the participants' affective and relational experiences, as well as the way in which they utilized their resilience and strategies to cope with difficult in-law relationships. These findings provide clinicians and educators with helpful information and recommendations regarding their work with Korean and Chinese American women who report difficult in-law and family relationships in therapeutic settings. These guidelines promise to be especially useful for practitioners in the provision of culturally sensitive treatments, which they can utilize to effectively address the unique cultural and sociopolitical factors contributing to psychological duress of this specific population.

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Participant Number:____________

Please answer each item by circling or filling in a response:

1. What is your age? _________
2. Gender? ________
3. Sexual orientation? _________
4. What is your race?
    a. Asian
    b. Non-Asian
5. What is your ethnic background?
    a. Chinese
    b. Japanese
    c. Korean
    d. Taiwanese
    e. Other: _____________________
6. What is your generational status?
    a. 1.5 generation (I was born in a foreign country but moved to the U.S. before the age of 15)
    b. 2nd generation (I was born and raised in the U.S. but my parents are immigrated here after being born in another country)
    c. Other: _____________________

7. How would you self-identify your social class membership?
    a. Low income /poverty
    b. Working class
    c. Lower middle class
    d. Middle class
    e. Upper middle class
    f. Upper class/wealthy
8. What is your highest level of education?
    a. No high school diploma
        i. Please indicate highest grade completed ___________
    b. High school diploma or GED
    c. Some college
    d. College degree
    e. Graduate degree
        i. Please indicate highest graduate degree obtained _______________
9. What is your employment status?
    a. Unemployed
    b. Employed part-time that is unpaid
    c. Employed part-time that is paid
    d. Employed full-time that is unpaid
    e. Employed full-time that is paid
10. If employed, please indicate your profession _________________
11. What is your husband's profession? ________________

a. What is your husband's highest level of education? _______________

12. What is your father-in-law's profession?_______________

a. What is your father-in-law's highest level of education?_______________

13. What is your mother-in-law's profession?_______________

a. What is your mother-in-law's highest level of education? _______________

14. What is your religious affiliation, if any? _______________

15. Please circle Yes or No to the following questions:

a. Are you adopted?

i. Yes / No

b. Are you currently married?

i. Yes / No

c. Is it your first marriage?

i. Yes /No

d. Are you married to a co-ethnic man? (i.e. married to a man who shares your East Asian cultural background)

i. Yes / No

e. Are you married for less than or equal to 5 years?

i. Yes / No

ii. How many years into the marriage? _____________

f. Do you have co-ethnic in-law members? (i.e. in-law members who share your East Asian cultural background)

i. Yes / No

g. Do you have (a) child(ren)?

i. Yes /No

ii. If Yes, how many child(ren) do you have?

1. ____________

iii. If Yes, what is/are the sex(es) of your child(ren)?

1. ____________ 2._______________

3. _____________ 4._____________

THANK YOU!

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

---

1. **Please describe your relationship with your in-laws.**
    a. Why would you describe your relationship as such?
        i. Can you tell me a story (or example) about that?
2. **Do you think your relationship with in-laws has any effect on you or your life?** [PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT]
    a. Does the relationship or do they (i.e. in-laws) affect your feelings?
        i. [If yes] Can you tell me an example that illustrates how the relationship has affected you this way?
    b. Does the relationship or do they (i.e. in-laws) affect the way you view or think about yourself?
        i. [If yes] Can you tell me an example that illustrates this?
3. **Tell me about your in-law relationship leading up to engagement and/or marriage.** [CONTEXT/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT]
    a. Did the relationship or did they (i.e. in-laws) have any effect on your feelings during this phase?
        i. [If yes] Can you tell me more about that?
    b. Did the relationship or did they (i.e. in-laws) have any effect on your thoughts or view of yourself during this phase?
        i. [If yes] Can you tell me more about that?

4. **Tell me about the relationship with your partner in relation to your in-laws.**

   [RELATIONSHIP/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT]

   a. Does your in-law relationship or do they (i.e. in-laws) have any effect on your marriage?

      i. [If yes] Can you tell me a story about that?

         1. Does the effect have any impact on your feelings?

      ii. [If no] Can you tell me your thoughts on why the in-law relationship does not have any effect on your marriage?

5. **Tell me about the cultural values that you hold, and that your in-laws hold.**

   [CULTURAL VALUES/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT]

   a. [If different values are mentioned] Can you tell me an example that illustrates the differences?

      i. Do the differences in values have any effect on you?

         1. [If yes] Do they affect your feelings?

   b. [If similar values are mentioned] Can you tell me an example that illustrates the similarities?

      i. Do the similar values have any effect on you?

         1. [If yes] Do they affect your feelings?

   c. [If cultural identifications are <u>not</u> mentioned] How would you describe your cultural identity and that of your in-laws?

      i. Which culture(s) do you identify with?

      ii. Which culture(s) do you think your in-laws identify with?

6. **Please describe your own mother's relationship with her in-laws.** [IMAGES OF IN-LAW RELATIONSHIP OBTAINED FROM FAMILY ORIGIN/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT]
    a. Why would you describe your mother's in-law relationship as such?
        i. Can you tell me a story (or example) about that?
        ii. Do you think that your mother's in-law relationships or her experiences have any effect on you or your life?
            1. [If yes or no] Tell me more.
7. **[If participant discussed <u>positive psychological experiences</u> with in-laws] You've previously described positive relationship experience(s) with your in-laws. Could you tell me an example (or a story) of one of the most positive or satisfying experiences that you had with your in-laws so far?** [PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/RESILIENCE FACTORS]
    a. Did this experience have any effect on your feelings?
        i. If so, please tell me more.
    b. Did this experience have any effect on how you view or think about yourself?
        i. If so, could you tell me more?
    c. What do you think contributes to your satisfying and/or positive experiences with your in-laws?
8. **[If participant discussed <u>negative psychological experiences</u> with in-laws during the interview] You've previously described difficult relationship experience(s) with your in-laws. Could you tell me an example (or a story) of one of the most difficult**

experiences you had with your in-laws so far? [PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/RESILIENCE/COPING STRATEGIES]

a. Did this experience have any effect on your feelings?

   i. If so, please tell me more.

b. Did this experience have any effect on how you view or think about yourself?

   i. If so, could you tell me more?

c. How did you cope with this difficult experience?

9. [If participant discussed any <u>negative psychological experiences</u> with in-laws during the interview] You've previously discussed difficult experience(s) with your in-laws. [HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS/COPING STRATEGIES/RESILIENCE]

a. Have you ever sought help from a mental health professional to address any relationship issues with your in-laws?

   i. [If yes] Could you tell me about your experience of seeking help?

   ii. [If no] Could you tell me about your reservations in seeking help?

b. Have you ever sought help from a person who is not a mental health professional to address any relationship issues that you had with your in-laws?

   i. [If yes] Can you tell me about your experience of seeking help?

   ii. [If no] Can you tell me about your reservations in seeking help?

c. What were your coping strategies that you have tried by yourself to cope with difficult experiences with your in-laws?

10. **[If participant identifies as having (a) child(ren)] Tell me about your relationship with in-laws in regards to your children?** [OFFSPRING FACTORS/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT]
    a. Do the in-laws have any effect on you in regards to parenting?
        i. [If yes] Can you tell me a story (or example) about that?
        ii. [If no] Can you tell me your thoughts on why or how your in-laws have no effect on your parenting?
    b. Do the in-laws have any effect on how you feel about yourself in regards to you as a parent?
        i. [If yes] Can you tell me a story (or example) about that?
        ii. [If no] Can you tell me your thoughts on why or how the in-laws have no effect on how you feel about you as a parent?
11. **Is there anything else that you would like to add or think is important for me to know about this topic before ending the interview?**

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix C

Recruitment Electronic Message

My name is Angela Gwak and I am a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at Teachers College, Columbia University.

I am inviting married women who are Asian Americans from East Asian cultural backgrounds to participate in my research. Eligible participants will be asked to share their thoughts, insights, and experiences regarding their relationships with family-in-laws.

The eligibility criteria:

- Must self-identify as a **heterosexual woman with an East Asian cultural heritage** from one of the following countries:
  - China, Japan, Korea, or Taiwan.
- Must self-identify as **1.5 or 2nd generation East Asian American.**
  - 1.5 generation refers to an individual who moved to the U.S. prior to age 15.
  - 2nd generation refers to an individual who was born and raised in the U.S. and whose parents are 1st generation immigrants.
- Must be married to a **co-ethnic spouse** (i.e. who shares the same East Asian cultural roots).
- Must be **married for 5 years or less.**
- Must have **co-ethnic in-laws** (i.e. who share the same East Asian cultural roots).

If you are interested and eligible to participate, please contact me via phone XXX-XXX-XXXX or email **XXXXX@tc.columbia.edu** to receive more information and to schedule an interview (either by phone or face-to-face) at a time that is convenient for you.

If you know of a participant who may be able to qualify, please feel free to forward this message.

Thank you!

This study has been approved by the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board, protocol _____________. If you have any questions, please feel free to email at XXXXX@tc.columbia.edu.

Appendix D

Screening Questions for Recruitment

Hi, my name is Angela Gwak calling you in regards to your interest in participating in my study about married women's experiences with in-law relationships. First of all, thank you so much for your interest. I have a couple of screening questions that I would like to ask you to see whether you qualify to participate. Do you have a couple of minutes to answer some basic demographic questions at this time?

[If yes] Are you:

- ☐ Asian?
- ☐ Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Taiwanese American?
- ☐ 1.5 generation or 2nd generation?
- ☐ Female?
- ☐ Heterosexual?
- ☐ Not adopted?
- ☐ Married?
- ☐ First marriage?

☐ Married for less than or equal to 5 years?

☐ Married to a co-ethnic man?

☐ Living within approximately100 miles or 2 hours of driving distance from your in-laws?

☐ Willing to interview either by phone or in-person?

[If qualified] Scheduled interview date: ____________ time: _____________

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n= 12)

Characteristics	**N**
Sex/Sexual Orientation	
Female	12
Heterosexual	12
Race	
East Asian	12
Ethnicity	
Korean American	8
Chinese American	4
Age	M=30.17, SD=3.24
Generational Status	
1.5 generation	4
2nd generation	8
Religious Affiliation	
Christian	9
Buddhist	1
Agnostic	1
“No religion”	1
Class Membership	
Working class	2
Middle class	9
Upper middle class	1
Upper class	0
Highest Level of Education	
Bachelor’s degree	6
Master’s degree	5
Juris doctorate degree	1
Employment Status	
Full-time paid employment	9
Unemployed	3
Parent Status	6

Table 2.

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
1. DIL's Observations of General East Asian Cultural Values	I think it's customary for DILs to enter into and become part of the in-laws' family	Variant
	Based on my impressions, accepting domestic and caretaking roles is common for DILs	Variant
	In an Asian household, I think it is important to show that you are doing well through your children and wealth	Variant
	In our culture, it is common to respect and care for elders	Variant
	I think that there are stigmas around having mental health issues and receiving treatment in our culture	Variant
	It is common in our culture for the wife to perform traditional ceremonies and give dowries to the husband's family	Variant
	I think living together or having children before marriage is a big no-no in our culture	Variant
2. DIL's Cultural Self-Identification	I identify as a Christian	Variant
	I am more Americanized than traditional East Asian	Variant
	I am more East Asian than American.	Variant
	I am in the middle of East Asian and American	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
3. DIL's Values Regarding Family Roles and Practices	I value having independence, education, equal rights, and shared decision-making and household responsibilities	Typical
	It's important for me to respect and serve elders, including my in-laws	Variant
	I believe in following wedding traditions, such as wearing traditional clothes, accepting gifts from guests, and doing things for the husband's family	Variant
	I consider the whole extended in-law family as my family and believe that getting along with them will make my life easier because I am married into the in-law family	Variant
4. In-Laws' Cultural Identification	My in-laws are more East Asian than American	Typical
	My in-laws are both Americanized and East Asian	Variant
	My in-laws are Christians	Variant
	My in-laws are not Christians	Variant
5. In-Laws' values regarding family roles, practices, and their expectations of DILs	My in-laws expected me to abide by their traditional ways due to their sense of entitlement and authority	Typical
	My in-laws have family-oriented values and follow traditions	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to follow their ways of traditional wedding practices, such as giving dowries and performing ceremonies	Typical

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
5. In-Laws' values regarding family roles, practices, and their expectations of DILs (cont.)	My in-laws expected me to prioritize their time and space over mine	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to fit into the qualities of an ideal DIL and wife, such as being quiet, serving my husband and elders, and being a stay-at-home wife	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to do all the household chores, such as cooking and cleaning for them as a woman and DIL	Typical
	My in-laws expected me to bear sons to carry the family name and take care of children	Variant
	My in-laws follow strict gender roles, such as valuing the steady housewife type of woman who takes care of her family	Variant
	My in-laws told me to manage my relationships with SILs as an authority figure as I am married to the eldest son, while younger SILs are expected to listen to me	Variant
	My in-laws did not expect me to follow the traditional ways of being a DIL, such as serving, cleaning, or cooking for them	Variant
6. Immigration and Generational Factors	My in-laws and parents immigrated to the U.S. and they have adjusted to the American ways	Variant
	As immigrants, my in-laws and parents made sacrifices and struggled in America	Variant
	My in-laws and parents immigrated to the U.S. but weren't able to let go of their East Asian ways	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
6. Immigration and Generational Factors (cont.)	I had conflicts with my in-laws because of the generational differences	Variant
7. Financial and Living Circumstances	I had conflicts with my in-laws because of money	Variant
	Living together with my in-laws exacerbated my relationship with them	Variant
	I lived with my in-laws to save money	Variant
	My in-laws are not financially well-off but they are still giving and supportive	Variant
8. DIL's Perceptions of Own In-Law Relationships	I have a good/close/comfortable relationship with my in-laws	Typical
	I have a distant/strained relationship with my in-laws	Variant
	I have an okay/civil/co-existing relationship with my in-laws even though they drive me crazy at times	Variant
9. DIL's Perceptions of Others' In-Law Relationships	I heard about difficult Asian in-law relationships from friends and family members	Typical
	I saw that my mother had a great relationship with her in-laws as she was obedient, caring, respectful, and patient towards them	Typical
	I saw that my mother had rocky in-law relationships as she experienced a lot of bitterness/resentment due to their harsh treatment	Typical

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
9. DIL's Perceptions of Others' In-Law Relationships (cont.)	My mother's positive in-law relationships made me respect her and also helped me to better relate with my own in-laws	Variant
	My impressions of my mom's/friends' in-law relationships have little to no effect on me	Variant
	I've learned how crazy East Asian in-law relationships can get by watching TV dramas	Variant
	My mother's negative in-law relationships impacted the way I view and would react to things	Variant
10. In-Laws' Influence on DIL's Marriage	I have conflicts with my husband because my in-laws interject themselves into our marriage and want to make decisions for us	Variant
	I argue a lot with my husband because my in-laws brought him up to value things differently	Variant
	I butt heads with my husband because he prioritizes my in-laws over me	Variant
	I think that my in-laws have a positive effect on marriage as they impact us to confront family-related hurdles together	Variant
	My in-laws are not a daily influence in our marriage because we are pretty independent	Variant
11. Triangulation	My husband gets caught in the middle between my in-laws and I	General
	I was caught in the middle of/ pulled into family struggles	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
12. DIL's Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Positive In-Law Relationships	My in-laws are supportive/ affirming/ loving/ respectful, which I think contribute to our good relationship	Typical
	My in-laws do not really impose traditions and are more hands-off, which contribute to a positive relationship that I'm appreciative of	Typical
	I was already familiar with my in-laws before marriage, which contributed to a more welcoming and comfortable relationship	Variant
	My in-laws help me with childcare and household responsibilities, which contribute to a more positive relationship	Variant
	I think spending quality time and communicating well with my in-laws contribute to our positive relationship	Variant
	I think having similar values and goals of wanting positive in-law relationships help us to relate better	Variant
13. In-Laws' Emotional Responses	My in-laws disliked/ criticized/ lashed out their anger at me because they felt like I did not meet their expectations	Typical
	My in-laws were jealous/ sad/ needy due to feeling like they have lost their son/brother to me	Variant
14. DIL's Emotional Responses	I felt frustrated/ angry/ disrespected/ confused/ stressed/ anxious/ tearful/ trapped because of my in-laws' traditional expectations of me	Typical

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
14. DIL's Emotional Responses (cont.)	I questioned myself and felt inadequate as a wife/ DIL because I was unsure whether I was marriage/ wife material according to my in-laws' standards	Typical
	I felt broken/ depressed/ offended/ hurt/ livid/ exhausted/ disrespected/ disappointed/ humiliated because of my in-laws' blatant disregard for my well-being and treatment towards me	Typical
	Overall, my in-laws do not affect how I view myself	Variant
	I felt upset/ furious/ scared/ stressed/ frustrated/ anxious/ disliked/ bitter because of my in-laws' expectations around our wedding invitation, planning, and ceremony	Variant
	I felt frustrated/ annoyed/ hurt/ mad/ depressed due to my in-laws' overly dependent personality/ strong personality/ passive aggressiveness	Variant
	I felt good/ less emotional/ less anxious/ happier/ more affectionate/ loved because my in-laws were welcoming, loving, affirming, and accepting of me	Variant
	I felt more worthy, confident, and deserving of love because of my in-laws' encouragement, words of affirmation, and acceptance	Variant
15. Perspectives on Seeking Professional Help	I did not seek professional help for in-law related issues because I feel like the problems have never gotten to a point beyond what I could handle	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
15. Perspectives on Seeking Professional Help (cont.)	I have reservations in seeking help because having mental health issues and taking medications are not accepted in my culture	Variant
	If my in-law relationships get worse, I would explore more into going to a mental health professional	Variant
	I went to therapy for problems unrelated to my in-law relationships, which helped me to heal from my past issues	Variant
	One of my concerns in seeking help is not being able to find someone who can empathize and understand all the nuances of my culture	Variant
	I went to counseling to address in-law related problems, which was helpful in having someone to talk to and applying the things I learned in therapy	Variant
16. Coping Strategies	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by avoiding/ letting things go/ dismissing/ ignoring	Typical
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by sharing with others	Typical
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by thinking things through and reflecting on different perspectives	Variant
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by engaging in spiritual/ physical/ work activities	Variant
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by submitting and giving into their ways	Variant
	I coped with difficult in-law relationships by letting out my emotions	Variant

Table 2. (Cont.)

Domains, Categories, and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
17. Resilience, Lessons Learned, and Growth	I grew to rise above the situation, become more independent, and not feel defeated anymore through my in-law relationships	Variant
	I've learned to better react, understand, and relate to my in-laws over time	Variant
	I've learned to focus on my husband and have more conversations with him about issues related to my in-laws	Variant

**Note.* Total of n = 12. General (11-12 cases), Typical (7-10 cases), Variant (2-6 cases)

Table 3.

Exploratory Domain with Categories and Frequencies*

Domain	*Categories*	*Label*
ED 1. In-Laws' Influence on DIL as a Parent	I appreciate my relationship with in-laws because of their love and care for my children	General
	My in-laws' criticizing and imposing their ways of parenting were difficult experiences	General
	I appreciate that my in-laws are hands-off and respect the way I parent my children	Variant
	Overall, I don't think my in-laws affect the way I parent my child because I just ignore or dismiss their comments	Variant

**Note.* Total of n = 6. General (6 cases), Typical (4-5 cases), Variant (2-3 cases)

Diagram A. Organizational Chart of Themes