ABSTRACT

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING FILIAL PIETY’S INFLUENCE ON KOREAN FAMILIES LIVING IN THAILAND

by Hannah R. Stohry

Filial piety is a Confucian concept that structures traditional East Asian cultures and one’s role in the family and society. Family dynamics are evolving as a result of globalization and shift in care for elders as well as children-rearing by East Asian families should be at the forefront of research. This pilot study of Korean families living in Thailand uses qualitative ethnographic research method. Data collection techniques combine snowball sampling of 5 informants, in-depth interviews and participant observations. Data collection took place in Bangkok and Chiang Mai, Thailand.

This study analyzes the definition of filial piety, definition of dutiful child/son/daughter, practices by Koreans living in Thailand, and aspects of the Korean community in Thailand. Results of this comparative content analysis show differing definitions of filial piety and dutiful child/son/daughter, adapted practices, varying emphasis on celebration of traditional holidays, and surprising aspects of the Korean community living in Thailand.
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING FILIAL PIETY’S INFLUENCE ON KOREAN FAMILIES LIVING IN THAILAND

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“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering…”

–James 1:5-6a

With all sincerity and gratitude,

Hannah Ruth Stohry
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

This section introduces the rationale and justification of this research. It first introduces culture and Confucianism, continuing on to describe the importance of studying Confucian filial piety and Korean families living in Thailand. The general and specific objectives of this research are stated. Research questions are also listed, concluding with a section on the significance of this study.

1. Rationale and Justification

Culture is a complex intersection of a community of humans with similar beliefs and interactions with the environment. Anthropologists and ethnographers have attempted to encompass the complexities associated with culture but there is still no universally accepted definition. Whitehead (2005) defined culture by its many attributes with some of the following descriptions: “‘holistic’ flexible and non-constant”; “roles and routines that facilitate order”; “a shared phenomenon”; “highly influenced—but not determined by—environment”; and “implies values, or the preferred practices, social relationships, or ideas and sentiments of a human community.”

Confucianism is a philosophy that is a major part of the cultural lifestyle of East Asian countries. It is a moral and ethical guide that dictates societal and family structural dynamics. Traditional values such as filial piety and ritual practices like ancestor worship are maintained and are still an important part of harmonious life. Hierarchy and patriarchy are important social structures of Confucianism that indicate and maintain harmonious life.

In South Korea in particular, national holidays like 추석 (Chuseok or Lunar Harvest Thanksgiving) and 설날 (Seolnal or Lunar New Year) are still very important national holidays for
which the family gathers, makes traditional foods and pays respect to elders. *Chuseok* is a time of year where the family travels to their hometowns and make a group effort to honor their ancestors by cleaning the gravesites and offering food like *songpyeon* (traditional rice cakes) (Lim, 2004). *Seolnal* is also a family celebration with more traditional games and food. During both of these lunar holidays, many ancestral rites and rituals are performed whether cleaning ancestors’ graves or offering food and drink at the base of the grave.

For Koreans, this value system is very natural, necessary and apparent in everyday life. “Beliefs, creeds, symbols, and myths emerge as forms of mental content or conceptual blueprints: they direct, inspire, or promote activity, but they themselves are not activities. Ritual, like action will act out, express, or perform these conceptual orientations” (Bell, 1992, p. 19). Tradition is very important, especially during holidays, but as time goes by, those ideals become less important.

### 1.1 Why Study Confucian Filial Piety?

As soon as children are brought into this world, parents bestow love and nurturing care upon them. Confucianism iterates this obligatory care in important literature from China, Japan, and Korea. This care can be regarded as a reciprocal investment as parents often explain to their children that it must be compensated in the future. In the Confucian family, where it was traditionally common to live in a three-generation household, parents have learned this from previous generations and passed it on to their children. Children observed parents providing physical and financial care to their own parents and were oftentimes expected to participate in such care for grandparents. Specifically, much of the responsibility is passed on to the eldest son as he is expected to become a leader or the next head of the household; he is usually referred to as the dutiful child and is expected to carry on the traditions. Literature on the “dutiful child” uses masculine language as it is usually referring to the son and his filial duties. “Dutiful child,” however, is understood as encompassing both the son and daughter, but it is usually the son that is referred to with the daughter only mentioned when she carries specific duties. This indicates the patriarchal nature of Korean society.
It is the duty of those elders to teach the child to properly bow to (greet) the elders as well as use honorific language (use proper formal conjugations as well as traditionally-established honorable vocabulary) once the child is able to understand their place and master verbal language. If they are of age, they are punished or chided if they fail to use honorific language or greet an elder. It is expected that the eldest son will assume primary responsibility for care of parents in their old age. Co-residence with aging parents and extended family seems to be more common in Asian society than in Western countries (Chui, 2007); each country has minor variations of family make-up and assignment of roles. For example, in East Asia, the eldest son carries the responsibility of care for his aging parents and is even expected to provide housing. With less seniority, more is expected of his service toward his parents and grandparents, as well as toward his seniors and authority figures. He may be expected to study more and become even more educated.

The relationship between parent and child is a complex blend of interdependence. Parents invest in their children financially and emotionally, ensuring success in one’s career to reap later rewards of care. However, it is not just a win-win situation for the parents; although it seems as if the child is on the least beneficial end, they reap the satisfaction of being an honorable or dutiful child. Attaining this success requires pursuing the happiness of the parent as well as pleasing recognition from society. Behavior is modeled not only by parents in the home, but by citizens of society. The child observes from their parents and their teachers what behaviors are appropriate. Proverbs that explain what it means to be filially pious are taught in school, at home, and are enforced in society. For example, traditional songs also include parables, stories or tales of a filial son and rewards for the extent to which he goes in order to ensure his ailing parent receives nutrition.

Traditionally, the eldest son stays in his parents’ home and welcomes his wife, the daughter-in-law, into the family. Elders may expect financial assistance to buy trinkets or desired healthful medicines. Nowadays, it may be the opposite situation where the parents will move into the eldest son’s house providing that he is economically stable; it is becoming a double burden on children.

As mentioned, it was a child who assumes care for the elder parent to the exclusion of other family members, unless there are special circumstances under which the other elders also
live in the same household and receive the same care as the parents. The eldest son is entrusted with the responsibility to earn enough money to provide financial stability (e.g., food, education, care expenses) to the family. He must allot a certain amount for the care of and allowance to his parents. The eldest son is expected to uphold the traditional values and celebrate holidays. He must also provide the best for his children in order to uphold the family name. If the children are considered undutiful or unfilial, blame goes to the wife and then to the husband for his inability to ensure his wife is fulfilling her duties.

It is common for the daughter-in-law assume a secondary or unnoticed role yet carry full responsibility for the household, manage the planning of the traditional holidays, cook and clean, as well as provide physical care for the elders. On top of her household duties, she must massage the feet and shoulders of the elders; if elders are disabled, she must willingly bathe and feed them, for example. She is expected to find external resources that provide supplemental care if she is unable to fulfill all duties. Elders may also wish to receive massages or deference when it comes to mealtimes; an example of showing deference is giving the biggest leg of chicken or the most tender kimchi (pickled vegetables, usually cabbage) to the elders. The burden is especially heavy during traditional holidays when everyone gathers at the eldest son’s house. The elders expect the daughter-in-law to cook well enough to please them as well as make delicious traditional foods. It is expected that the daughter-in-law provide these services without being asked. It is described that the women bear the physical and emotional burden while the men bear the financial burden; this burden is even bigger for the family of the eldest son.

Traditionally, religion and culture are reciprocally influenced. Most religions have taught their followers to provide love toward others, to show gratitude and to create a better society. However, hierarchy is still established within society and in the family. This is obvious, given that the most evident hierarchy is the patriarchal form of society in those countries influenced by Confucianism. The elders (fathers) are considered wiser, with more life experience and are the established leaders of the younger, to pass on the knowledge gained. Filial piety is practiced toward those who have passed on from this life. Although it is not such a common practice anymore, traditionally, ancestors were remembered and honored during traditional holidays as well as on the death anniversary when the grave is cleaned, traditional foods are offered and incense burned.
Overall, this is the picture of past generations, and the current picture reflects one of change. Reflecting globalization and shifting trends, Confucian ideals are not as easily accepted by younger generations and with societal expectations, parents are pressured to place extra pressure on children to achieve a good and successful lifestyle. Thus, tradition becomes less important. Some say that Westernization is ruining tradition and that modernization is creating unwanted change, but regardless, change is coming from every direction. The younger generation is conflicted between being raised by a generation that was taught traditional values and a newer lifestyle of change.

1.2 Why Study Koreans Living in Thailand?

Korea has faced many historical difficulties including Japanese occupation from 1910 until 1945 and then the Korean War from 1950 until a ceasefire or armistice in 1953 (the war is technically at a standstill as no peace treaty has been reached) and successful partition of the country into North and South Korea along the 38th parallel. Focusing on South Korea (to be referred to as Korea throughout) in this paper, the country has been forced to revive itself and become a worthy contender in the global market. Despite facing great economic loss in the 1997 financial crisis, Korea is now a successful, top economic leader, and its influence is apparent in all parts of the world. Korea has made tremendous economic progress after the Korean War and even after the 1997 financial crisis.

Korean popular culture (K-pop) and the 한류웨이브 (Hanryu or Korean Cultural Wave) spread throughout Asian countries, eventually reaching Thailand. Its roots began with television, media, and radio in Korea in the late 1990s; momentum built nationally and then Korean television drama series was introduced in China. Not only was drama introduced, but Korean pop music began to introduce idol groups to the other East Asian countries. Once a select few celebrities became internationally recognized in China and Japan, there was no turning back for Korea’s influence spreading to other countries. Television and music are made popular by the Korean celebrities who inspire fashion trends and lifestyles. Plastic surgery, popular in Korea, was also made popular when worldwide fans began to emulate their idols.
Korea began to make changes by shifting interest from traditional, slower music to contemporary music that was breaking boundaries (Shim, 2002). In the ten years since Shim’s (2002) research and ideas about Korean popular culture’s hybridity were in 2002, Korea’s influence has grown greater and more powerful worldwide. The Korean Wave is a culture in and of itself, evolving to conform to different markets, appeal to various cultural audiences and deserves a second look as it seeks the largest market, the Western market. Wonkboonma (2009) studied Thai teenagers’ consumer behavior influenced by Korean culture and Korean entertainment. “‘Korea’ stands for fashionable and stylish in Asia, which is largely due to South Korea’s close ties with Western culture, while maintaining Asian values and themes” (p.2). “Unlike Japan and United States, which have a poor image in Asia due to strong anti-Japanese and anti-American sentiment throughout Asia, South Korea is seen much more positively among Asians. It acts as a filter for Western values, experts say, making them more palatable and consumable to Chinese and other Asians” (p. 8). Thailand has been emphasizing tourism, to appeal to foreigners, especially Koreans who are looking for vacation destinations. Even an ordinary observer may notice the flow of not just Europeans, but many Asian populations, especially in those tourist destinations like Phuket, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok.

What remains static despite the Korean Wave, major hardships and demographic change is the obvious but subtle maintenance and presence of the role of Confucianism in the Korean family. It is this philosophy that dictates Korean people’s actions, roles in the family, society, and interactions with leaders. However, the winds of change are rustling through families all over the world, brought on by changing demographics and family structure as a result of globalization. East Asian countries are no exception. ASEAN (Association of Southeast Nations) countries are in the top 10 ideal destinations for Korean tourists (ASEAN-Korean Centre, 2010). In 2010, the population for South Korea was estimated to be close to 49 million people (World Bank, 2012) and according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFTA, 2011), there are 17,500 Korean citizens living in Thailand alone (18th of all destination countries). Although the largest numbers of Koreans living overseas are in the United States, China, and Japan, large numbers of Koreans have immigrated to many other different countries. Koreans have immigrated for various reasons, but usually for better labor and business opportunities.
Kim (2002) explores the global Korean community, introducing ideas of what it means to be an overseas Korean as well as associated obstacles. Kim (2002) mentions identity crisis and cites the Confucian influence as the reason that overseas Koreans are viewed negatively by those still living in Korea; leaving one’s home is considered abandonment and the result is feelings of shame and abandonment. Korea as a country is homogenous with a group mentality that there are outsiders and insiders. Koreans may be expected to live as Koreans in Thailand rather than fully conforming to Thai lifestyle and maintain “Korean-ness.” Overseas Koreans should be recognized and empowered; efforts should be made to recognize the needs of the next generations growing up overseas. Most research available has involved other countries and there is relatively little information on Korean people living in Thailand.

South Koreans who move to Thailand are usually employed by large conglomerates investing in global marketing. Companies such as LG or Samsung have branches in many Southeast Asian countries. Bangkok, Thailand is known for being a hub for international trade and industry, especially among ASEAN countries. It holds much appeal to those willing to invest. Those working for companies may move their families with them. The living standards are decent with lower cost and an even more comfortable and relaxed lifestyle than the cutthroat, fast-paced, success-oriented Korea, especially Seoul. Petersen (1958) proposes a typology of migration. In the typology, there are different types of migration with varying migratory forces and relationship and one is classified into a group depending on those push/pull factors. Koreans have varying reasons for moving to Thailand. Some Koreans were pushed/pulled by economic factors, seeing a potential business market in Thailand (Phanseub, 2011). Some were pushed by their criminal record whereas others are pulled, seeing ministry potential.

In the twentieth century, Christianity was influential as it rapidly spread all through Korea century dismissing the traditional Confucian ancestor worship and shamanism. Christian missionary appeal exists in a very real way in Thailand. The Korean missionary movement grew exponentially beginning in the late 1970s and has stabilized since (Moon, 2008). Out of those missionaries sent to reach Asian countries, Korea has sent the largest number. Koreans have moved toward missionary outreach and many come to Thailand to minister not only to Thai people, but to those Korean people living in Thailand. Missionaries are a large part of the Korean community in Thailand. They establish ministries within big cities to evangelize to the larger
Buddhist community, or branch out to rural areas where humanitarian aid is given; the majority of Korean Protestant missionaries tend to plant churches (Moon, 2008). In this way, a community is created, one that branches out from the church; it is a key meeting place for those Koreans living in Thailand, even for those who are not Christians.

Filial piety practices, as demonstrated, have been altered as a considerable amount of time has passed since Koreans have immigrated; traditions and culture are weaker with second- and third-generations. There is an expectation within the family to raise children as genuine Koreans, ensuring that they speak Korean, even display the same level of respect toward elders and carry out the same traditions of honoring and respecting parents especially during the holidays. Adult children have adapted definitions of filial piety to the context of living in Thailand, especially toward their parents still living in Korea and in their childrearing practices. With infrequent visits to the home country, it is difficult to celebrate traditional holidays with extended family. These adult children may feel as though they should be ashamed toward their parents for not meeting their needs from overseas or at least express regret for not being able to participate with family. They may also feel irresponsible for not teaching their children the full reality or value of Korean traditions. The Korean community within Thailand is extensive and has even formed its own locus away from the family core in Korea. This study seeks to explore the unknowns of the Korean family living in Thailand.

2. Objectives

2.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of the Korean family living in Thailand. This includes learning the respondents’ definitions of filial piety, understanding their filial piety practices and what it means to be a dutiful son/child/daughter, the role of the Korean community in Thailand, and related experiences of Korean families living in Thailand.

2.2 Specific Objectives
1. Explore definitions of filial piety by Koreans living in Thailand
2. Explore definitions of a filially pious or dutiful child/son/daughter by Koreans living in Thailand
3. Explore adapted behaviors and rituals of filial piety in daily life of Korean families in Thailand
4. Identify some specific characteristics and functions of the structure of Korean community and the Korean family in Thailand

3. Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to use an ethnographic approach to examine contemporary conceptualizations and practices of filial piety among Korean families living in Thailand. Specific questions to be explored include: How do Koreans living in Thailand define filial piety? How is filial piety practiced by Korean families living in Thailand? How have Koreans adapted their family lives in Thailand? What does the Korean community look like in Thailand?

4. Significance of the Study

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach to explore and understand the adaptations of filial piety practice and examines its role in the lives of the Korean families living in Thailand. Currently, I have found no research that specifically examines the Korean family living in Thailand much less their filial piety practices. The results of this research contribute to gerontological, sociological, and anthropological research on filial piety, culture, migration and adaptation. Further research efforts may be made in an attempt to assess particular needs of this population as their numbers grow and provide ways to accommodate those needs.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This section introduces Confucianism and the individual’s role in the family and society. The theoretical framework describes Confucianism as ritual discourse followed by a supportive literature review. Filial piety is described as one aspect of Confucianism that includes duty and respect manifested in the form of rites and rituals.

1. Confucianism

China’s Confucius (551 to 479 BCE) and his followers created a philosophy of ethical and moral values called Confucianism that East Asian countries (China, Korea and Japan, for example) follow, even to this day. As an institution, Confucianism dictates relationships within the family, with religious leaders, authority figures, friends, etc. A person must know their role in the family and society, play their part, and expect the same from others.

Although Confucianism is an ideological value system or institution, it is often referred to as a religion. Confucianism, like every other religion, philosophy or value system, is influenced by other religions, philosophies and value systems (Park & Cho, 1995). Moon (1974) states “Confucianism is not a religion but a system of political and ethical philosophy advocating creation of a new, orderly and harmonious society” (p. 73). This research focuses on the basic understanding of filial piety practices common to Koreans. Confucianism here will only be identified as the principles (whether implicit or explicit) that guide family and social life; the history and arguments of origin as well as whether it is a religion is not the purpose of this research.
Confucian values can be observed in Korean hierarchical social relations, such as those between ruler and subject, parent and child, and husband and wife” (Park & Cho, 1995, p. 118). Interpersonal relationships and ethics are laid out by Moon (1974):

(1) Closeness or love between father and son, (2) justice between king and subject, (3) difference between husband and wife, (4) rank order between senior and junior (or between elder brother and younger brother), and (5) trust between friend and friend. (p. 73)

Hierarchy in the family and society is explicit and family is the locus around which everything else is centered and family ties are strong. The three obediences as dictated by traditional law require a woman to obey her father, husband and son, indicating the patriarchal nature of Korean society. Park and Cho (1995) scrutinize Confucianism’s role in the Korean family. They examine: the historical implications, demographic transition leading to change in family structure, and role changes for both sexes. Overall, they discuss change within Korea as well as Confucianism’s adaptation to such changes. Park & Cho (1995) state:

Despite these changes, the Confucian influence on the Korean family is still strong, as evidenced by the persistent deference by wives to their husband’s status and role, son preference, and strong kinship bonds. Whether parents and their eldest son maintain separate households or not, the relationship between parents and their children remains strong, being based on mutual reliance, and many grown children plan to live with their parents when the parents grow old and require help. The ethics and values espoused by the traditional Confucian influence of the past are changing slowly. (p. 132)

Ancestor worship began out of fear and love and respect for spiritual beings. It is referred to as a religious behavior that Koreans practice. Not much literature exists on ancestor worship, but Moon (1974) offers the most comprehensive research; he explores the origins and specific tasks involved with the worship. The ceremonies have evolved over the centuries, but some practices still remain and are evidenced during the two main lunar holidays in Korea. Probably the most prominent feature remaining is the food offering at the burial site as well as when honoring the deceased during holidays by making ceremonial and traditional foods. At the end of Moon’s (1974) paper, he states that although Korean religion has and is shifting toward
Christianity, he is confident that filial piety practices of ancestor worship will persist in a “‘Korean Christian’ way” (p. 85).

2. Filial Piety

Filial piety is an aspect of Confucianism, a concept that is difficult to simplify or accurately translate, especially for those in Western society who practice this concept unconsciously without realizing it. The most basic definition, that filial piety means “to respect one’s parents and to care for one’s parents,” is quite lacking but it is a beginning point toward basic understanding (Sung, 1995).

Filial piety can be defined conceptually and visually in the Chinese character “孝” (xiao4), sharing the same meaning in both Korean and Japanese, with the borrowed Chinese characters translating to Korean “효” (hyo). The Chinese character consists of two major characters joined with the top part “老” (lao2) representing the older man and the bottom part “子” (zi4) representing the son bearing the burden of carrying the father. Attaching a concrete definition to an abstract concept is difficult and limiting; it is so much more than just “respect for parents” or “respect for elders.” It encompasses many more concepts in one: deference, propriety, and reverence. To explain elder respect, though, Sung (2001) provides a comprehensive understanding of forms of elder respect in East Asia: care respect, viictual respect, gift respect, presentational respect, linguistic respect, spatial respect, celebrative respect, public respect, acquiescent respect, consultative respect, salutatory respect, precedential respect, funeral respect, and ancestor respect.

Sung (1990) summarizes Li Chi’s (1879) Sacred Books of the East, I & II definition of filial piety into “three important conditions…respecting parents, bringing no dishonor to parents, and taking good care of parents” (p. 611). He says “the practical meaning of reverence is the ideal of respect for parents and elders” and that “Koreans have traditionally taught that children must revere and obey their parents and that children should be responsible for their parents in their parents’ old age” (p. 611). The Filial Piety Prize, established in 1973, is offered to those Koreans who are nominated by locals or private organizations. The government seeks to attach
positive value to these individuals as role models and make examples of those representing the cultural values of filial piety while recognizing their valiant efforts to care for parents. Sung’s (1990) research identifies specifics of filial piety: care and services provided; motives and sacrifices for being filial; and physical, financial and social sacrifice endured for parents. Sung found that 80% of parents still lived with their children; his major finding is that “respect for parents emerged as the most outstanding motive for filial piety” (p. 615). Sung (1998) identified and explored the six outstanding actions from a set of ten categories of filial piety: showing respect, fulfilling responsibility, harmonizing family, making repayment, showing affection, and making sacrifice.

3. **Confucianism as Ritual Discourse**

Confucianism is a social institution, comprising a set ideas and values that have been established and maintained over time by various actors. These ideas and values of how to live a balanced life in harmony have been accepted by those in leadership positions. Those leaders model appropriate behaviors and set standards for what is right and what is wrong, what should be honored and what should not. Importance has been attached to the maintenance of harmony within society and in the family, rewarding good behaviors and punishing the bad. It is this institution that guides and dictates the practices of social harmony, explained through discourse and upheld by the people. Rituals are practiced, respecting elders not only by using honorific language but in behavior and upholding traditions. They have been established over time through repetition and habit. When the ritual conditions are met, and considered valid, they are established as rites, as is demonstrated in traditional ancestor worship. Bourdieu (2005) states:

> For ritual to function and operate it must first of all present itself and be perceived as legitimate, with stereotyped symbols serving precisely to show that the agent does not act in his own name and on his own authority, but in his capacity as a delegate. (p. 115)

Discourse on ritual:

Can be delineated in a series of three structural patterns. In the first, ritual as activity is differentiated from conceptual categories. In the second, ritual is the cultural medium by
which thoughts and acts (or concepts and dispositions, beliefs and behavior, etc.) are reintegrated. In the third, the activities of the object (the actors) and the concepts of the subject (the theorist) are also integrated by means of a discursive focus on the integrative function of ritual. (Bell, 1992, pp. 47-48)

Bell (1992) describes ritual as “particularly thoughtless action—routinized, habitual, obsessive, or mimetic—and therefore the purely formal, secondary, and mere physical expression of logically prior ideas” (p. 19). Being filially pious or dutiful is not necessarily questioned as it is practiced.

Ritual is a type of critical juncture wherein some pair of opposing social or cultural forces comes together. Examples include the ritual integration of belief and behavior, tradition and change, order and chaos, the individual and the group, subjectivity and objectivity, nature and culture, the real and the imaginative ideal. (Bell, 1992, p. 16)

Bell’s (1992) description of the construction of ritual also includes discussing Durkheim’s ritual as “the means by which individual perception and behavior are socially appropriated or condition…the necessary interaction between the collective representations of social life (as a type of mental or metamental category) and individual experience and behavior (as a category of activity)” (p. 20). Bourdieu (2005) states that social rituals are “authorized acts.” If ritual conditions are met, then it is recognized as a valid ritual.

For ritual to function and operate it must first of all present itself and be perceived as legitimate, with stereotyped symbols serving precisely to show that the agent does not act in his own name and on his own authority, but in his capacity as a delegate. (p. 115).

The institution brings together those people practicing ritually; it controls and manipulates conditions. However, over time, authority must be re-elected; leaders are variable and social conditions change as power is transferred (Bourdieu, 2005).

Ritual and society have a special relationship, a hierarchical one; rituals themselves have value placed upon them. “Ritual dynamics afford an experience of ‘order’ as well as the ‘fit’ between this taxonomic order and the real world of experience” (Bell, 1992, p. 104). Confucianism thrives and teaches harmony by ritual practice of the accepted beliefs. Bell (1992)
discusses Durkheim’s description of religion as beliefs or “representations of the sacred” and rites or “modes of action.” She discusses the importance of Durkheim’s recognition of the interaction between the ‘collective representations of social life’ and “individuals’ experiences and behaviors.”

Ritualization can be defined only as a ‘way of acting’ that makes distinctions like the foregoing ones by means of culturally and situationally relevant categories and nuances…an essential strategy of ritualization is how it clarifies or blurs the boundaries that identify it as a specific way of acting. (Bell, 1992, p. 205).

This institution of Confucianism has brought together the people who practice similar rites. People practice the valid behaviors; those behaviors are upheld over time by those in authority or the majority who controls and manipulates the conditions of these harmonic behaviors.

With Confucianism established as an institution, one may establish that the rituals or the dynamics of the culture are ancestor worship, filial piety practices, hierarchy in family and society, and traditional celebration during holidays. The role players are delineated by opposing forces evident in parent-child, teacher-student, senior-junior relationships within social institutions. In this study, Confucianism as ritual discourse is broadly applied to define its scope.

4. Confucianism and the Korean Family

Confucianism is a poignant and necessary part of the Korean person’s life. The traditionally patrilineal family placed emphasis on the parent-child relationship rather than between spouses and the harmony of the group rather than the individual member (Park & Cho, 1995). However, traditional values are slowly shifting to reflect modern expectations. Fewer and fewer parents have the expectation that their children should obey them and even release the reins of picking their child’s spouse; women’s value in society is also steadily rising.

Demographic change forces family structure to shift and adapt. Park and Cho (1995) observe a trend using National Statistics Office data from 1995 to 1990 to show an increasing number of men and women migrated to cities due to urbanization. Changes in family structure
are most evident after industrialization where one-person households increased and the percentage of multiple-generation households decreased. Life expectancy is increasing while family size is diminishing, leaving elders at risk of dying without as many family members’ support (Park & Cho, 1995). Park and Cho (1995) still believe that Confucian values are still powerful despite change, but that the conflict between traditional values and Western influence “is generating a great deal of tension and threatens social harmony and consensus in Korean society” (p. 132).

Global aging is a concern, especially for women who age with traditionally gendered cultural expectations. Women in Confucian societies play the role of gatekeeper and maintain the harmony and health of the family; the woman assumes a role of teaching younger women and reap the rewards of growing older (Mjelde-Mossey & Walz, 2006). Sung (1998) lists some “nationwide efforts” to preserve “the tradition of filial piety”: Respect for Elders Week; Senior Citizens’ Welfare Law; and Filial Responsibility Law. Overall, elder care is a concern as dependence upon children is an expectation in a world where children may no longer have the ability to assume care. Younger generations in Korea have emphasized efficiency, adaptability and productivity while elders are becoming more aware of the burden they have become (Han, 1996). There is an increase in elders dying alone, or being put into nursing homes; the shame is apparent when either of those happens and their children are still living. Such fears cause elders to even refuse care from children and to boost one’s own independence (Han, 1996).

There is a need for exploration of the Korean family living in Thailand. Not much is known about the Korean family living there much less their traditional family practices such as filial piety.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research methodology used in this study. First, I introduce the research design, followed by a few details about Bangkok. The sampling section covers the sample selection criteria and sampling methods. Next, I proceed to detail my position in the field. Data collection methods are followed by data processing. Data validity is supported by data triangulation, and ethical considerations are discussed as the conclusion of this chapter.

1. Research Design

The design for this research incorporates an exploratory qualitative case study approach that utilizes convenience sampling, ethnographic interview methodology and content analysis to explore the definition of filial piety, the definition of the dutiful child/son/daughter, filial piety practices and some aspects of the community of Korean people living in Thailand. This research is exploratory in nature. The purpose of qualitative research is to examine the personal experiences and unique realities with assigned meaning and values of the informants involved (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). This study is informed by various disciplinary perspectives such as anthropology, gerontology and sociology to explain behaviors relating to filial piety and the roles that people play in their families within society.

2. Research Site

The chosen research site is Bangkok (BKK), Thailand. Thailand has a total population at midyear of 64.6 million people with an estimated 7.8 million people living in BKK, the largest city in Thailand (Institute for Population and Social Research, 2013). BKK is a hub for international commerce and is a global mecca within one city.
While the site for locating informants was Bangkok, I did not limit observations to just BKK, but extended observations to Chiang Mai and other locations I have visited in Thailand. I have also extended observations to unofficial observations of Korean people I have observed while living extended periods of time in other countries. I focused on finding informants within the Bangkok city limits as it is the closest major city to Mahidol University in addition to having the largest Korean population in Thailand. Bangkok has a large Korean population and I know how to navigate transportation well enough in both cities to navigate to meet the informants in their own comfort zone. Although Chiang Mai has the sixth largest population of people in Thailand, it still has a large foreign population and probably consists of the next largest Korean population after Bangkok. Chiang Mai has a large missionary community and several observations were made when I made several visits.

Figure 1 shows the BTS (Bangkok Mass Transit System) Skytrain, Metro and Airport Rail Link. I include this figure to demonstrate the reaches of development in BKK. From the center of the metropolis of Bangkok, one may reach the most important destinations. Transportation is relatively easy by BTS, or MRT (Mass Rapid Transit or subway system), bus, taxi, motorbike, or tuk tuk (motorbike taxi). One may take a taxi or a tuk tuk (motorized bike transportation) to the nearest BTS station and access any major attraction, whether Dusit Zoo, Koreatown, Chinatown, Terminal 21 (shopping mall) or fine eateries that may catch the interest of those from any country. As in any major city, traffic during rush hours is hectic, but if one is familiar with the transportation system, it may shorten transportation time. It is not just in the major transportation hubs, but even just walking along the street that one can hear languages from various foreign countries. BKK is truly a cultural center, certainly the best place in Thailand to find Korean people.
3. Informants

3.1 Sample Selection

Five informants were interviewed for this study. I had several demographic characteristics that I was looking for in informants, mainly so that the sample was varied. Those characteristics did not result in restriction of my sample, but merely were a guide to selection. The sample criteria are as follows:

1. Age: legally adult age of 19 (Korean standards).
2. Gender: at least one male and at least one female.
3. Years Lived in Thailand: a range of years lived in Thailand (from 1 year to at least 10 years)
(5) Children: a few/none.
(6) Occupation: employed/unemployed.
(7) Ethnicity: Koreans who moved to Thailand from Korea. However, I included a informant who was half-Thai/half-Korean as she was raised by her Korean mother in Thailand.
(8) Religion: at least one Christian and at least one other non-Christian

Adult informants are most likely have a better understanding of filial piety and their duty as an adult to contribute not only to society but to their aging parents and begin their duty of training their children to do the same. I was mindful of gender in selection, to at least have one male and one female, as males and females have different expectations of what it means to be filially pious as they play different roles in the home and society. Years lived in Thailand were not of particular interest to me, but a range of years was desired, with at least one informant who was newer to the area and another who has lived in Thailand for a while.

It was also important that at least one informant be married and another be unmarried. Married individuals are obligated to be mindful of in-laws especially if one has children. A single person would have different characteristics and expectations placed on them as an unmarried person. Informants with and without children were desired. I sought informants from diverse career vocations. I was initially only looking for ethnic Koreans from Korea, but I included a half-Thai/half-Korean who was raised by her Korean mother in Thailand; her father is ethnically Chinese-Thai. I met her Korean mother who volunteered her for the study; it was known beforehand that her daughter was not solely ethnically Korean. I did not wish to exclude her information. Her perspective was anticipated to supplement as well as contrast responses from other informants. Additionally, since the sample size was small, she was not excluded. Two of the informants were a married couple; I interviewed them together and their responses were not altered because the interview was simultaneous.

3.2 Finding Informants
Snowball sampling (see Fig. 2) was the chosen method to locate informants. Even before I began this research, I had already established myself in the field by making ties with the Korean community, making Korean friends and observing Koreans in Thailand whether during travel across the country or locally on the Skytrain in BKK, etc. Limited time and resources prevented me from spending more time in the field to identify informants, so I relied on introduction by friends and the volunteers I met at church. As a result, I conducted 5 in-depth interviews and decided to create case studies. Using a case study approach allows for exploration of an individual in his/her environment and his/her unique circumstances (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). These case studies are a “pilot study” for future research. It is not my attempt to generalize about the whole of Korean population in Thailand but to analyze and report on the 5 cases gathered (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). All names have been changed to protect the identities of the informants.
3.3 Demographic Characteristics of Informants

Five informants were interviewed, two males and three females. Their basic characteristics are presented in Table 3.1 below.
Table 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Study Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Lived in Thailand</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chun-hyang</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Native Korean</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joon-young</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>Native Korean</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-il</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Half-Korean, Half-Thai/Chinese</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun-woo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Married to Young-ja</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Native Korean</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young-ja</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Married to Gun-woo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Native Korean</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Names have been changed to protect the identity of the informants.

3.3.1 Age

The age of the informants ranged from 32 to 57 years old with an average age of 49 years old. All are adults and of career-age.

3.3.2 Duration of Residence in Thailand

Time spent living in Thailand differed across informants. The length of time that informants had lived in Thailand ranged from 1-32 years and with a median and mode of 8 years.
3.3.3 Marital Status

Two informants (one male, one female) have never been married. The other three informants have been married for over twenty years, nearing thirty years. There is a married couple in the sample.

3.3.4 Children

The single informants do not have children. Chun-hyang has two boys, both graduated from college overseas; one is working overseas while the other is studying for his Ph.D overseas. Gun-woo and Young-ja have three children together. The eldest, a son, was born and raised in Korea; he spent at least a year of education and mandatory military service in Korea followed them to Thailand and is now currently finishing his college education at a Thai university. Their remaining two daughters, although born in Korea, are enrolled in elementary and junior high Thai boarding school.

3.3.5 Occupation

Chun-hyang is a homemaker, married to a businessman in Thailand. Mary is employed in Thailand. Joon-young is a businessman who alternates business in Thailand as well as in Myanmar. Gun-woo and Young-ja are both missionaries in Thailand.

3.3.6 Ethnic group

Four out of the five informants are native Koreans, born and raised in Korea. The other informant is half-Korean and half-Thai; she was born and raised by her Korean mother in Thailand while her father passed away when she was young.

3.3.7 Religion
Of the five informants, four are Christians and one is Buddhist.

4. My Position in the Field

As I had already made ties and formed relationships with the Korean community in Thailand, I used the built network to search for possible candidates. I sought parents of those students from the Mahidol University International College Korean Students’ Facebook page, but there were no responses. Additionally, I established ties with some Korean students at Mahidol University through those contacts, I had two visits with one friend’s family who are currently living in Thailand.

Through my contact at Mahidol University and inquiry about a Korean Christian church in BKK, I accompanied a young Korean adult to a 9AM church service. The location was chosen as it was known by the contact; it is one of the more easily accessible churches by Skytrain. The reason for choosing the 9AM service as opposed to the other services was not strategic, but earlier services do have fewer numbers of people in attendance and more opportunities to strike up conversations with church members. The first visit was merely cursory and not interactive.

After that first visit, I began attending the church by myself in an effort to form relationships with the church community and establish a friendly rapport as a stepping stone to find more informants. The church community consisted of deacons, or individuals as gatekeepers who welcomed me into the church’s community, who introduced me to fellow church members. They explained that I was doing research and was interested in getting to know the Korean church family a little better. That was my entrance into the field.

Those first few ushers/deacons who I met were my first gatekeepers and assistants in my gaining enough confidence to approach other Koreans. My first encounters were observed and eavesdropped by the other church members. They observed my introduction (in Korean) to the gatekeepers, my Korean language ability and friendly eye contact, they began to approach me. This was a signal of curiosity, trust and connection. Consistent participation in the church service as well as in the prayer group would be useful. I was introduced to people, even garnered curiosity and interest in my research, especially since the topic was described as regarding Confucian “孝” (hyo) or filial piety among Koreans.
The first visit was merely a reconnaissance mission to observe whether the church atmosphere would prove suitable for future visits. I only greeted the ushers and the pastor the first visit and did not offer an official introduction. I deemed it suitable enough to attend more times and after perusing the information bulletin, decided to attend the following Wednesday morning service. There would surely be fewer people as it was during the weekday and in the morning.

As expected, with myself included there were fewer than 20 people in attendance. After the service, I had only intended to make introductions and introduce the research another day. However, an opportunity presented itself and I met a few individuals. I then introduced myself as a graduate student at Mahidol University and said that I was interested becoming involved in the Korean community and wanting to find Korean people to participate in my research about filial piety. I described my research interests as simply as possible, mainly as an interest in “filial piety and the Korean family living in Thailand.”

I was asked to stay for lunch and prayer meeting, initially oblivious to both events usually occurring right after the Wednesday morning services (meals are after every Wednesday and Sunday service). I agreed because it seemed that any effort make myself available and present was a sure way to gain trust as well as open doors to meet people. Only a handful of people remained for lunch and the prayer meetings, but I still learned valuable details about the community. I introduced my research to a few people and told them that I was actively seeking informants for my research. Because I am also a Christian, I actively participated in singing and even offered my own prayer requests. At the end, I believed that I had established enough of a relationship because individuals offered their help in finding informants. I was encouraged to continue attending.

As I visited multiple times (at least 7 times) to build trust, some members began to recognize me and ask me more about myself. So, from the beginning, I had to establish myself as a confident woman capable of carrying on a conversation in Korean. If one does not establish (情, Jeong or love/spiritual connection/feeling) with Korean people, it is very difficult to establish an honest or open relationship, especially since I am relatively young and a student. Jeong is something that an individual must feel with another person (especially if unknown), according to Korean culture, before opening up. In order to do this, I spoke Korean confidently
(and well enough to impress most). However, usually, the deciding factor was that I introduce myself as half-Korean, specifically that my mother is Korean. Although I can hold my own with my Korean language abilities, the added bonus that takes me much farther was to establish myself as an “insider” because of my half-Korean ethnicity. I received more support for recruitment by revealing my ethnicity, but this did not influence interview responses in any way.

Each time I introduced my research, not only was I told that I was filially pious and that I was a *hyo-nyeo* or dutiful child for studying the concept, but that I should be dutiful to my parents. Many thanked me for taking such an interest in Korea, for loving Korea and for wanting to find out about being dutiful to parents. Many times Koreans told me it was comfortable talking to me, a foreigner, and that my Korean language was good. Typical conversation included my journey to Thailand and whether I could eat Korean food or kimchi. Most of the time *jeong* was felt they would tell me they feel a spiritual/emotional connection so they feel close to me. As I was the only Caucasian in attendance, I was easily spotted and everyone took an interest especially if I was talking to a Korean person in Korean.

It was not foreseen that my participation in the community or church activities influenced informant behavior or responses. If anything, participating enhanced the researcher-informant relationship and created a more comfortable atmosphere for the informant to share a more honest portrayal (Bernard, 1995) of a day in the life of a Korean person living in Thailand. Although not living in a Korean community, I, too, have a foreigner’s perspective on living in Thailand.

One interview was conducted in English completely. One interview was conducted in a mixture of both English and Korean. The other three informants spoke only Korean in the interviews. Interactions with other Koreans were either in English or Korean or both.

Duration of the major field work, including establishing my position and conducting interviews spanned a three-month time frame.

5. **Data Collection Methods**
Data collection includes interviews, observations and a research diary (Table 1). Open-ended in-depth semi-structured interviews with an ethnographic approach allows the researcher and informants to come to a mutual understanding of cultural values and meanings attached. “Ethnography is the systematic study of a particular cultural group or phenomenon” (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012, p. 163) and the “socio-cultural contexts and processes in which people live their lives, as well as the meaning systems which motivate them. Within an ethnographic paradigm, the actors and their corresponding actions, behaviors, and beliefs are examined within the cultural and societal context in which they take place” (Whitehead, 2004, p. 15). It focuses on “real people and their everyday activities in their natural environment” and not only does it describe, it is a “cultural interpretation” (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012, p. 173).

Using Mackenzie’s (1994) summary of research (Hilton, 1987; Lofland & Lofland, 1971; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), I have assumed a naturalistic approach. This approach assumes that: each person’s behavior is linked to their situation; that each person’s behavior alters during interaction with others; that each situation contains different perspectives; behavior and beliefs must be understood in a broader perspective; and that the “group or culture must be studied ‘as it is’” (Mackenzie, 1994, p. 774). Ethnography is an interpretive and holistic approach to understanding culture; it is a flexible learning process and not rigid (Whitehead, 2004). It is not a solely linear process, but one that takes steps, re-traces steps and uses many data perspectives to inform the research design (Mackenzie, 1994).

Although an interview script was prepared (Appendix), it was not necessary to strictly follow it each time as it was my goal to be flexible and informal and allow the informant’s responses to guide the interview’s direction. The interview script includes important main questions address issues related to the research questions and objectives. The questions are open-ended in nature with no right or wrong answer; follow-up questions were asked and if necessary, probes were utilized (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). As the interviews progressed, new themes emerged and after reflection and those topics were included in subsequent interviews.

The interviews were conducted in Korean or English or a mixture both. One interview was solely in English with a few Korean words interspersed. One interview was a mixture of Korean and English. Three interviews were solely in Korean. Because I speak conversational-level Korean, I could communicate easily with informants, at least during the initial introduction. This put the informants at ease. In addition, being able to speak Korean proved easier for
immersion into the field and during the interview process because the informants could speak in their native language or language of choice. For more difficult terminology, I asked for clarification as well as an explanation.

Observations include: attendance at a Korean children’s drama club performance; multiple church attendance; travel observation of Korean groups; meeting and interacting with Koreans in public areas; multiple Korean restaurant visits and conversations; and observation of Korean students attending international schools. A detailed research diary was kept of my participation, the interviews and the observations.
Table 3.1 Data Collection Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Target Groups</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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6. Data Processing & Analysis

Using a digital recorder, I recorded interviews; I also took field notes and kept a research diary. I used constant comparative content analysis approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze data, taking detailed notes during the interview and in reflection directly after the completion of the interview. Next, I organized, transcribed and translated all interviews. Because the interviews were conducted in Korean and English or a mixture, I kept a copy of the translation next to the
original transcript per person’s (researcher and informant) question/response as a reference. It was my intent to have immediate reference from English to Korean to remember the origin of meaning during analysis. Each file includes demographic information and the family story of each informant although identifying factors have been altered to maintain anonymity of each informant.

Coding consisted of numbers assigned to themes and sub-themes as they emerged from the transcripts. Identifying markers were placed on words that were repeated as well as concepts that were emphasized by informants. Observations merely support emerging and existing data. Themes, sub-themes, patterns, concepts or similar words among informants were identified. As I only had 5 cases, I did not use any software, but analyzed by hand.

7. **Validity of Data**

Information regarding filial piety, practices in Thailand, and attitudes came not only from the informants themselves, but from family members (conversations and participant observation), and my many other observations, conversations and interactions.

Multiple data collections methods were used, specifically in-depth interviews and participant observations. I depended upon triangulation for valid definition, meaning and understanding. In order to establish validity, I rely on theoretical framework to support findings, transparent field evidence, and the research process. Triangulation within each individual case is represented by matching my observations with informants’ responses and behaviors. Not only is validity tested within the case, but between and among the individual cases, testing one resource against another using field note documentation of informant observation.

8. **Ethical Consideration**

It is critical for research to be conducted in a manner that is ethical by first recognizing the nature of the study and understanding the informants in their context. Following introduction of my research to the informants, confidentiality was explained as the protection of information passed between the researcher and informant with the understanding that information presented
is confidential and private. I changed the names and any details of the informants when interview details were recorded so that their identities are protected (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). I made every effort to follow the ethical standards of scientific research by first obtaining Mahidol University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this research.

Upon explaining the nature of the study, I emphasized the freedom of the informant to decline to answer any question or completely stop the interview at any time. I also explained that interview topics should not cause discomfort; the topic of filial piety is not relatively sensitive. It was possible that the informants might feel sadness or shame for not being able to provide physical care for or dutifully respect one’s parents while living so far away. However, I was well-equipped to deal with any emotional reaction as I have had interview experience for previous graduate assistant work.

The informants chose the location, time of the interview, as well as the information they chose to impart. Answers were not forced from the informants, but encouraged. To establish a comfortable atmosphere and rapport with the informants, I made it very clear that their identity would be confidential. Identifying factors and names were changed and there are no identifiers that can be linked back to the informant. I emphasized that although interviews were tape-recorded, they would remain in my possession. I prepared written consent documents explaining the study, however, all gave verbal consent to participate. I distributed the consent form to three of the informants who wished to keep it because it explained the nature of the study, my identity as the researcher, contact information, any foreseen risks and benefits of the study and the assurance that one may withdraw from the study at any time. The other two did not express interest in the consent form with my contact information. Verbal consent was obtained from all five informants. No informants expressed discomfort during the interview process. Furthermore, informants were not compensated for their participation in the research.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of this research, beginning with introduction of the field site and characteristics of the study informants. The definition of filial piety is discussed in its connection to the Korean family living in Thailand. Discussion of celebration of Korean lunar holidays is followed by descriptions of the Korean community living in Thailand. Findings illuminate the Thai context for Koreans and this chapter is concluded by case-specific findings.

1. Entering the Field

Informants were located in Bangkok (BKK), the capital of Thailand, and several observations took place in Chiang Mai. BKK is a large metropolitan city with a total population of 7.8 million people (IPSR, 2013) compared to an estimated national population of 64.6 million people (IPSR, 2012).

The two main cities that Koreans live in are Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The only respondents that offered information on the differences between Bangkok and Chiang Mai were the couple that had once lived in Chiang Mai but is currently residing in Bangkok. The Korean communities are very different, reflected by the different socio-cultural-political environments. Bangkok is a metropolitan city while Chiang Mai is a more historical location with a more artistic vibe. The Korean community in BKK, in my observation, is more business-oriented while Chiang Mai seems to have more missionaries. Gun-woo and Young-ja admit that Chiang Mai is more family-friendly with the Korean community more tight-knit and living closer together, even celebrating traditional Korean holidays as a community. The downside, according to the informants, is that the children are sent to either of the two of the main international schools where the families emphasize English only in school and only in the home.

In my observation, both BKK’s and Chiang Mai’s Korean communities provide activities for their children. While I was in Chiang Mai, I directly observed Korean adolescents speaking
English with their peers at a Korean event. However, when adults/elders approached, they immediately spoke in Korean. Although the children were speaking in conversational Korean with their parents, this does not overtly reflect the depth of their language abilities or abilities to speak at a level that would equal their peers in Korea. The respondents worry about this generation of Koreans being unable to speak Korean or relate to their ethnic culture. This couple worries because they highly emphasize remembering where they came from and Korean-ness.

Gun-woo: “When you look at it, it means if they only make them speak English and don’t make them speak Korean, they will forget Korea. When we were in Chiang Mai, there was a neighborhood with all the Korean people, their children would speak English. When you tell their children that when they’re with Korean people speaking Korean is best, the parents don’t really like that. They don’t speak Korean—that they speak English well, it seems to be a situation where they’re forgetting Korea. We do (holidays) it together with our children so that we don’t forget Korean traditional culture. We gathered with the neighborhood missionaries and had a feast.” (57, male, married, missionary)

Young-ja: “We had the kids come and the mothers made vegetable pancakes and the kids made the rice cakes. That’s how we did it…Chiang Mai is more severe. The mothers there really don’t let their children use Korean. But, since coming down here (BKK), the parents don’t seem to be as severe. But, I don’t know. I don’t know what they specially do relating to Korea for their household, but on observation, they don’t seem to be pay attention. Because we’re living overseas and Koreans like to speak English. They’re forgetting Korea, it’s becoming like this, like Korean Moms like speaking English better. There are not that many. But, they live together. In BKK, they live far apart. In CM, they live together. So, they look better at first glance.” (55, female, married, missionary)

An American friend working as a school teacher describes Chiang Mai’s Korean community as having “3 or 4 major Korean churches. All are pretty large and active groups, with many opportunities for involvement. There are also a few dormitories in Chiang Mai for the various mission organizations.” I also observed that one of the international schools in Chiang Mai offers Korean language classes in addition to Thai language classes for their students. That international school also mediates language difficulties by asking a parent to act as a translator when one parent cannot understand the teacher’s suggestions for the student. Korean parents also send kimchi (pickled vegetables, usually cabbage) common for most Korean parents as an offering for the teachers. I observed that international school teachers with previous experience teaching in Korea receive slightly more attention from Korean parents.

2. Korean Families in Thailand and Filial Piety
This section outlines the respondents’ definitions of filial piety, the filial child, and being filially pious. Themes that emerged from these definitions supplement the definitions given by the respondents.

2.1 Definition of 효, 효도 or Filial Piety

Native Koreans are familiar with Confucian teachings and are all aware of the idea of filial piety. Each respondent defined 효 (hyo), filial piety or 효도 (hyo-do), the way to being filially pious, differently. I have used 효 and 효도 interchangeably.

2.1.1 Shared Household

Interdependence is not uncommon in East Asian families. All but one informant are living separate from their parents who either live in Korea or are deceased. One informant lives with her mother in BKK; her parents moved to Thailand where she was born and raised.

One informant explained that “living with parents” was a “natural concept” of filial piety even before Confucianism was introduced to the Korean peninsula. He then explains a little bit of the history of Confucianism and its introduction to traditional Korean society; this respondent felt it was important to separate Confucianism from filial piety’s pre-existence in Korea. Filial piety is more complicated than solely understanding it in the context of Confucianism although Confucianism was instrumental in shaping Korean culture.

Joon-young: “Confucianism emphasizes filial piety. But, the tradition of filial piety is much longer, further than the Confucianism. It (filial piety) started more than 2000 years ago. Much longer than the history of Confucianism. Confucianism, you see, came to our country from China. It was about the years 600 to 700 that filial piety was an important part of the Three Kingdoms…it’s been over 6000 years of history. So, that filial piety is a very natural concept to Koreans…you definitely had to be filially pious. Children should live with their parents is what it was. After that, Confucianism came in. So, Korean people easily understood Confucianism. Filial piety wasn’t there and Confucianism came in and you should respect your parents, that’s not it. They were already living with their parents and then Confucianism came in.” (47, male, single, businessman)

2.1.2 Emotional Support
Emotional support emerged as a dimension of the definition of filial piety. In response to the direct question of how filial piety is defined, some respondents spoke of putting their parents’ 마음 (mah-eum or translated as “heart/mind”) at ease with respect to their own relationship with parents. Gun-woo says “I think that filial piety is putting older adults’/parents’ minds at ease. That’s what I think, putting your older adults’/parents’/elders’ minds at ease, in my opinion.” His wife Young-ja agreed with him, saying “I think it’s making them comfortable, the way the people want it, doing that, making them comfortable.”

2.1.3 Obedience to Parents

Filial piety is exhibited through obedience to parents; it is the foundation of maintaining parents’ happiness. Material support and economic safety emerged as concrete actions of love and support for parents, actions of obedience to parental guidance. Chun-hyang was specifically thinking of filial piety in terms of specific behaviors her children should exhibit in order to have a successful life.

Chun-hyang: “Filial piety in Korea, being filially pious (dutiful) toward your parents is studying well, getting into a good college and if you do all that, money should follow. That’s the way to be filially pious toward your parents.” (54, female, married, housewife)

Physical actions to better oneself such as working hard, getting a good education and making money are actions of obedience which makes parents happy.

2.2 Description of 효자 or 효녀, “Dutiful Child,” “Dutiful Son” or “Dutiful Daughter”

In the Korean language, filial piety is a concrete term for an abstract concept. However, there is a specific term for a child or person who is “filially pious” or “dutiful” (I use the terms interchangeably throughout the document). It is a term called 효자 (hyo-ja) which literally means “dutiful child” or “dutiful person” that refers to both males and females, but it may also be male-specific referring to a “dutiful boy” or “dutiful son.” In addition, there is a female-specific word 효녀 (hyo-nyeo) which means “dutiful girl” or “dutiful daughter.” All respondents had different
responses, but all included these actions: making parents comfortable; providing care and services; providing allowance; being healthy; caring for oneself and one’s family; and making one’s parents proud. Consistent with literature, the oldest son is expected to carry more responsibility than the rest of the children and sons and daughters carry different roles. It is apparent that there are different children that parents expect: the available child, the traditionally obedient child; and the educated child.

2.2.1 Available Child

Traditionally, in Korea, the child was available, usually living with or in close proximity to the parents. Physical proximity provides emotional support. However, living overseas makes it difficult for the child to be physically near their parents. As a substitute for their absence, communication and additional emotional support is emphasized.

Joon-young: “A son who is filial/dutiful…it depends on the circumstances and the time, places, so, if we’re thinking about modern societies, a good child, a good son, may spend a lot of times to talk with his parents. Not only spending money or something like that. So, many parents are not so satisfied with their children because of the lack of communication. So, they cannot have empathy, you know? The emotional interchanging. So, I, think a good first thing is he needs is to talk much, spend much time with his parents.” (47, male, single, businessman)

2.2.2 Traditionally Obedient Child

The following response sounds more like it comes from a textbook or descriptions in research that use “love,” “obedience,” “respect,” and “honoring your parents.” That obedience usually encompasses following parents’ guidance to maintain harmony within their circle as well as within your own. The obedience is mutually understood by parents and children.

Mae-il: “To put it in simple words, I guess it would mean someone loves and obeys, you know, being obedient to their parents. Not because of the role they have to play. They’re feeling it, they know they have to be obedient or take care of their parents. I don’t know. It’s, I think it’s conscious, you know, something like you know in your mind. Not everybody could be a 효녀 (hyo-nyeo) or 효자 (hyo-ja)… to be obedient. I think that’s one of the key words, to be obedient. And, also to respect and to take care of their parents.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)
According to the following couple’s responses, a dutiful child means treating/serving one’s parents well along with making them comfortable with all family members living harmoniously. Parents’ happiness ensures child’s happiness and vice versa. It is interdependent. Service and care to parents is a requirement for being a dutiful child.

Gun-woo: “A son who listens well to his parents is called ‘dutiful son’ and a daughter who listens well to her parents is called ‘dutiful daughter.’ So, hyo-ja is for the son and if you’re talking about a hyo-nyeo, it’s for a daughter. So, if they’re grown and you call them “dutiful child” and they look after their parents well and serve them well and make them comfortable, that’s what you call that son or daughter, a ‘dutiful son’ or ‘dutiful daughter’…that’s filial piety. Even though being filially pious toward your parents is giving allowance to your parents who are still living and taking them to nice places, it’s making your parents’ minds comfortable and not being sick and do your thing well. Also, if you have a family, I think living well is being filially pious. It’s important to put your parents’ mind at ease. In the Christian realm, filial piety is doing well in front of your parents, their place, if you do it like that, it’s good.” (57, male, married, missionary)

Young-ja: “Also, although doing good to your parents is called ‘dutiful son’ and ‘dutiful daughter,’” if you’re able to live well on your own and studying diligently and if you get a job, go to work and working diligently, and if you happen to have a family, a loving couple and loving your children and making your family happy. That’s what a dutiful child is.” (55, female, married, missionary)

Her husband agrees, “That’s filial piety.” To put parents’ hearts/minds at ease, the following actions of a dutiful child as inferred by the respondents include giving allowance, working hard, taking parents to different places, becoming successful, and insurance of one’s own well-being.

2.2.3 Educated Child

Education in Korea is at the forefront of all parents’ minds. There is relatively no upward mobility unless one’s family is well-established in society, so there is significant pressure to attain high positions. There exists something called 재벌 (chaebol) or plutocracy. For example, if one’s family owns a large corporate company, it is almost guaranteed that one will inherit a position. If one is not related, then one must rely on education and other accomplishments to compete with hundreds of other candidates for a slight opportunity to obtain a position. Parents invest their resources and sacrifice for the sake of their children’s education so that they may have a better life. Emphasis is placed on studying overseas, especially in America or other
Western countries. This is a Korean reality, one that follows the family overseas, even to Thailand. Parents who wish for their children to attend university in Korea must work harder with their children in Thailand to reach the standards of Korean education. These ideas were explicitly and implicitly expressed by respondents as well as among Koreans living in Thailand.

Chun-hyang says, “To me, a ‘dutiful son’ and a ‘dutiful daughter is without any trouble, any accidents, and healthy. I’m like that. Education is a given, going to a good university. That’s the closest to filial piety I think.”

2.2.4 Healthy Child

It became obvious for Chunhyang that her definition of filial piety had adapted when she visited Korea and realized that her expectations of her children differed from the expectations her friends had for their children. Her friends attribute it to the fact that her children have recently completed their education and that she has completed raising her children. She also agrees that education is an important part of being dutiful, but that she has changed her opinion that health is just as important.

Chunhyang: “Right now, we educate, after that, health…for me, health. Right now in my opinion, health is very important. If you’re healthy, wherever you go…I’m different than the people living in Korea. If you could say the best thing, the best way to be a dutiful child is studying well, for results in Korea, going to a good university. That’s the closest to filial piety I think. I’ve changed now, to my children’s health. When it came out that I said my children’s health to my friends (in Korea), they said it’s because I’ve already gone/came through it. Because I’ve already been through it, they’ve both graduated from college. That’s why ‘my children’s health’ is coming out. I’ve already experienced it.”

(54, female, married, housewife)

2.3 Description of 효도하다, Being Filially Pious or Dutiful/Respectful

In the Korean language, filial piety, 효도 (hyo-do), is a concrete term meaning the way/road to being filially pious. There is an action verb form of filial piety called 효도하다 (hyo-do ha-da), which literally translated means “being filially pious” or “being dutiful/respectful.”
Gun-woo’s definition of “being dutiful” parallels his definition of filial piety. “Being dutiful, the first thing is putting their minds at ease, their minds at ease.” Once again, happiness of parents means that happiness of children and harmony is maintained. When asked to describe behaviors of being dutiful, his wife, Young-ja, inserts “Being considerate and thinking of the adults before yourself, before myself.” The right thing to do, according to parents, is to be selfless, to put one’s parents’ needs above one’s own. Gun-woo describes it as being “difficult, being dutiful. It’s difficult.”

2.4 Being Unfilial or Undutiful

The concept of filial piety was described as was what it means to be a filial or dutiful child, but being unfilial or undutiful was also mentioned specifically or indirectly by some of the respondents. It was mentioned that parents have expectations of their children but that children do not always live up to those expectations and in turn, is considered undutiful or unfilial. It may even become a source of conflict.

Chun-hyang: “But, now, the problem with parents, Korean parents is that now they invest and make sacrifices. They do that and to their kids, ‘Later, I will go and rely on my children, rely and lean on them.’ And if it doesn’t go according to plan, he’s labeled ‘unfilial child’ and they fight, he’s called ‘undutiful child,’ one who’s not filial/dutiful.” (54, female, married, housewife)

Communication is a source of conflict but also a method of resolution for parent-child disagreements. Joon-young says, “So, many parents are not so satisfied with their children because of the lack of communication.”

Filial piety is not only taught within the home and in the classroom. Additionally, it is emphasized and maintained in society. Individuals who seem to be disrespectful by social standards are perceived as bad people.

Joon-young: “Now, from elementary school, during Disciplined Life Class, they teach that you should be dutiful/filially pious; they teach how to be dutiful/respectful to elders. It’s laid down as a base/foundation now from public positions that you should be dutiful/respectful. If you don’t, you’re a bad person. So, naturally, those thoughts that you should be dutiful are increasingly reinforced.” (47, male, single, businessman)
Parents’ well-being is compromised when a child is not dutiful. Being dutiful encompasses working hard and studying hard. If a child does not do those things, they are not dutiful and, in turn, disappoint their parents.

Young-ja: “You see, if you don’t live well and (you) fight and don’t live well, your mother’s heart hurts. So, that’s not filial piety. If you really don’t study well, it’s not really good. Your mother’s heart is uncomfortable. Also, if you’re not healthy, your mother’s heart is not good. Filial piety is studying a little, being healthy, and working hard if you get a job.” (55, female, married, missionary)

Gun-woo agrees with his wife that if one causes their mother heartache that it is not filial piety. Young-ja goes on to say “You see, if you don’t live well and (you) fight and don’t live well, your mother’s heart hurts. So, that’s not filial piety.” He agrees again that making your parents unhappy is “the opposite of filial piety.”

2.5 How Filial Piety is Learned

Is behavior innate or learned? It is the classic nature versus nurture argument; however, cultural ideals may be argued as being both. Behaviors are taught, learned and modeled, from anyone we observe, but most are learned from parents or those role models in our lives. Is filial piety innate or is it learned? Two respondents say that the elders teach the children. Young-ja also mentions financial assistance in one phrase.

Gun-woo: “In the morning, when you wake up, you greet your parents with ‘Did you sleep well?’ ‘Are you comfortable?’ Greeting them like that. When you’re young, they tell you when you get up, that the culture is that the requests are first made for Father, Mother, Grandmother, and Grandfather. You should greet like this ‘Did you sleep well’ or ‘Is your mind and body comfortable?’ They ask you to ask like this, they teach you, they teach you like that.” (57, male, married, missionary)

Young-ja: “They tell you. The adults tell you. They do it like that and then later, if they are older and you live in one house, you help them with meals and take them places. Doing like that is what you call filial piety, and giving allowance.” (55, female, married, missionary)

Joon-young believes that filial piety is reinforced in society, even in the educational system starting at early ages. Korean society enforces moral and ethical behavior, attaching value to being dutiful. Leaders or those in higher positions are to be examples for the rest of society. He believes filial piety is a “natural concept.”
Joon-young: “Oh, if you look at it this way, I think the fact that you have to be dutiful/filially pious is a natural concept. Korea, by default, all Korean people hold this belief. But, all of that...all various instances because of the environment now, that thought is becoming twisting/turning. First, all have the thought to be dutiful to their parents. Secondly, there exists special morality in our country’s education. From elementary school now, there’s something like Life Discipline. Within various curriculum there’s Life Discipline. Now, from elementary school, during Life Discipline class, they teach that you should be dutiful/filially pious; they teach how to be dutiful/respectful to elders. It’s laid down as a base/foundation now from public positions that you should be dutiful/respectful. If you don’t, you’re a bad person. So, naturally, those thoughts that you should be dutiful are increasingly reinforced. The very best one, showing what parents do...how you know how a home should be, in that relationship, you see certain filial piety/dutifulness appear. It becomes naturally.” (47, male, single, businessman)

Mae-il, who was raised by her Korean mother in Thailand, says that her mother taught her and her brother. One learns it but does not necessarily need to maintain consciousness of it.

Mae-il: “I think I learned about this from my Mom, like, my Mom taught us to, about the concept. It’s not something that you know, you have to be aware or stay conscious about it 24-7. But, I think it’s how you’re raised or how you’re brought up. And then, as a girl, as a daughter, the eldest in the family, I think I was taught to be nice, to be obedient, to do proper things, to be, you know well-mannered, you know, so on so forth.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)

Chun-hyang stressed multiple times that the children “watch and learn,” that they observe parent’s behaviors. Three of the respondents frequently stressed the words “environment” or “atmosphere” as being important for how and what children learn, especially in Thailand.

I also observe that it is quite common to mention filial piety within popular songs about parent-child relationships and even on television shows, rewarding those that are dutiful to their parents. Each of the several times I attended the Korean church, the pastor mentioned filial piety or the filial child from the pulpit. He used the phrase “최고의 효도” when asking “What’s the best thing you can give your children?” with the answer that they can give Christ’s love and good instruction. He referred to filial piety as the duty of being a good Christian, to take good care of parents and family. Other ways to be dutiful were mentioned in reference to: Korean sporting events; nationalism; being unified together in Thailand; prayer for their home country; the next generations; and the importance of maintenance of Korean identity. The motive for mentioning filial piety usually alludes to happiness and harmony.
2.6 The Role of Living Overseas in Adaptation of Filial Piety Practices

Moving to a new country means changing one’s life in many different ways. Filial piety practices have obviously been adapted in a new country; less frequent physical interaction is one major example of such adaptation. Joon-young says “Maybe I seek out my parents less often than when I was in Korea; I have less time.” He works hard in his business, traveling between Myanmar and Thailand frequently. It has only been one year since he established himself in Thailand.

In addition to buying gifts, it is becoming more and more common in Korea to give an allowance, or sum of money, to one’s parents as a way of taking care of parents. This is a rewarding option to support from afar, especially if one has siblings still living in Korea who are able to manage physical care. Joon-young, the fourth out of five children, says “Each brothers send some money to his eldest brother to support my parents.” Gun-woo supports this new trend of sending financial support, especially since the parents have the power to choose how the money is spent.

Gunwoo: “Parents nowadays, they really enjoy it if their children give them allowance. Rather than items, parents like allowance because they can buy what they want to wear, to eat, those kinds of things. Rather than buying it for them, they like it when you give them an allowance. That’s contentment. It’s a good method.” (57, male, married, missionary)

Adaptation became more apparent in Korea when it started to become more common that children were living away from families. Remittances are becoming more common as a result of displaced physical location. Now, this is also apparent in a trend for those children living away overseas. Gun-woo, who happens to be the eldest son says that “Yes, we are in Thailand…we call them and every so many months, we give allowance to the bank, to our parents’ bank. We send money.” His wife adds, “In their bankbook.” For some, this is the best one can do, all that is possible. It is not ideal, but is the best they are capable of in their situation.

Gun-woo: “I try to call often and send regards. We often and even though we couldn’t go often, during feasts, we would go and greet and prepare gifts, give some allowance…like that and minister well. Even though we are apologetic in front of our parents, because they’re still alive, we went (to Korea) and came back this time (summer 2012)…even though we can’t bring them and live together, go seek them out every so often, greet them and pay them proper attention, it’s okay.” (57, male, married, missionary)
3. How Major Korean Holidays are Celebrated by Korean Families Living in Thailand

It is natural and common to celebrate national holidays, especially while away from one’s native country. It is an opportunity to unite with others, remember family, or it may just be a way to express one’s own identity. South Korea celebrates lunar holidays as do most East Asian countries.

All of the respondents celebrate 추석 and 설날 or Chuseok and Seolnal (Moon Festival and Lunar New Year), the two biggest national lunar holidays in Korea. Although Western holidays such as Christmas are also common, those lunar two holidays are still a reason to create heavy traffic as people head to their hometowns on the tiny peninsula of Korea. The importance that respondents placed on those holidays differed as well as did the practices; none of the respondents travel all the way to Korea to celebrate.

3.1 Passive Celebration of Holidays

Mae-il says that they celebrate Christmas as they are a Christian family and when asked about New Year’s (Western), she said “Not really. Well, occasionally, yes, but it’s not something that we do like every year or something that we have to do or we have to have a family gathering.” This is truly a holiday for the younger generations. It seems as if holidays are not as important as in Korea while living in Thailand. Her mother would make efforts to have the basics such as the rice cakes or seaweed soup and attend Korean church functions. It seems that her mother is involved by doing those activities and actively participating in church. Mae-il, however, does not seem to be as active in the Korean community, at least not as much as her mother.

Mae-il: “My mother would, you know make something, cook something, like you know according to the festivals. Like, for example, if there’s Chuseok, I think she would buy some moon cakes or something like that. Or like, you know, for example, for Korean
New Year, people should have seaweed soup. We actually should make that.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)

3.2 Adapted Celebration of Holidays

As should be noted from Mae-il’s mother’s example, holidays have been adapted, whether due to occupation, importance or lack of time. Those who migrate to Thailand for business seem to have little time to fully devote themselves to all Korean traditions. During this time, it is common to call home to communicate with family, especially being sure to inquire about parents’ health. During the holidays, Joon-young phones his parents and tries to keep in touch with his younger sister who also lives abroad. He acts as a go-between and updates his family on his sister’s activities and the most important matters during the big holidays. He has had to assume an active role, a mediator within his own family even though he is living overseas. He has also assumed a voluntary role to update sister on their father’s health conditions.

Joon-young: “Because I have my own company. I have my own company, so there is not the holiday, so such a, what can I say, special days, just off-duties, like that. But, as you may know, there are some big holidays we celebrate in Korea, like New Year’s Day or Fall Year’s Day…Two Asia holidays. At that time, if I am out of Korea, I make a phone call to parents, keep talking about his condition and what I am doing now and my family. Three of my brothers have their own families, so it has some stories. And, uh, my younger sister lives in Australia, Sydney, and she doesn’t have much time to look with those peoples in Korea, so, sometimes I call my sister and I tell my father about what she is doing, something like that.” (47, male, single, businessman)

Joon-young may not actively celebrate or make the traditional dishes for himself. However, in turn, he compensates for this by at least communicating with his family. He is currently single and busy with business in Thailand and Myanmar. Perhaps if he had a family, celebration may a little different.

3.3 Active Celebration of Traditional Holidays

Some families actively celebrate the holidays as close to the traditions as possible. Some families even go above and beyond to actively teach their children about Korean traditions, the cultural meanings, and what it means to be Korean. The holidays are a great teaching opportunity
for parents with their children. Some neighborhoods in Chiang Mai (rather than BKK) seem to be more close-knit and conducive to celebrating as a Korean community in Thailand.

Young-ja: “During Chuseok and New Year’s, I make Korean food. I make rice cakes and dumplings with my children. But, since I don’t do it well, and other Moms don’t do it well, when we were in Chiang Mai, we called the Korean people in the neighborhood to our house. So, we made rice cakes and pancakes with our children. We would make that also and eat together, toss pennies and play badminton shuttlecock. We had the kids come and the mothers made vegetable pancakes and the kids made the rice cakes. That’s how we did it. We make sure to do it in our house. Our kids definitely do it. Also, we don’t send our kids to school on Harvest Moon Festival. We don’t send them to school. We don’t send them to school on New Year’s either. So, we make food together and do the bow. We wear hanbok (Korean traditional clothes).” (55, female, married, missionary)

Gun-woo: “We do it together with our children so that we don’t forget Korean traditional culture. We gathered with the neighborhood missionaries and had a feast. We tell them it’s so we don’t forget Korea and traditions.” (57, male, married, missionary)

The three respondents who have children actively celebrate the traditional Korean holidays and teach their children about tradition and rituals.

3.4 Buddhist Celebration

Korean Christians still celebrate the traditional holidays; however, they do not usually set out the ancestor’s pictures on the ancestral table or perform any ritual tradition regarding the spiritual element of honoring the deceased ancestors. However, most Buddhists still honor this, albeit with adaptation, even from afar. Chun-hyang puts out the ancestral tribute table in Thailand even though she is the second eldest son’s wife and it is not her place to do so. However, she feels that it is not disrespectful as long as she does not do the traditional bow. She feels bad that they cannot gather as a whole family to pay respects to the family head, the deceased grandfather.

Chun-hyang: “During Moon Harvest Festival, I set the ancestral tribute table, the ancestral memorial ceremony. It differs by household. Our father-in-law is deceased. For Grandfather’s ancestral memorial ceremony, we hold it during Moon Festival and Lunar New Year, right? I set out food here, and set it out on a table. I don’t do that (extra stuff), just put out the ancestral ceremonial food table because I’m only the second’s wife. I don’t even have that right, actually. Even though I am not supposed to, I feel sad for our father-in-law, it’s so pitiful, really. Actually, my mother-in-law doesn’t even do it for her
husband, our father-in-law, Grandfather. You must put out the ancestral ceremonial food table. People who go to church don’t do that. We don’t attend church because we go to the temple. In Korea, the most important filial piety is setting out the ancestral tribute table for the ancestor, except for those that attend church. But, even, starting from there, it’s important. It’s not that other things are not important. Your family gathers if you wait on the ancestral ceremonial tribute. The family gathers at night and does it. But, because we can’t do that, it’s bad. They just said don’t do the bow. The first son doesn’t like it. They said not to do the bow. So, I only set out the table. I make rice and soup, you’ve seen the Korean ancestral ceremonial table. You set out the table and after a while, we eat, eat it. If not, then during the Moon Festival, we go to the gravesite.” (54, female, married, housewife)  

4. Korean Community in Thailand  

4.1 Mission-Oriented vs. Business-Related Korean Community  

All respondents described the Korean community in Thailand as either being mission-oriented or business-related. The business community includes either large corporations or small business. The small business aspect includes travel agencies, Korean restaurants, Korean grocery stores or black market trade.  

Joon-young states he does not know the Korean community very well because he does not spend much time with them due to his business. However, I saw him multiple times at the Korean church; the church may be the only active interaction he has with the community. He is also a single businessman; unlike other Korean families he neither has a spouse who needs emotional and cultural comfort or children who need to spend time with other Korean children. He does describe two different types of Korean people who come to Thailand: “Two kinds of the Koreans in Thailand. One is the business. The other one is the missionary. There are many Korean [criminal] men in Thailand, they are mainly offset. What, now, earlier, because this kind of history exists across the board, [they] can’t enter the mainstream (in Korea). And another side is the missionary like this church.” That description dichotomizes the community as either good or bad/reformed. Chun-hyang describes Korean business as “all travel…there are tours, travel agencies and restaurants…a lot of those.” She also mentions the Joseon-jok business community, or the Korean minority group from North Korea who fled to China and created a long-lasting Korean community in Northeastern China. She warns against this group in Thailand.
Businessmen sent from Korea can stay in Thailand for temporary business. Then there are those Korean branches of companies in Thailand employs people who stay for longer periods of time. Other businesses based in Thailand may include travel agencies or restaurants. All respondents alluded to different generations of those who come to Thailand, either as part of the generation seeking alternate employment after Korea’s industrial growth or because of the Korean Wave.

Mae-il: “Most of them are dispatched here, meaning that they’re just here, for like, you know, a certain period of time and they go back, like, you know, executives for corporate, big corporate from Korea, so I think, initially, most of them are doing travel-related business, like tour guides, or travel companies, something like that. And, for, some of them are trying to do their own business, like restaurants, or other types of business. If they’re successful here, most of them will bring their families here, ‘cause I think probably the reason that they’re trying to doing business here is because they’re not doing well back in Korea. I guess that was the picture of people who migrated to Thailand a decade or two decades ago, I guess. Thailand is actually, Bangkok is actually very international. I mean, you see the, um, the demographic of, you know, foreigners living here. I think it’s, it was or it is more international than Seoul. And, um, you can see there are a lot of stores where you can buy, like you know, um, imported food. And, now, you know, because of the popularity of Korean Wave, now they even have stores for Korean groceries.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)

Gun-woo and Young-ja do not have much time to meet other Korean people because they minister to Thai people (and conduct their church services in Thai language), but have lived in Thailand long enough (8 years) to be familiar with the Korean community. In reference to the Korean community groups in Thailand, Gun-woo says, “We practically rarely meet.” It seems that there were more opportunities to meet people in Chiang Mai rather than any other city in Thailand, even more convenient than Bangkok. Young-ja refers to those that are not missionaries as “일반 사람들” or ordinary people; she also uses this term to include spouses of businessmen, especially.

Reasons for migration vary and it is no different with the Korean community. Koreans are usually more inclined to migrate to more developed countries than Thailand and higher numbers usually end up staying in the United States, for example. Missionaries come to Thailand either to minister to the Korean community or to reach out to Thais and Burmese people. Korean business based in Thailand is also varied, usually involving a Korean restaurant, grocery store or a travel agency. I have also observed Korea tour groups making pit stops at the local Korean
restaurants that, in turn, turned away regular business to make room for the tour groups. Businessmen from Korea may also come from a company based in Korea with a branch in Thailand. Observations and assumptions of the Korean community being either mission-oriented or business-related are supported by the respondents’ responses.

An American friend, a missionary who is working as an international school elementary school teacher, and is well-acquainted with the Korean community describes the Korean community in Thailand as:

Really close-knit, but also hugely divided (if that is even possible). Most Koreans I have met or known are in Thailand for the purpose of missionary work. They stay close within their church or mission, but I see little intersection between Koreans from differing churches/missions.

4.2 Meeting Places for Korean People Living in Thailand

Reasons for meeting with other Koreans vary; meetings are opportunities to reunite with friends of the same culture and to catch up on local news or Korean national news. Meeting places for Koreans depend upon how involved the respondent is in the community. Meeting places also revolve upon religious or spiritual leanings. There are also a few Korean organizations that plan certain events for the community; the Korean embassy is also involved. Mae-il mentions Korean churches for locals or the fact that there are some local Koreans that meet in Buddhist temples. The Koreans she mentions exclude the many Korean tourists that also frequent those places.

Young-ja: “We’re Korean people, we serve Thai people. Also, there’s a Korean church. But, that Korean church is for Korean people living in Thailand. They have services. But, most are missionaries to Thai people. We almost never meet. Once a year, there’s a camp where we can meet other missionaries. For 4 days, we eat well together and our kids come too. We used to do that a long time ago. There’s a Korean Association in Thailand, but we don’t have very much time so we don’t go often. But, general people occasionally go. But, if there’s a big country event, if there’s something like that, we attend. We participate. If they’re voting…do you know voting? If there’s voting involved, we go to the Embassy and vote. And, if there’s a game, we go and cheer them on. Also, if it’s the World Cup or something like that, we go out and wear red clothes.” (55, female, married, missionary)
Those meeting places like the temples or churches would appear to have saints and patrons, but besides those people that are classified as good, there are also bad people that attend. Although Chun-hyang is actually referring to scam artists, she says that they gather at the churches and temples. She herself used to attend the Korean church until she and her husband were victims of too many scams by church members. Korean church is an opportune location to meet other Koreans; after each major church service, a meal is provided.

I observed a ministry off-shoot of a Korean church, a Korean mother’s prayer group, in Chiang Mai. It seems that most mothers of Korean students attending international school are involved. All respondents gather at the meeting places for the Korean community, but the frequency and reasons vary, whether social or religious.

4.3 Scam/Fraud

In the first interview that I conducted, scam and fraud were mentioned as something that are part of the Korean community and was experienced directly by the respondent. Not only this, but the first generations of Koreans who migrated to Thailand right after the Korean War are a special population. Thailand is an ideal place to start a new life, with security that is more lax than developed countries such as America, which required more strict entrance documentation. Only one respondent specifically mentions one Korean community group who came to Thailand, the Joseon-jok, or ethnic Korean minorities in China (usually from North Korea). Only one of the respondents did not know of any specifics on scams within the Korean community.

Chun-hyang: “A long time ago, North Korea, Joseon people. You should watch out for those, have you heard of that? It’s like that, they’ve picked people. You shouldn’t trust those people that go “You’re a friend, I’m a friend”…it’s like that. You know our community, Joseon people, Korean-Chinese. They come here to work selling IPS, with this, they thieve. Thieves/scam artists, [do] thievery work. Thieves sell this kind of stuff. Yeah, there are fake brand-name stuff. Thieves do a lot of this, like smart phones. They sell it like work, one person buys it. They mainly go to the police…to sell that kind of stuff. Korean people…Korean people…be careful.” (54, female, married, housewife)

One respondent has been a victim of fraud and this inadvertently caused ostracization from the Korean community. Isolation became something she preferred as a result.
Chun-hyang: “You judge a person a little, really, you should look closely. There are a lot of bad people. I don’t really go, many gather at church. At church, temple-like places. I went at first, too. Representatives, diplomats, don’t trust those kinds of people. We were tricked a lot, so I became a loner. It’s comfortable, if you’ve been hurt, it’s better to be alone. After being hurt, [it’s] only me, my husband also had a lot of friends back then. It wasn’t our time. It all took money, they were afraid they couldn’t pay back so they didn’t come. Do you know what I mean? My husband says this, ‘Give one chance, a second chance, a third chance…’ There’s no reason for money to come out all the time. Income comes. Where do you go to earn money? If you’re using it, you should use it like in Korea. Beware of attempts, out of every group, there’s one, in my observation.” (54, female, married, housewife)

Korean diplomats were specifically mentioned as persons of interest who should be not be trusted. Single individuals, especially, are to be monitored and not to be trusted; families are more trustworthy. Diplomats are also cast as disloyal to the Korean community, not necessarily looking out for the people’s interests but are self-interested.

Chun-hyang: “If you look at the government, they’re there. If they have a family, you can trust them. They said they were moving because other Koreans were there. I also moved because of other Koreans. They do travel agencies. To that extent, it’s a sad story. At church, everyone’s friendly. When my kids were younger, they went to an American church on Tenth Street. It’s a really good American church. Diplomats from Korea don’t go to Korean church. Those people? They go at first. In those people’s words, it’s tiring, they’re a bit brainless. They think they are high level. If you go to Korean church in America or in a good country [developed], those citizens, they’re doing well. If a [--] person comes, they ignore them. They’re at that level where they ignore. Yes, since going to Korean church, there’s a lot of talk. In the service, there’s a lot of talk to watch out for diplomats. They go to foreign church. They go to Korean church at first. It’s not like that in America. Korean immigrants are doing well, they [diplomats] go to foreign church.” (54, female, married, housewife)

The respondent that has lived in Thailand longer than the other native Koreans has the best knowledge of the Korean community living in Thailand. However, Chun-hyang knows more about this community of scam artists; she attests that those scam artists tend to group together as do other groups with like interests. She proffers that those people with families or those that you do not necessarily know are most trustworthy, cautioning that those you are close to should be watched. Those untrustworthy people that are focused on upward mobility are not loyal to the group. Chun-hyang has mentioned more than once that this kind of situation does not exist in America although she has never lived there; she compares the rewards for efforts made.

Chun-hyang: “What I’m trying to say is be careful of Korean immigrants overseas. People you don’t know won’t trick you. It’s those people you know that will do bad
things. Now I understand, I understand because I’ve lived here for 20 years. It’s what we’ve felt here. We’ve experienced it. I didn’t know at first either. Since we’ve experienced it, fought and fought, it’s like that. 20 years, our kids were little. They say that “Birds of a feather flock together”…the character idiom is “Birds of a feather flock together.” Crooks hang with crooks and so do plutocrats. They hang out together. So, everyone…upward mobility…the levels are different. If you study, you are becoming upward mobile, the price of your life. They even ignore people they know. Birds of a feather flock together…the same. If you look at Korea, the plutocrats. In America, they recognize it, if you work hard, you’re recognized. It’s not like that in Korea. Samsung is always Samsung plutocrats.” (54, female, married, housewife)

Facing ostracization and wishing to avoid being hurt anymore, Chun-hyang has faced loneliness in her community. She says “Go online…I only watch television. It doesn’t work nowadays. I feel bad as an adult. I teach my son that. You come from America, you must have not have met those kinds of people because you’re American. It’s like that.” Her son has set up Korean television for her so that she can access all of the programs from back home. This way, she can stay connected. She has warned her children about Korean people baiting other Korean people in Thailand.

Other respondents are aware that there is a specific group of con artists in Thailand. Joon-young mentions some sort of men (unintelligible while transcribing, possibly another word for “criminal” in Korean), “Now, there are many Korean (criminal) men in Thailand, they are mainly offset. What, now, earlier, because this kind of history exists across the board, [they] can’t enter the mainstream.” Chun-hyang gave warning several times, to “beware, be careful” of those kinds of people.

One respondent was not previously aware of such a specific group living in Thailand. However, she admitted that such groups exist everywhere and that those groups are more small-scale business-related.

Mae-il: “Among like Koreans? Usually, well, I think in the, in any society, yes. There are some situations, but, usually small SME-sized (Small/Medium Enterprises) you know, like businessperson…owned business or smaller-scaled businesses or you know like, investment opportunity, what they would claim that it’s an investment opportunity in Thailand or something like that. That’s where the scam happened a lot. But, for larger company or the corporate-level, I don’t see any of that happening. They’re very professional.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)
During a church service, I observed the pastor mention that they do not necessarily welcome outsiders and to beware of those people who could possible swindle them.

5 Thai Context

5.1 Thai Filial Piety

As the focus of this research is filial piety, some respondents also referred to and compared Thai filial piety with Korean filial piety and the context in Thailand that makes it conducive for Koreans to live there.

Some respondents drew parallels to Thai filial piety and Korean filial piety. Gun-woo says “It’s important to put your parents’ minds at ease. Since coming to Thailand and living, Thai people also treat their parents well like that. We are people who take care for the Lord.” When discussing Buddhism in the Thai context, Mae-il, whose father is ethnically Chinese (Chinese-Thai), argues that Thai filial piety is not Buddhist, but, in fact, Confucian.

Mae-il: “I think not, because of Buddhism, if I may insert here. I think it’s a Chinese family, it’s, you know, a concept from Chinese family. You know how we have several ethnics in Thailand living together, majority are people who descended from, you know, Chinese ethnics and also some other Malay, Khmer, and other national. And the main concept of being 敬 (filial piety), I think it came from Chinese people, Chinese family.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)

She makes the argument for a difference between Buddhism and Confucianism in Thai culture, but one must remember that the Thai-Chinese population only comprises 14% of the population in Thailand and does not explain why 95% of Thai people practice Buddhism. The Confucian background is the context that Mae-il knows, according to her family heritage, on both her father’s side as well as her mother’s side of the family and her views are not representative of Thai Buddhist practices. Those Chinese-Thai people still practice religious rituals, practicing both Confucian lunar holidays and those national Buddhist holidays. Joon-young believes that regardless of which filial piety, it is essential to maintain for the future.

Joon-young: “I’m not sure, but Thailand is the Buddhism country and Buddhism also emphasizes 敬 [filial piety], so there is some connections about it. As I said, 敬 is very some essential part of human life. It should be, what can I say, what we have to, yeah, I
think it can make some way of communication between two countries or some relationship development. But, to the most of the Western people, I’m not sure. Actually, the Christian, the Bible also emphasize it. It belongs to the Ten Commandments already. I don’t know what it feels with the Western people, but we have to keep it…and strengthen it…as time goes by.

Joon-young mentions this need to keep filial piety, which is traditionally a part of his culture. It should be noted that he later mentions how he would prefer to raise his children within Thai culture or the context of the country in which he and his family are living. Filial piety’s origins do not matter, but that the concept is saved and should be a part of his family’s life.

5.2 Education of Children

It does not appear to be typical for Korean families to send their children to Thai school, unless they are living in the more rural communities where there are no other options. If, for example, a family lives in such an area, boarding school may be preferred to Thai school. In my observation and after hearing it many times from many Korean people, heading to the United States would be ideal because the “American Dream” still exists and there is hope for upward mobility. This is reinforced by the emphasis on learning the English language from elementary school, and the enormous amount of money invested in after-school learning academies, and other curricular and co-curricular opportunities.

For Korean people and for even Thai people, it seems that the U.S. is top priority and location for which to send children for education. The next best places would be the United Kingdom and then Australia, if an English-speaking country is preferred. One of my Korean friends who is attending university in Thailand has stated specifically that his Korean language skills have fallen drastically and getting a job in Korea would be difficult because one has to pass several qualification tests, including language. Young-ja stated to me outside the interview that her children would not be able to keep up in a Korean classroom. In my observation, and supported by their brother and Young-ja’s accounts, the two daughters are most comfortable speaking Thai although they were born in Korea. It has been eight years since they moved to Thailand and attending a Thai boarding school is not the ideal environment in which to try to
maintain the Korean language. For those students who attend Thai boarding school or even international school, it is up to the parent to enforce use of the Korean language at home.

Mae-il: “They would go to international school because they think it’s better for their kids, I mean like, considering Korean university entrance exam and everything, it’s relatively difficult and very competitive. But, or kids studying overseas certain period of times, they would have a special admission channel or it’s better for them to go overseas to further their education in the States or the U.K. There’s no—not really other option because they wouldn’t go to Thai school because they don’t speak Thai and they don’t see the point of doing that.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)

Chun-hyang talks about education of children in Korea in the context of a discussion of the harsh conditions of mandatory twenty-seven month service of all males in Korea, she also discusses education. It is as if continued study is an ultimatum for not completing one’s military service, or that education is the answer to avoiding military service. Sons may struggle with life in the military, but fulfilling duty is the best way to be filially pious and maintain parents’ happiness.

Chun-hyang: “If they do their military service, they all call, using their cell phones, it’s overboard, problems arise. So, they run away, they all run away, why? Do you know why they run away? If they don’t want to do their military service, they force/tell them to study. It’s like that in Korea, they run away. Parents become very sad if they run away, because of education. If you could say the best thing, the best way to be a dutiful child is studying well, for results in Korea, going to a good university. That’s the closest to filial piety I think.” (54, female, married, housewife)

Only one informant has a different perspective about raising their children in Thailand. This informant views the Thai context positively, and his future children will be able to choose to express themselves accordingly. Although currently unmarried, he compares himself to other Korean parents in that he will not emphasize international education. He is the only informant who will not be as serious about emphasizing Korean culture. He believes he is adapting to a more global society.

Joon-young: “Personally, I think I have such a philosophy that the children’s lives belong to them, not the parents. So, actually, I don’t, maybe I’m not so serious about the children’s circumstance or the wish for them. I know that many Korean parents want to send them, their children, to some Korean or international school. But, as for me, I think if they are in Thailand, they need to go to Thailand school and have to learn the Thailand way of thinking and culture even if it’s harsh for them… Actually, I’m not so serious about the Korean culture or Korean way of thinking because nowadays it’s a global
society. And, once he is very familiar with the society he’s belong to, it’s okay.” (47, male, single, businessman)

5.3 Extreme Behavior Related to Education of Children

Extreme behavior exhibited for the sake of children seems to be a norm for Korean parents, at least for some of my informants and their relay of information of other Korean parents. Chun-hyang gives an introduction of such extreme behavior, also known as “sacrifice for the sake of our children,” in the context of Korea. “Sacrifice for the sake of our children” was mentioned several times in the interview as was the fact that “Korea is harsh.” Those Korean norms are excused and attributed to the confines of a small peninsular country. Korean mothers are known to be “crazy,” for the sake of educating their children. Crazy behaviors may include closely monitoring children’s activities to make sure they are studying or even going as far as breaking up a child’s romantic relationship so that there are no distractions.

Chun-hyang: “There exists giving all of your life for your children’s education. It’s parents not having a life, for your children’s education. But, you have to understand Korea. Korea has little land. What do you do to live and survive on narrow land? Education. It’s like that. Education is the only way to live. Me, I just lived for my children’s sakes. If you’re talking about mothers of Korea, in my opinion, the mothers of Korea live to this standard. I didn’t work. I didn’t go out to earn money. I just cared for my children. Your Mom will know that. Korea is also severe. They lock the doors and force them…filial piety, in Korea, being filially pious (dutiful) toward your parents is studying well, getting into a good college and if you do all that, money should follow. That’s the way to be filially pious toward your parents. But, now, the problem with Korean parents is that now they invest and make sacrifices. They do that and to their kids, ‘Later, I will go and rely on my children, rely and lean on them.’ But, then I think I’m a little/very different. When I go to Korea, our friends, my husband’s friends, there’s a girlfriend, their son’s girlfriend. She goes to school everyday, follows her son everyday. To that extent, there’s that push/kick by parents in Korea…parents do what they deeply feel in their hearts. It’s not like that in foreign countries, that’s good… I’m not completely like everybody; my friends are overboard, they’re all like, ‘Mom, I’m going to school’ ‘Oh, did you arrive at school?’ ‘Oh, what time are you coming home?’” (54, female, married, housewife)

Korean mothers are most likely the same everywhere because they are not only considered extreme in Korea, but in Thailand as well, although in different ways. Young-ja actively teaches Korean culture to her children, but says that Korean mothers in Thailand are different because they do not value similar things. Korean culture and language is not
emphasized in Thailand and the English language rather than the Korean language may be preferred within the home. The mindset is that the children will have better chances in their future if they can speak English fluently and with ease. Young-ja believes that it is important that a Korean person should be Korean, holding Korean values, speaking Korean language naturally, and celebrating Korean customs and traditions. Her husband agrees, inserting that the Chiang Mai community sometimes took offense to their telling other families that it is important to maintain Korean culture. This family fears the loss of Korean culture, but as mentioned earlier, the son has adapted to slight loss of Korean language and the most comfortable language of their daughters is the Thai language. It may be because of this loss that this couple sees the importance of emphasizing the value of being Korean. This nationalist attitude and wish to maintain Korean identity is a common theme among participants. Chun-hyang also makes an active effort during the holidays.

Young-ja: “I think that it’s important (to teach Korean culture). If they’re Korean, they are Korean, they will think that it’s important. So, that’s why we teach. But, in my eyes, other mothers (in Thailand) are different, they don’t really pay attention to their families. They really like it if they speak English. So, they send them to international school. Also, they make them, their children, speak English a lot in the home. Chiang Mai is more severe. The mothers there really don’t let their children use Korean. But, since coming down here (BKK), the parents don’t seem to be as severe. But, I don’t know. I don’t know what they specially do relating to Korea for their household, but on observation, they don’t seem to pay attention. Because we’re living overseas and Koreans like to speak English. They’re forgetting Korea, it’s becoming like this, like Korean Moms like speaking English better.” (55, female, married, missionary)

Gun-woo: “When you look at it, it means if they only make them speak English and don’t make them speak Korean, they will forget Korea. When we were in Chiang Mai, there was a neighborhood with all the Korean people, their children would speak English. When you tell their children that when they’re with Korean people speaking Korean is best, the parents don’t really like that. They don’t speak Korean…and they speak English well, it seems to be a situation where they’re forgetting Korea.” (57, male, married, missionary)

5.4 Adaptation to Living in Thailand

Korean people have adapted their lifestyle in Thailand, most importantly, in the way they support their parents and raise their children. Gun-woo admits that since they “are in Thailand…we call them and every so many months, we give allowance…at our parents’ bank,
we send money.” This is an adaptation contrasting meeting and giving money in person. Joon-young also sends money as financial support to his eldest brother to support his parents. All respondents except for the Korean-Thai respondent sent money directly to parents living in Korea or sibling caretakers.

Life is different in Thailand; those who wish to be around other Koreans make efforts to gather during special events that involve Korea. The different communities plan special activities and gather as one people. According to the missionary couple, “general people” or those who are not missionaries usually have more time to gather.

Korean families in Thailand, in contrast to Koreans in Korea, must explicitly explain, distinguish and label their behaviors and lifestyle as Korean.

Young-ja: “Once a year, there’s a camp where we can meet other missionaries. For 4 days, we eat well together and our kids come too. We used to do that a long time ago. There’s a Korean Association in Thailand, but we don’t have very much time so we don’t go often. But, general people occasionally go. But, if there’s a big national event, if there’s something like that, we attend. We participate. If they’re voting... do you know voting? If there’s voting involved, we go to the embassy and vote. And, if there’s a game, we go and cheer them on. Also, if it’s the World Cup or something like that, we go out and wear red clothes. Even so, most Korean people go to church, eat, and do it together, eat Korean food, meet Korean people, speak in Korean and pass time that way. When they (daughters) come home (from Thai boarding school), in our daily life, we teach them Korean culture. When we eat, we say, ‘Korean people do it like this’ and teach them the method. We do it like that. So, we show them Korean dramas, so they can understand. So they can see with their eyes and understand how it is in Korea. Also, we teach them Korean stuff, and stuff only Koreans do.” (55, female, married, missionary)

What should be noticed is the pro-active stance taken by Young-ja and her husband; she tells me “So, our children left for school yesterday but, Father... there’s 4 verses in the national anthem. They know how to sing the first verse, but not verse 3 and 4, so, Father printed it and sent it to them.” They were expected to memorize the national anthem to sing the next time they returned from boarding school.

Chun-hyang has adapted her ways of thinking regarding the traditional nuclear family, “When you live so close together, you fight. You should be a little apart. You should be apart.” With regard to health being more important than what other mothers place value upon, “…I’m different than the people living in Korea. I’m different, I’m half-half Western-style. I’m
very…right now, if I go to Korea, my friends tell me I’m weird, that I’ve changed.” Her friends noticed that Chun-hyang is different, that she is not as Korean as she once was. Chun-hyang distinguishes that she does not exhibit those extreme behaviors like her friends.

Chun-hyang: “I don’t do that. If I go back, it’s over. They say I’m weird…that I’ve changed now…to my children’s health. When it came out that I said my children’s health to my friends, they said it’s because I’ve already gone/came through it. Because I’ve already been through it, they’ve both graduated from college…that’s why ‘my children’s health’ is coming out. I’ve already experienced it.” (54, female, married, housewife)

Regarding her relationships with her children, Chun-hyang says, “Since coming to Thailand, I’ve adjusted and matched/fitted myself with my children and let them be. They haven’t received Korean education. You know?” She makes it a point to set out the ancestral ceremonial tribute table even though she’s the second son’s wife and is not obligated to do so. However, she does it to show her children what is the tradition in Korea, to teach culture, and mostly keeping the honor of the family and ancestors.

Two of the respondents have openly accepted that their children will live different lives because of being raised in Thailand. Joon-young will raise them comfortably in whichever environment he and his family live. Chun-hyang acknowledges the importance of duty to the family, but, in turn, prefers her sons to make their own choices and is resigned to both of them having attended university in Australia with one currently living and working in the United Kingdom. The resignation that the traditional family practices are different is attributed to having raised her children overseas and, ultimately, now that her children have moved away from Thailand to begin their own careers.

Chun-hyang: “I can serve it (traditional holiday ancestral table) if I was in Korea. Since I’m not in Korea, it’s different than being in Korea. In Korea, they could come to our house and we could serve together. We’re not in Korea, I’m here and can’t help doing it daily. I only set out the table. The oldest and the oldest’s wife caught a disease…doing a good job is good. Doing well is a good thing. I also show my children how I set it out because they’re not in Korea and they don’t get that education and don’t know that service culture. Because they don’t know, I’m doing it like this. Now if I die, we will have an eldest son, no? It can’t be helped because we live overseas. If I was living in Korea, it would work. We’re removed here overseas, how can he serve that ancestral ceremonial tribute? Kids live separately elsewhere. Usually in Korea, Korean kids live with their families. During the service, they come…they come and serve, and come to the eldest son’s house. We can’t do it like that. Now, since we can’t do it like that, I serve it. Because I don’t want to be scolded. Because we can’t go and do it. We can’t go multiple
Chun-hyang has different expectations of her children and even goes as far as to state that “Western-style” of raising independent children is better than traditional methods. The reason given for preferring the non-traditional style is that she has lived outside Korea and experienced it firsthand.

Chun-hyang: “I don’t want that. I can’t help but not want it. Even if I wanted it, we don’t live together. Because I live in a different country, how can I go there? Our friends haven’t thought that far ahead. They take all the income. Because parents nowadays do what they want with the marriage and set it up, tangling up from behind…their minds are not good. Foreign-style is right…now that I’ve lived it. Why are they like that? Western-style is smart. They prevent that ahead of time…if you live tangled from behind, you make enemies and fight. Once you turn 18, you’re independent. How can you not love that? That’s prevented ahead of time. You set out ahead of time, that’s how they do it. They seem smart…Western-style. So, my husband and I eat American-style breakfast…I think Western-style is really smart.” (54, female, married, housewife)

5.5 Generational Differences

5.5.1 Korean-Thai Historical Relations

The Korean War (1950-1953), referred to as the “6-25 War” by Koreans, ended in armistice. Thailand was the first to send aid and military assistance to assist the Korean people during the war (The 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee, 2011). Neither side has forgotten. However, that assistance does not influence the fact that today there are marked cultural differences and power imbalance and hierarchy between the two cultures.

Young-ja: “Thai people came and fought together during the June 25 War. So, Thai people think of Korean people as friends. So, they really like them. It seems that Korean people, they think they are richer, more educated, smarter. So, they kind of ignore Thai people, because of slower behaviors, because they can’t go faster, faster, because of those things, the harmony doesn’t work.” (55, female, married, missionary)

5.5.2 First Generations of Koreans Coming to Thailand
The generations before have decidedly different perspectives regarding life and society. The wave of those that first came to Thailand in large numbers are of a specific generation. Joon-young refers to this group as having come during the age of development in recent Korean history.

Joon-young: “Because Korea’s offsetting history of development is short, there’s still some confusing situations, so, first generation of development…first generation of the development, is maybe in 50’s or 60’s, around there, and second generation is about 40s and 30s this group. And the new generation in 20s. These different groups have different philosophies or some characteristics.” (47, male, single, businessman)

This generation living in Thailand has a reputation within the Thai community due to their behaviors and lifestyle, according to my informants. This generation has a true lack of education because of the history of war, sparse resources and later development. The reason for this generation coming to Thailand is that their criminal background made it difficult for them to make a living in Korea but the Thai environment provided more opportunities to not only escape their past but to make a fresh start.

Joon-young: “Traditionally, these Southern Eastern Asian countries’ people didn’t like Korean so much. Because actually, what can I say, they didn’t have, uh, I mean, the Korean old generation didn’t have uh educational experience much. They came these countries and their lifestyle was not so good. And it affected those people think Korean ugly and untrustable something like that. Some part of it is culture still has such an effect. That’s the one thing. And the other one is Thailand is, the barrier of immigration is relatively low for Koreans. So, uh, some peoples have some criminal records and come to Korea, no, no, Thai, to escape some punishment.” (47, male, single, businessman)

5.5.3 Older Generations’ Perceptions of Foreigners

Older generations’ traditional perceptions of foreigners are described as a bit more narrow, especially for those who have not traveled outside one’s own country. Embarrassment and shyness seem to be the immediate reaction of older persons upon meeting foreigners. Lack of exposure warrants such reactions. However, living overseas has changed perceptions. Already, today’s generations have different exposure and a more full account of what happens in the world. International school is also a life-changing environment, especially to the younger generations.
Chun-hyang: “But, foreigners, if we look at foreigners, it’s difficult to understand each other. In Korea, their faces get red. Also, at first, from 1-2 years old, we were a little afraid of foreigners. In Thailand, there are a lot of foreigners…came out of international school.” (54, female, married, housewife)

The older generations seem to stay within their own cultural community while the younger ones who are educated in the international system tend to develop a more international mindset. Association with one’s own cultural community is important, but there are also stages of association with other cultural community groups. Mae-il talks about the children identifying with other children in similar situations, “I mean, the younger students who go to international school, of course they hang out with their international friends.”

5.5.4 Parent-Child Generational Differences

It is becoming more and more apparent that there are generational differences that result in conflicts. Lack of communication contributes to this problem. Joon-young stipulates that “Nowadays, in the children’s sense, the newer generation doesn’t talk that much with parents. It’s possible both sides thoughts have changed, in that case, there’s a point that your words have changed directly.”

Traditional society is changing and older generations still live according to the traditional philosophies and ideals, but younger generations are beginning to speak out and question authority. One informant associates the younger generation with “modern society” and that they believe traditional ideals to be “old-fashioned.” The younger generations are refusing to listen to direct orders, but Joon-young believes that proper guidance improves intergenerational relationships, especially regarding filial piety. He believes that elders manipulating power and implementing the old belief that one should blindly follow orders is wrong.

Joon-young: “父教 (Confucianism) was the very old tradition. You know, it’s very interesting. 父教 (Confucianism) came from China. But, in China, they don’t pay attention to 父教 (Confucianism), they don’t know. Only recently, some businessmens found it has some good way to manage the companies, so, they investigate it and some lesson for employees, but not familiar, not popular yet. In Korea, they use it as the way of ruling the country. So, it has strong and deep roots in Korea. But, in modern societies, young generation doesn’t like it. They think it’s old-fashioned. So, if somebody said, ‘You’re a children, you need to obey your parents.’ ‘Huh? No, it’s too old. It’s out of fashion.’ They may response like that. So, that’s why I told you the best way to teach them is practice and show demonstration first, and make them feel what is the 教 (filial piety) and
why it is good for you. That is the first thing and just, uh, telling the, uh, filial piety is the number 1, number 2, number 3, you need to obey it’ is not good.” (47, male, single, businessman)

Traditional actions are being adapted to suit modern life, and this is especially apparent in living situations. Adaptations are positive but not without its repercussions; stressors evolve differently.

Young-ja: “People nowadays don’t want to live with their parents. Back then, Korean people lived together. Now, they don’t attempt to bring their parents. If they’re together, it’s tiring and if it turns out they live together, they try to leave their children with the Mom. She has to care for the child. Mothers nowadays are tired. If the daughter gets married and comes out, the mother has to help care together, with the daughter going to work. That kind of thing is very tiring to mothers and living apart is also tiring. Earlier, according to what Father said, seek them out once in a while, while they’re alive, greet them and I think that kind of thing is very good.” (55, female, married, missionary)

Giving allowance is a buffer to bridge the gap of being unable to fulfill filial duties.

Gun-woo: “Parents nowadays, they really enjoy it if their children give them allowance. Rather than items, parents like allowance because they can buy what they want to wear, to eat, those kinds of things. Rather than buying it for them, they like it when you give them an allowance. That’s contentment…it’s a good method.” (57, male, married, missionary)

Younger generations are believed to be more open-minded and well-adjusted because of better opportunities and circumstances despite the fact that Thailand is less developed than Korea.

Joon-young: “And, uh, Thai is very...still underdevelopment society, so it’s not so...for Korean people yet. Such circumstance makes the somewhat different from other countries. As I said, the criminal records comes to and maybe that’s why, I guess, so, serious about the relationship in Korean communities. But, I think this changing slowly as time goes by, the younger generations comes to Thai and they are very ordinary and global standards, way of thinking, has very good attitudes to local peoples. Gradually it’s changing, but not enough yet.” (47, male, single, businessman)

5.6 Actively Teaching Korean Practices

Some families make an effort to mimic Korean traditions from back home; it is important to some families to pass on traditions. Young-ja and her husband Gun-woo emphasize Korean culture; she says “We teach them those kinds of things, for the reason that they will never forget. We also make them speak Korean and speak about things Korean.” It is important to this family
that their children know their traditional heritage. Young-ja says, “Traditional culture…so, we teach them games we played when Mom and Dad were younger, like tossing pennies and badminton shuttlecock, teach those kinds of things and teach them dancing.” For Young-ja and Gun-woo’s family, their parents’ generation experienced the Korean War and want to never forget its significance, so the traditions are modeled. Young-ja mentions mealtime traditions, “On the day the Korean War started June 25, every household doesn’t eat breakfast, they starve, and for lunch and supper, they eat barley rice. You know barley rice? Barley.” Her husband Gun-woo reiterates “On June 25, because they didn’t have anything to eat, they make fistfuls of barley rice and sprinkle salt and ate it. There are even people who don’t have that, they think of that and eat like that, so that they don’t have to forget June 25.” His wife gives the reason “It’s so we can remember our country’s hardships and problems, think of our country and pray for our country, so we can always remember Korea.”

In a conversation with Chun-hyang’s son, he said that his mother made sure that they spoke Korean in the home. Young-ja and Gun-woo teach their children Korean and require that they only speak in Korean in the home as well as teaching them other traditions.

5.7 Parents as References for Raising Children

When asked about raising their children, one’s own parents are mentioned. It was a common theme across informants that one does not know how children will turn out. One respondent gave the reason that she has not yet experienced motherhood and is not sure whether or not she will have the same traditional parenting styles as her mother. She does admit that her mother’s generation was uneducated, labeled “first-generation ignorance,” and that her generation is educated and “different.” All respondents with children are raising their children much differently than their parents raised them; the environment and economic atmosphere is very different from then.

Chun-hyang: “I don’t know if I will become like her (mother). Because I haven’t done it yet, I should make an effort because we’ve been educated. My mother’s first-generation ignorant. First-generation ignorance…do you understand what I mean? What I mean is, back then, they didn’t weren’t educated….first-generation ignorance…learned a little…So, they didn’t receive education. Because of that, I think that it was like that, but,
because we were educated, graduated from college, if we are different, they say it’s not like that.” (54, female, married, housewife)

5.8 Thai Perceptions of Koreans

Although this is beyond the scope of this research, I observed that there seems to be some disconnect when it comes to Thai perceptions of Koreans and Korean perceptions of Thais. It should be noted by my observation as well as many responses that the affection is stronger by Thais for Koreans. Thai people love Korean people, popular culture, and generally have a good opinion of Koreans. However, upon observation, many conversations with Korean people, it seems the devotion is almost one-sided, that Koreans do not hold such a high opinion of Thais, or South Asians for that matter. Historically, Koreans prefer Westerners and lighter-skinned people from developed countries. There are distinct cultural, religious, political and ethnic differences; harmony is sometimes thrown off-balance, especially in the workplace. Gun-woo reaction is that the “harmony…it doesn’t work.”

Young-ja: “They say that Korean people have urgent personalities. ‘Hurry up hurry up.’ Thai people are slow people. So, the mind is ticking. They say that Korean people have Jai ron [literally translated from Thai means “hot hearts”]. So, whatever it is, they do it quickly, they do it urgently. These people say this of Korean people. Even so, if it’s a drama or movie or song or K-pop, they really like it. They really like Korean people. But, seemingly, it seems that even though they really like stuff like Korean culture, in reality, if they’re going to work together, living together, those kinds of people have urgent personalities…there are some conflicts. Thai people are a little on the slower side and Korean people are on the urgent side. So, that’s where they don’t fit. There’s conflict. So, they don’t understand each other’s hearts. Even so, Korean people and people living here, make efforts to try to understand. But, overall, when you look at it, Thai people like Korean people. When Korean people think about it, they think Korea is more mature economically. They think the country is more developed. So, they kind of ignore Thai people, there’s been those kinds of experiences before. So, Korean people that come to Thailand, the harmony doesn’t work well…meeting in the middle…harmony… Thai people really like Korean people. But, it seems like Korean people ignore them. Not everyone, though.” (55, female, married, missionary)

These respondents believe that Thai people perceive Koreans as pushy and having urgent personalities. Koreans perceive Thai people as really laidback and while participating in activities, not wholly committing. Different measures of value are placed upon efficiency.
Joon-young: “Relatively, there is none, achievement is not so much (in terms of work). And another side is the missionary like this church. But, as you know, Thai people has a very flexible religion or, what can I say, uh, characteristic or something. So, they listen what they say, but they don’t trust or they don’t change their religion. Just listen, okay, it’s good and that’s it. So, uh, there is no change. Just listen, ‘Okay, yup, that’s good words’ something like that. So…So, yeah, these two groups is not so effective, so, uh, maybe that is their, our, object to work with.” (47, male, single, businessman)

5.9 Thailand’s Political Environment and Natural Disasters

Thailand’s inviting environment proves conducive for Korean people to celebrate holidays as the Thai-Chinese community also celebrates the lunar holidays. The academic atmosphere calls for harmony in mutual understanding of hierarchy and teacher-student responsibility. Although not necessarily national holidays, the lunar festivals are celebrated by the students, so it was not uncommon to stay at home.

Mae-il: “Am I aware of when I am being respectful to other people? Hm, I think, yes, of course and that’s you’re conscious of your being respectful and you have to be respectful. That’s how you can express your doing that. But, then again, it’s automatically automatic for us. Now, I’m speaking about Thai students, how we are taught to be really respectful to teachers and to older people, especially parents… Confucianism, I think we observe that a lot in Thailand as I mentioned earlier is because that’s because of the influence of Chinese family who are Thai. There are a lot of Thai families who still observe Chinese traditions, Chinese values, so I think pretty much the same or very similar to that of Koreans. But, then we didn’t live with extended family, so, it wasn’t really like other Chinese family, you know, staying together or living in the same compound, made every important Chinese festivals, Moon Festival, or Chinese New Year festival. They would do that and they still do that even though it’s not national holidays, but, uh, every Chinese New Year, uh, every Chinese New Year Day, students would not come to school. Most of them will not come to school and you know, office workers would not go to work, that kind of thing.” (32, female, single, half-Thai/half-Korean)

Thailand’s political environment has influenced the Korean family. Many Korean families felt it unsafe to live in Thailand during the peak of the 2010 conflict (Nelson, 2011) between the two major political parties, the Red and Yellow Shirts, and inevitably returned to Korea.

Young-ja: “They went back. Also, it’s been difficult for Thailand for a while now…with Yellow/Red Shirts fighting. Also, last year, there was a flood, so, last year, before that they fought with the Red Shirts, so many left. Many went back to Korea.” (55, female, married, missionary)
Although Korea has its fair share of typhoons and other weather-related threats, Koreans living in Thailand suffered at the hand of several natural disasters in recent years. One respondent has relayed that the cost of living has increased significantly within the last 20 years that she has lived in Thailand.

Chun-hyang: “There have been tsunamis. Even my son was stuck for 3 days at the airport. Yeah, lots of those incidents pop up. Because of that it’s difficult to live. Right now, prices are so expensive; eggs are even more expensive here, eggs, too. Prices are so expensive right now. It’s difficult to live. 20 years ago, living was okay. Now, what, I even want to return to Korea.” (54, female, married, housewife)

Differences in political climate, cultural climate, etc., have led to the Korean families in Thailand growing more tight-knit and forming communities. In some cases, after experiencing natural disaster or political unrest, some families have re-evaluated their family’s safety. Additionally, families have begun to question the way they raise their children and begun to see the “need” to teach traditional Korean traditions and values like filial piety.

6. Case-Specific Findings

6.1 Chun-hyang

Chun-hyang was shy to open up or explain anything but became comfortable after a while, after being reassured that I could understand and communicate adequately. Her hesitance stemmed from her family’s past suffering with many scam artists posing as friends among the Korean community. Throughout the interview, she felt more and more comfortable to open up to me and even referred to my mother several times; she felt a relation to me as I am the same age as her son and she is the same age as my Korean mother. Her assumption of the role of mother to me during this interview led her to look out for my future, even encouraging me not to work in Thailand, but in Korea where she believes it is easier to assume a job. Her reasoning is that it is difficult to advance in employment in Thailand, but my chances as a foreigner are higher in Korea.

Chun-hyang and her husband visit Korea every few years but she now questions their need to visit now that her children live overseas to further their own careers. She mentions “희생”
and “자식을 위해서” or “sacrifice” and “for the sake of children” multiple times. She stresses those words as part of expectations of being a dutiful person. As a Buddhist, she is also very superstitious, more so than the other respondents. She mentioned ghosts and living spirits in relation to the deceased, although this was unrelated to the focal topics of the interview at hand. To the best of her ability, Chun-hyang upholds the traditional rituals of paying respect to ancestors; she continues the ritual in part for the sake of the ancestor whose eldest son does not pay him respect and also her children may observe her. “환경” or “environment” is important for children to learn tradition and what is valued. She does not expect her children to continue the traditions; she also prefers “Western-style” culture and methods of raising children. She emphasizes “Western-style” many times and that “맞는거같아” or that it seems “right.”

Chun-hyang brought up the colloquial terms “시집살” or “시월드” directly translating to “married life” as being difficult for newer generations. She mentions the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship as being traditionally tumultuous. She is her mother-in-law’s favorite daughter-in-law as she displays care and compassion toward her -in-laws. Attribution that her parents’ generation wasn’t as educated excuses generational conflict. Several times she mentioned that Korea is “severe,” and that there are lengths that parents go to in order to provide for children to fulfill their expectations of their children.

Discussing dying overseas, Chun-hyang knows of several friends who brought their parents to Thailand to live with their families and pass away; she is not sure how they proceeded with burial practices. Chun-hyang continues the practice of setting the ancestral table in Thailand even though she does not have the birth order right, as she is the second son’s wife. She does this for many reasons, one to show her children, but mainly because she feels bad for the deceased grandfather’s legacy. She describes him as “pitiful” because he does not have the recognition. However, she compares the American tradition of only going to the gravesite to remember and pay respects at one’s own will; she says that the American practice is “good enough.” She admits that really there is no reason for the sacrifice as the grandfather is deceased. This admission was whispered so she felt less disrespectful.

Chun-hyang mentioned her son traveling to Korea after many, many years. She praised him for going to visit his grandfather’s grave and doing the traditional bow; he did not grow up in Korea and did not know all of the intricate details of Korean culture. Chun-hyang felt proud in
the sight of her relatives that her son, technically a foreigner in Korea, made a symbolic gesture in terms of traditional ritual. This was especially important to Chun-hyang, who may feel her son is not considered “Korean-enough,” because her son performed adequately.

6.2 Mae-il

Mae-il has no living Korean grandparents, but she states she has visited Korea often when she was a child. She even attended school in Korea while on school vacation from Thailand. For her, her identity depends on the context; for example, she feels Korean in Korea and Thai in Thailand. She did not mention the mother-in-law or daughter-in-law relationship. She is single and perhaps does not anticipate marrying a Korean man. She does not seem to have much contact with the Korean community except for when she used to attend Korean church with her mother. Filial piety to Mae-il comes naturally.

Mae-il does not accompany her mother to Korean church. When asked, she stated she had started going to another Christian church when she was in high school or when she graduated. Upon observation, it seems that her mother is very involved in the Korean church. I encountered her several times and she seems to hold an appointed position of Deacon or Greeter and she has greeted me several times. It seems that Mae-il’s mother is still involved in the Korean community, but since she has raised her children (Mae-il has a younger brother) in Thailand, she has allowed them to be a part of the Thai context. In my observation, Mae-il lives as a Thai person, but looks upon her Korean heritage, traditional holidays and visits to Korea very fondly. The Korean church usually celebrates these kinds of things, but different in contrast to other families, it does not seem as though Mae-il’s mother forces her to attend these Korean events, but instead allows her to live her own life as a Thai in Thailand, and as a Korean in Korea.

Mae-il states that her mother would “buy moon cakes”; I am unclear if she is actually referring to the Chinese tradition that Chinese-Thais also celebrate, moon cakes, or if she is referring to rice cakes. Rice cakes are native to Korean holidays; moon cakes are Chinese. This shows adaptation in the Thai context that her mother buys the cakes rather than making them. Her mother works full-time and may not have time; it may also be that there might also be limited supply of certain ingredients in Thailand. Or, there may be no reason to make them if the
family does not wholeheartedly celebrate the holidays, especially since it is only the mother, her
daughter and son. Also, moon cakes are different from the Korean traditional rice cakes. Chinese
tradition is to make moon cakes and Thai Chinese also make those moon cakes. This choice of
word may be a technicality or unintentional, but it may also be that Mae-il may have confused
the moon cake with the rice cake as her deceased father’s family most likely celebrates the
Chinese lunar holidays. She may have Thai Chinese friends that eat the cakes on Lunar New
Year. Additionally, rice cake soup is actually associated with Lunar New Year and not seaweed
soup, like Mae-il describes.

6.3 Joon-young

Joon-young mentions “가정” or “environment” as being important for children to learn,
emphasizing that parents should allow children the freedom to pursue their own identity. He
emphasizes that passing on his Korean culture is not central to raising his future children.
However, Joon-young seems to have an opinion about the younger generations not respecting
their elders and the generational conflicts that arise from disagreements. The younger generation
“cannot accept” the old ways of leadership and this is why they resist being told what to do. He
claims that society calls those people “bad people” for being disrespectful. Joon-young says that
filial piety is being brought back because it has been shown to be a great management technique
in the office. His attributes the generation of scam artists from Korea in Thailand as having less
education; this excuse of less education also attributes the generational conflict of ideas.
Although filial piety is taught in society and the institutions, he believes it also comes naturally.
Joon-young is considered unusual compared to other Koreans because he emphasized that his
children will choose their own culture and identity. He does not wish to dictate that they must be
Korean. He believes it is sufficient enough to adapt to the local culture, whether Thai or Burmese,
and accept new cultures.

6.4 Young-ja & Gun-woo
Young-ja and Gun-woo mention “갈등” or “conflict” that occurs between Koreans and Thais because of cultural differences in the work place. The word “조화” or “peace” was mentioned several times referring to the disharmony that comes because of Korean people’s efficiency and workaholism contrary to Thai people’s relaxed environment. With regard to teaching their children Korean traditions and rituals, they specifically mention “전통문화” which is “traditional culture” rather than ordinary Korean culture. It is important to this couple that their children really understand traditional culture. Young-ja and Gun-woo emphasize preservation of their traditional heritage and take an active stance. Their parents emphasized filial piety and Korean culture and especially want to preserve the memory of hardships of their parents’ generation.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This section introduces Foucault’s biopower, power, and its relationship to Confucianism, filial piety and the findings of this research. Filial piety, holidays, and acculturation are described in relation to Korean people and its community living in Thailand. Finally, future generations and filial piety conclude the discussion.

1. Biopower

Power, according to Michel Foucault (2007), is “a set of procedures” and “is not founded on itself or generated by itself” (p. 2); it is continuous and powerful. He introduces a new concept called biopower as social power where “human species became the object of a political strategy” (Foucault, 2007, p. 1). “Mechanisms of power are an intrinsic part of all these relations and, in a circular way, are both their effect and cause” (Foucault, 2007, p. 2). According to Foucault, how one is dictated to live one’s life seems to be an “aesthetic discourse that can only be based on choices of an aesthetic order” (Foucault, 2007, p. 3). This means that there is an order or an institution made up of players that formulate an order for which players are to follow.

Biopower as a concept represents the control, management and power over populations and illuminate Confucianism as an institution and the Korean people as a whole body made up of different parts that work to support that institution. It may seem that the family is eroding and falling apart when players discontinue their traditional roles in the family and society, but one may perceive that roles are merely redefined and actions altered. When discussing filial piety as it is structured by Confucianism, it is useful to consider Rabinow & Rose’s (2006) expansion upon Foucault’s work that emphasizes three main facets of biopower:

We have suggested that the concept of biopower seeks to individuate strategies and configurations that combine three dimensions or planes—a form of truth discourse about living beings and an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; and
modes of subjectification, in which individuals can be brought to work on themselves, under certain forms of authority, in relation to truth discourses, by means of practices of the self, in the name of individual or collective life or health. (p. 203-204)

The reasons punishment exists are to correct wrongdoing and maintain order; not only is there a cost of crime to the individual but to society as well. Although Foucault (2007) gives the example of sickness and discipline, he posits that discipline is not the problem but the “problem of knowing how many people are infected with smallpox, at what age, with what effects, with what mortality rate, lesions or after-effects…and the statistical effects on the population in general” (p. 10). This picture may be paralleled with Confucianism and its related changing undertones especially regarding expressions of filial piety, and that perhaps the problem does not actually rely on disappointment for not carrying out rituals or roles. Perhaps the problem relies upon the number of people not fulfilling their roles and duties on an individual and societal level; the problem also lies in the reasons for role change, rituals losing value, and the overall effect on Korean people in the future. Michel Foucault’s work overall argues power, hierarchy, and the regulation of the human body.

Confucianism as a philosophy is still surviving because it is a well-established institution. Korean people, for example, place values on certain rites or behavior that is deemed acceptable. Leaders then set precedents for the communities to uphold and maintain order within society, thus supporting the institution of Confucianism. Filial piety is one of those rites that is still maintained, but the actors (people) are reassigning value to traditional behaviors that re-shape what it means to be filially pious, thus adapting to modern times; newer or different behaviors are deemed appropriate for the new look of filial piety.

2. Filial Piety and Korean Families Living in Thailand

From the interviews, one can see that each respondent defined filial piety differently with similar but varied themes emerging: shared household; emotional support; material support; and respect or obedience or deference to parents. Love and respect emerge as common themes of filial piety (Sharma & Kemp, 2010) but, in this case, are expressed implicitly rather than explicitly by the respondents. Shared household was traditionally expected of children, but not
for those respondents who move overseas; none of the respondents brought their parents from Korea to live with them in Thailand. This is the first step of a break in the cycle of the institution of the family, living apart. Distance then creates difficulty in sharing resources and traditional family values that are so important to the family. New cycles of family interaction are either reborn or never created.

Financial or material support was traditionally expected of children and is increasingly becoming the main avenue to care for parents (Sharma & Kemp, 2010). This is becoming more acceptable as more role players adopt these habits to compensate for lack of physical presence. Greater financial support usually means greater support by parents; initial investment of time for children by parents means receiving greater support in the future, which illuminates the idea of reciprocity (Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002). Reciprocal relationships result in higher quality of life for elders rather than non-exchange relationships (Kim & Kim, 2003). Each of the respondents have their own adapted version of a reciprocal relationship, adapted to their own context, each deemed appropriate by most members within their own families.

In addition to financial support, emotional support and obedience to parents are considered respectful and put parents’ hearts/minds at ease (Chow, 2001). I found that respondents referred to traditional filial piety and their own generation; I also found the respondents have not actively pictured the challenges of succession of Korean traditions for their children’s generations. Some did not picture it because they state their children have not grown to that point. They pass on tradition to the best of their abilities, mainly the concepts of respect, politeness and expectation for their children to perform in the most appropriate settings, usually in front of elders, especially during holidays. These rituals are the point of analysis for what is acceptable behavior toward elders, senior authority figures, parents and grandparents. The essence of the tradition is maintained while the practices gradually change.

I found that filial piety is unconsciously acted out in daily life of the informants, although it is an understood aspect of daily life. Filial piety practices are evident and natural but not necessarily emphasized for the sake of filial piety. The definition of filial piety is not necessarily weakened but is changing and adapting, holding different meanings per person depending on their own circumstance. Major patterns from analysis show that the idea filial piety is still very
ingrained in past generations and is strongly believed and upheld. However, the sustainability of filial piety practice in today’s society is in question as there is a gap between ideals of filial piety and practice of filial piety.

The definition for the path to being dutiful also aligns with the definition of filial piety. Being dutiful means putting parents’ minds at ease; the way to do this is to be considerate and to put the elders’ needs above one’s own. It is described as difficult. Filial piety is learned by modeling and actively teaching children the ethical and moral values. All of society enforces this.

The definitions of dutiful child given by the respondents parallel the definitions given for filial piety, but expand to include actions or tasks of the children. The “dutiful child” is also an established term with varying definitions depending on the context and how each person applies it physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Related behaviors involve: loving and obeying parents; listening well to one’s parents and serving them; giving allowance; and receiving a good education.

Four different themes of duty categorize the children as available, traditionally obedient, educated and healthy. Traditionally, the available child has been more common and accepted, but is becoming less so as children move away from the hometown and even move overseas. Ways to compensate for physical distance are to call home and communicate often. It is becoming easier as elders are learning how to use social media; video chatting eases elders’ minds as they can see their children and grandchildren and tend to worry less. The traditionally obedient child is described as honoring, loving, respecting and caring for parents; they are described as dutiful. Filial obligation is serious and important to both young and old; in China, both young and old rate respect as most important and obedience as least important on a 5-point scale (Yue & Ng, 1999).

The expectation that a child is educated is a common component of being dutiful; this way, the parents worry less and are at peace that the child is faring well. This, in turn, ensures their own future, assured that their child can take care of himself and them. This idea of studying diligently to ultimately become successful is so that parents know that they have loved and sacrificed; knowing that their children will be happy will in turn contribute to parents’ emotional
health and well-being in later life. Every parent places extra emphasis on education because it impossible to advance in society.

Education is highly stressed within Korean culture. Educational success for Koreans has been attributed to policy that allows modern education for more than just yangban (the elite ruling class) to pursue education, industrialization, and Confucian teachings (Sorensen, 1994). Confucianism cannot be solely credited with educational success because it has been around for a few thousand years and has even been cited as unwilling to support investments, etc. (Sorensen, 1994). With advancement of public school education, comprehensive exams were introduced in order to ensure that deserving students received better education. Additionally, entrance exams were introduced and hagwons (after-school academies) became really popular for children to enhance their education outside school, efforts to prepare for the difficult entrance exams (Sorensen, 1994). Attending more prestigious schools is almost a guarantee of success in obtaining good employment. Thus, Korean parents sacrifice their livelihoods to invest in their children so that their children will have good futures, thus insuring their secure future, maintaining the cycle of filial piety.

Based on my observations and feedback from my informants, most parents send their children to international school for a more international educational training, according to my observations of Korean families in BKK and Chiang Mai. Contrarily, the missionary couple that I interviewed chose to send their Korean children to Thai boarding school; this family is the only family that I have encountered in Thailand who chose this option. They are not the only outliers, however, because Joon-young also expressed that once he has children, he will not pay extreme attention to education. Again, based on my observations and input from informants, it seems that this is not common of Korean people living in Thailand, though, and Korean people living in America, for example, usually do not hesitate to send one’s children to American schools.

Most parents believe that international school is a better option than sending their children to Thai school. English-speaking schools may be more conducive to Korean families as it is more familiar than Thai language, and the quality of education is perceived to be better at an international school as curriculum is usually from Western countries. Parents believe that their children will have better chances of survival either if their children return to Korea or if they enter the international job market; chances of doing so are especially high if they know the
English language. I have not met any Korean families who wish for their children to settle in Thailand, but instead wish that they find employment elsewhere. The extreme behavior on behalf of the parents is apparent. It is important that children perform well in order to reflect the parents, so parents will ensure that education is stressed and if this means that the best option is international school, then that is the only option. Some parents, many in Chiang Mai, stress speaking only English within the home. The Korean language as well as heritage is lost. It is unclear what are the long-term effects.

Like the “dutiful child,” the respondents could not define “being dutiful” without explicitly referring back to “filial piety.” How one should be dutiful is taught from birth; it is a part of society, a part of the culture. When asked, respondents believe that filial piety is either innate, learned, or both. It is almost as if it is natural, a given. Although adaptation occurs, it is still expected even with the rules slightly altered. Making phone calls because one cannot physically visit and relying on home health care workers to visit as supplemental care to parents when siblings must work are adaptive behaviors for being dutiful. These adaptations are situational and differ depending on the family structure and the parents’ health. Technology seems to be necessary, whether telephone or internet used to communicate. Communication is much easier today than it was in the traditional society. Being a phone call away puts families at ease of mind knowing that they can find out and then fly back to Korea if needed. Even the fact that one respondent is the eldest son means he has responsibility, but even it is accepted that he cannot be there physically to provide care for his parents. If it is obvious that the child is adapting and doing their best in their circumstances to provide the necessary care, then the families seem to accept it as inevitable and are at peace with the adaptation. If a child does not repay the kindness given him by his parents or he does not live up to their standards, he may be called an “undutiful child.” Being undutiful or unfilial is the most common cause of heartache, usually due to poor studying, disrespect, etc. Adaptation includes fewer visits to parents, expected financial assistance (allowance), and increased communication. Filial expectations include time spent with parents (Sharma & Kemp, 2010) but this is not possible living overseas.

Filial piety practices and intergenerational relationships of Asian Americans show that over time there is a lesser degree of filial obligation (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997). Ishii-Kuntz’s (1997) research also shows that there are varied filial piety practices even among East Asian cultures.
(Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) that share similar cultural practices and Confucian philosophies. Financial, service, emotional support in Ishii-Kuntz’s study determined levels of filial obligation and “Filial obligation has differential impact on provision of support depending on such structural and economic factors as proximity in residence, respondents’ financial resources, and parental needs for assistance” (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997, p. 30). Even moving to an urbanized and modernized city may decrease expressions of filial piety, especially among those who are not as highly educated (Cheung & Kwan, 2009).

Adaptation in expression of filial piety does not necessarily mean that it is disappearing, merely that it is changing to reflect modern times and economic circumstances. Social network and proximity to children, motivation to immigrate and time period immigrated should also be evaluated as affecting filial piety and well-being. Second-generation children worry for parents’ adaptability (Yoo & Kim, 2010). Daughters provide more care for parents than sons (Yoo & Kim, 2010) and the reason daughters provide more financial assistance may attribute to higher education and income. (Xie & Zhu, 2009).

The respondents also referred to Thai filial piety or katanyu and its similarities to Korean Confucianism. In this way, it is easy to maintain a structure of hierarchy and respect for Korean families living in Thailand.

Han (1996) believes that traditional and modern cultural values coexist in Korea but that individualism and independence are threatening elders’ expectations of security in old age. Younger generations may not value age and have negative perceptions of aging and the aged. What is also apparent is the shift away from shared households and less interdependence with elders discontinuing their expectations of reciprocity from children. As a result, elders are “seeking meaning of life and emotional satisfaction outside the family…They develop a lifestyle that deemphasizes relationships and roles in the family and increase the involvement with peers and leisure activities” (Han, 1996, p. 54).

3. Holidays and Korean Families Living in Thailand
The most obvious way that Korean culture is adaptive is evidenced during the Korean lunar holidays of Chuseok and Seolnal. All respondents celebrate the holidays, but the level of involvement truly depends on the individual, family situation and context. For example, the single respondents do not actively celebrate the holidays, one with the reason of being engrossed in his business and the other may only celebrate if her mother prepares it, but not that much importance is placed upon the holidays to be celebrated as a family. Levels of importance differ; one family makes it a point to celebrate, while another celebrates, yet does not emphasize participation of her children. Each family truly differs. While the generation after the Korean War celebrates the holiday with enthusiasm, their children’s generation may not understand all the nuances of celebration or be able to recreate such things when they are grown with children. Even in the case of Chun-hyang as a Buddhist, she has adapted her practice and sets out the ancestral ceremonial table even though she doesn’t have the right to do so as the wife of the second son. Her children will not be expected to do that for their father. Those respondents that actively celebrate the holidays do their best to celebrate as close to the traditional customs for the sake of their children, to teach them. The Chiang Mai community was cited by two respondents as adopting a more community-centered approach to celebrating the lunar holidays.

4. Korean Communities in Thailand

From my interviews, I learned that there are two types of Korean communities in Thailand: the mission-oriented community and the business-related community. Reasons for migration are either to reach people spiritually or to make a profit. The Korean community itself is very tight-knit, especially for those who attend church, which provides an opportune meeting place in addition to the Buddhist temples that are very available in Thailand. Korean people are either involved in one group or another.

The Korean immigrant church in America is quite established and “provides a sanctuary from everyday experiences of racism and linguistic and cultural barriers and offers programs and services for members at different life stages” (Yoo & Kim, 2010, p. 179). Although Bahk (2001) describes the effects of shunning and excommunication from the Korean church in America, he also describes aspects of the church and its merits. It can be argued that there is no difference
between the Korean-American religious community and the Korean-American community, that they are one and the same (Bahk, 2001). Historically, missionaries encouraged immigration to America and church leaders began to act as not only spiritual leaders but community leaders (Bahk, 2001). The church plays a major role in preserving Korean cultural identity, group identity and ethnic identity; the church may even go as far as providing social services (Bahk, 2001). Further research can identify the Korean church’s role in the lives of Korean families living in Thailand; then, a cross-cultural analysis between other Korean churches abroad would compare factors of influence across countries.

Korean people living in Thailand still gather as a community during holidays and are very much united when events are involving their home country. Bangkok provides a nice environment for the Korean community to thrive because, fortunately, Thai people love Korean people. This love is not always reciprocated to the same extent. Additionally, not all is as it seems within the Korean community; there are instances of scam and fraud where people are taken advantage of, within and outside the Korean community. A certain type of people is attracted to living and working in Thailand, a type that has disagreeable intentions (Fuller, 2011) and there have been many warnings to the community to look out for one’s friends. What some respondents expressed is that “Your friend could very well be your enemy,” that the people one trusts should not actually be trusted. This is all expressed by the respondents, but it is unclear if this information is representative of a larger fraudulent community within the Korean community living in Thailand or just instances involving the respondents themselves. The information about the fraudulent activity only generalizes to the respondents who have been victim of such activities in Thailand.

Koreans as well as other immigrants may find attractive aspects of joining an organization specifically for one’s own ethnic group (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997) where one can form a friendship community. Moving to a larger city with more diversity as well as a larger population of one’s own ethnic group creates a feeling of alikeness and unity.

Korean people have adapted to the environment of Thailand, learning enough of the language to communicate. Missionaries who work with Thais only seem to blend into the community much better than other missionary groups reaching only Koreans and those involved with Korea-related business, etc. It has been observed and stated many times that Koreans
perceive Thailand as very underdeveloped compared to Korea and perceive their status as higher than the developing countries of Southeast Asia. Many migrant workers in Korea come from Southeast Asia because Korea is wealthy. Most research on second-generation Koreans is based in America and the economic conditions and many aspects of the environment are starkly different from Thailand.

5. Acculturation of Korean Families Living in Thailand

Acculturation is described as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. At the group level, it involves changes in social structures and institutions and in cultural practices. At the individual level, it involves changes in a person’s behavioral repertoire” (Berry, 2005, pp. 698-699). Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001) describe various researchers’ ideas of two-dimensional models of acculturation, “preservation of one’s heritage culture and adaptation to the host society” as being “conceptually distinct” and varying “independently” (p. 495).

Acculturation research has grown significantly and assimilation and marginalization models of acculturation expanded to include integration and separation, allowing for multiculturalism, where “different cultures may coexist in a society” (Phinney, et al., 2001, p. 495). These strategies grew from issues involving “the distinction toward (1) a relative preference for maintaining one’s heritage culture and identity, and (2) a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups” (Berry, 2005, p. 704). The informants in this research have become acculturated to a certain extent in their Thai environment. Three informants actively maintain their Korean heritage, but with only one keeping to herself and not involving herself in the Thai community. The two who maintain their heritage, however, make themselves available to the Thai community, actively learning and speaking Thai, even conducting their church services in Thai. The half-Thai/half-Korean respondent maintains a Thai identity but weaves in between that identity and her Korean identity when the context changes; she dons her identity depending on the situation. One
informant, however, attends Korean church when he is in BKK, but does not strongly believe that Korean identity is the sole solution and is quite active in Thai-Burmese relations.

“The expression of cultural patterns is highly influenced—but not determined by—environment” (Whitehead, 2004, p. 10). Each respondent had differing perspectives of relating with Thai culture, some wanting to relate, and others wanting to maintain Korean identity. Findings from the five respondents cannot generalize whether Koreans living in Thailand choose to integrate, assimilate, separate or become marginalized. However, it should be noted that all respondents choose to relate to Korean culture in whichever context they choose, depending on environment, or even societal pressure. Korean families with sons are legally obligated to maintain some kind of relationship with Korea; if their son is still a Korean citizen, he is obligated to complete his mandatory military service once he is drafted.

It is apparent that the Korean respondents have become acculturated in Thailand, sharing cultural experiences, and perhaps setting aside aspects of one’s own culture. Consequences can be both positive and negative, harmony of two cultures, or stress on both cultures. Koreans may feel shame that their children may not hold the same levels of filial respect, duty and obligation. The extent of acculturation of Koreans in Thai culture should be examined in further research as well as methods of coping and how Koreans and Thais engage in this mutual process, not just on the individual level, but on a group level, family level and societal levels.

6. Future Generations and Filial Piety

Four out of five of my respondents were first-generation Koreans living in Thailand. The next generations should be considered because there are implications for Korean culture, identity, and tradition. Phinney et al. (2001) researched adolescent immigrants in 4 different countries and their research tends support to the notion that an integrated identity, that is, the combination of strong ethnic and national identities, promotes the most healthy psychological adaptation, whereas low scores on these two identities are related to poor adaptation” (p. 502). Their study represents interactional model’s suggestions that “these relationships will vary in relation to ethnic group and contextual factors” (p. 502).
A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is defined as “a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 13). Benefits and challenges of being a TCK are: expanded worldview; confused loyalties; cross-cultural enrichment; ignorance of the home culture; social skills; and linguistic skills (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This concept is important to note because the second-generation Koreans living in Thailand will identify themselves as Korean in a different way than their parents; identity conflict and culture conflict are a result and many other issues follow it.

Another concept is the Cross-Cultural Kid (CCK) who is defined as “a person who is living or has lived in—or meaningfully interacted with—two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during childhood (up to age 18)” (Pollock & Van Reken, p. 31). More empirical research is need, with additional operationalization of both definitions and how to effectively apply TCK and CCK to Korean children living in Thailand, as well as their specific needs and implications. Language transmission and communication are part of cultural transmission and is representative of relationship to parents. Pollock & Reken’s (2009) work addresses pros and cons of relationships with peers, but not necessarily issues within the family and home; it does not necessarily address the challenges that may occur when identity differs from parent’s home country. Additionally, they do not give many solutions for familial interactions and to maintain harmony in cultural identity. It is also important to understand the concept of linked lives being that “lives are lived interdependently and sociohistorical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships” (Elder, 2006).

Additionally, “generation and age at time of immigration are also related to identity and adaptation,” although more research is required (Phinney et al., 2001, p. 504). Four of my five informants are first-generation immigrants to Thailand and perhaps two or three of those informants plan to return to Korea once they have reached retirement age. Further research is needed for their children’s generation and levels of filial obligation, those second-generation immigrants. Koreans have a longer history of immigration to other countries with more research to support migration habits and push/pull factors; there is very little empirical research on the
Korean family living in Thailand. Even more poignant for anthropological research would be to identify the needs and intergenerational relationships of the 1.5 generation of Koreans (in-between generation), or the *ilchom ose*, who are currently living in Thailand. This 1.5 generation is the generation that was born in Korea but immigrated to America as a pre-adult, the generation between the first-generation immigrants and the second-generation immigrants born in the parents’ new country (Danico, 2004). More research is needed in order to be able to apply this term to that in-between generation in other countries and not just America.

Complex identity may confuse the 1.5 generation, especially during adolescence, whose parents emphasize speaking English in order to succeed; children may feel “Korean” but be unable to speak Korean as a result (Danico, 2004). I observed this with the two daughters of Gun-woo and Young-ja; they could understand and speak their parents’ Korean but having moved to Thailand at young ages and attendance at Thai boarding school resulted in their preference of speaking in Thai when by themselves. These girls know and understand their traditional Korean holiday rituals and the importance of being respectful, but their future may be complex if they would move back to Korea. Young-ja stated outside the interview that her girls would not be able to keep up in the Korean classroom because the language and curriculum would be too advanced. 1.5-ers are aware of their bicultural identity and may even identify with the dominant culture (Danico, 2004).

Inability to communicate in the same language by second-generation Koreans and altered identification with home culture may actually be a barrier to relating with parents, especially if parents cannot read or write the language of the country in which they live (Yoo & Kim, 2010). Second-generation children feel the need to repay parents in different ways like appreciation and caring for elders which will, in turn, secure parents’ happiness (Yoo & Kim, 2010). Both the future 1.5 and potentially second-generation Koreans living in Thailand will someday “contend with aging elderly parents who face multiple jeopardy—language barriers, limited income vulnerabilities, and the aging process” like their counterparts in America (Yoo & Kim, 2010, p. 179).

Wright (1998) discusses politicization of culture, old and new culture, and makes a poignant statement:
No ideology, however hegemonic and entrenched in institutions and in everyday life, is beyond context; ‘culture’ is a dynamic concept, always negotiable and in process of endorsement, contestation and transformation. Differently positioned actors, with unpredictable inventiveness, draw on, re-work and stretch in new directions the accumulated meanings of ‘culture’ - including old and new academic ones. (p. 10)

Culture is not static, but dynamic, as pointed out by many researchers, but Wright credits many anthropologists’ (Cohen, 1974; Macdonald, 1993; Morley & Chen, 1996) arguments that “cultural identities are not inherent, bounded or static; they are dynamic fluid and constructed situationally, in particular places and times” (p. 9). Wright (1998) concludes that culture includes meaning making and “in its hegemonic form, culture appears coherent, systematic, consensual” (p. 10). Although she discusses British politics and culture, she mentions that the “world can no longer be seen as a mosaic of discrete cultures, and that migration and diaspora have generated populations with multifaceted differences” (p. 10).

Overall, attitudes toward aging should shift toward the positive and aim to empower elders (Han, 1996) as well as engage the other generations for intergenerational bonding. Korean American elders have supportive social networks than the two other groups and also require more care, receiving more support from children (Han, 1996). Another interesting finding is that “later-generation Asian Americans tend to show a slightly less degree of filial obligation.” Han’s (1996) study can be modeled in Thailand providing a comprehensive database is obtained documenting multiple generations; perhaps a cross-cultural extension would expand the research from East Asian immigrants. Filial piety should be compared to katanyu or Thai gratitude related to filial piety. Thai elders also face similar consequences of growing older and not wishing to become a burden in old age. Thai elders are also facing adult children migrating away and are also having to adapt to such conditions, finding other means to supplement themselves in the absence of traditional expected care from children (Knodel, 2012).

To summarize, older generations still hold traditional Korean values and value traditional culture, including the obligatory filial piety. Filial piety means very different things depending upon the individual. The context of Thailand creates the need for adaptation, not just because it is a foreign country, but because it is less developed than South Korea and Korean expectations for success are very high. Parents rely on less frequent visits with their families in Korea every few years; they support their parents financially and emotionally by calling through the telephone.
The Thai hierarchical context is conducive and comparable to Korea in terms of maintaining filial piety values with regard to respecting elders or those in authority. Korean parents, still hold higher expectations of children, that they will receive a good education to leave Thailand to create an even more successful life. Raising children to maintain their Korean-ness and Korean traditional values in Thailand is difficult; children are sent to international school and this next generation of Koreans will be significantly different from the Korean children raised in Korea. Current generations will need to prepare their children to adapt to the new global community.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter provides conclusions of this research study as well as recommendations for ways that further research can expand upon this study and ways to engage families. Limitations of this study are mentioned followed by closing thoughts.

1. Conclusion

Globalization is changing the very way we interact, with whom we interact and where these interactions take place. Historical events, climate change, economic unsettlement, and many other variables all cooperate as influences on human interactions. Korea has made tremendous economic progress since the Korean War and has overcome many major hardships. Korean people have embraced industrialization, entered the global market and have not only permeated the Asian market but the Western market as well, all in a very short amount of time. The structure of the Korean family has altered, thus altering the Confucian philosophies and institution that is a large part of the Korean family make-up. Individuals’ roles are changing and families and society are adapting to the change in environment. This is significant because conflict can arise if families do not understand the process of change as positive and not negative. A sense of role loss will lead to confusion and feelings of loss of self-worth and value associated with previous role in the family.

The strength of filial piety as an expected rite or ritual obligation is steady, merely altered. The value exists, but perhaps displayed in a very different manner than it has been traditionally. The next generations, perhaps, do not place as much value on expressions of filial piety, but still understand that their parents have expectations of them. Filial piety should not be described as weakened but altered and adapted. Nonetheless, the current generation of parents should realize that perhaps they cannot place the same expectations on their children that their own parents
placed upon them. It is possible that there will be generational conflict, but awareness that change is inevitable will ease the burden. Knowledge is powerful and can be used as a tool of empowerment for all generations, to encourage people to notice the specific needs of the aging generation and to promote intergenerational relationships. Traditional rituals are also altered, and practiced whenever able. Expectations of children may change with the realization that children cannot perform traditional duties as in the past. Parents do not wish to become a burden on their children either and so adjusting may be inevitable; these examples of changes being made at generational levels should be explored in another study.

Children are being raised in a different world with different expectations placed upon them. Possible areas to monitor are stressors for children growing up in a country or environment other than one’s own nationality or parents’ home country. I perceive that some children may not identify with their parents’ ethnicity or national identity or be more “Western” than thought. I suspect that parents may struggle with their children’s vulnerabilities and the knowledge that their children are not “Korean” enough. This is recognized as common crises of second-generation immigrants in other countries. Traditional concepts are lost when brought up in a different world that emphasizes other cultural traditions. Unhappiness and mental health may plague the parents’ generation. It is my estimate that the mid-20 year-olds generation and older are more aware of their obligation to their parents rather than the younger generations because that generation is the offspring of the children whose parents survived the Korean War. It is also very obvious that children who grow up in Thailand and those children who were educated in Korea and then moved to Thailand as young adults are very different ideologically and socially. I have observed this in Koreans educated in the U.S. and Koreans educated in Korea. Mannerisms are just the physical manifestations of deeper ideological differences.

Thailand is a unique place to live, a vibrant country to live as a foreigner. Koreans are very welcome and work hard in an environment that is culturally different from Korea, one that is sabai sabai, the Thai expression for happy, peaceful, comfortable and relaxed. Koreans excel and move on and maintain good relationships with Thai people meanwhile wanting their children to move overseas upon graduation from high school. Thailand has much to offer the Korean people.

Choi (2004) believes that:
The core elements of filial piety could be continuously upheld in modern society if they could be practiced based upon egalitarian, reciprocal, and virtuous beliefs in relationship between family members and societal members...So far, the education on filial piety has emphasized the ethical or moral aspect and is not based on scientific evidence of aging process. (p. S73)

This just means that there needs to be more empirical studies that measure the value of filial piety. New and different global trends forcing families to adjust, even unexpectedly, shows the necessity to explore the differences between younger and older generations’ expectations and definitions of filial piety and the filial child. Each individual in each family is different. Some may welcome cultural change that is inevitable in a different environment. Some wish to maintain their cultural values yet embrace other cultures and understand cultural differences. It will, however, be more difficult for those families who desire to hold fast to traditional values in an ever-changing world. Although the couple I interviewed expressed that they do their best to educate their daughters about Korean culture and emphasize language in the home, it is still difficult to maintain cultural preservation in developing minds. I believe that the current middle-aged generations who fully support absorption of another culture will face significant cultural difficulties with their children in the future. It may become more difficult to communicate if children do not speak their parents’ native language; if children move to another foreign country, it may be even more difficult to interact. Those families who already live overseas should be aware that their families will have different experiences from families living in their native countries.

During data collection, I was very surprised to learn about the scam and fraud by Koreans, even further surprising me to know that the Korean community faces it from their own community members in Thailand. We do not know specifics about the Korean missionary and business community in Thailand. Additionally, it is evident that the Korean communities in Thailand are similar but very different in different cities. The Chiang Mai community was described as more “severe” in terms of emphasizing Western culture yet may even have the most tight-knit community willing to gather and celebrate Korean traditional holidays. I also believe my respondents still cling to ethnic identity and still hold onto distinct traditional philosophies but adapt them as their living situations change.
2. Recommendations

My suggestions for research are: work closely with the Korean Embassy to gather a more complete picture of Koreans living in Thailand, ultimately establishing a comprehensive database showing more in-depth demographic characteristics; use the database to make a comprehensive questionnaire detailing Korean ideals and emphasis on filial piety, culture and education; follow different generations of Korean living in Thailand and conduct a longitudinal study. There are bound to be stark differences in values and expectations of those newer families with younger children who move to Thailand. Also, reasons for sending a child to international school and Thai school can and should be examined.

Future research can include a more variable sample of Korean people of different ages. Also, the different communities such as mission-oriented and business-related should be examined more closely to identify adaptation and relationship to maintenance of traditional values. I was not able to uncover specifics of Koreans living in more rural areas of Thailand. Perhaps those Koreans have a totally different perspective of what it means to be Korean living in Thailand, and personal struggles with maintenance of Korean culture while having few resources that are usually more readily available in bigger cities. In addition to the rural communities, differences among Korean communities in major cities like Chiang Mai and BKK should be identified as well as specific factors contributing to those differences.

Reasons for migration and reasons for staying should also be examined while measuring the depth of Thailand’s relationship with Korea and mutual commitment and collaboration. Thailand’s country admission policies as well as immigration policies should be examined further. Longitudinal studies may be conducted to explore long-term effects on specific cohorts. Thai culture and Korean culture may be explored in more depth to identify specific aspects that makes Thailand an accommodating environment for Confucian and Buddhist philosophies, both of which are very familiar to Korean as well as Thai culture. Further research would benefit by observing parent-child relationships and transmission of culture and language and perhaps adopting a more formal interactional model would “take into account the culture, identity attitudes, and preferences of the immigrants, the characteristics of the place of settlement, and the interaction among these factors” (Phinney et al., 2001, p. 505). Overall, the adaptation of the
Korean family should be examined more closely to understand the specific factors influenced by Thailand.

My suggestions for preparation in the future would mostly include promotion of cultural enrichment programs to assist children in relating to their home country. Not only should there be cultural programs for the younger generations but for the parent generations raising children overseas, to better equip them with skills to teach children necessary values and to anticipate changes associated with living overseas. One avenue with a positive feature would be a more unified collaboration with Thai people to encourage, share, and exchange cultural expressions of Korean and Thai identity and cultural traditions. Effective utilization of educational programs and awareness can help alleviate stress and struggles that may not have been previously known. Another avenue would be to establish intergenerational programs that promote increased communication and mutual understandings of traditional and modern ways and provide opportunities to bond.

Further research should identify factors that make up the cohort that immigrated to Thailand after the Korean War and during industrialization. That cohort must have experienced a period effect and have identifying characteristics from other Koreans that have recently immigrated to Thailand. A period effect is “people’s responses to historical events and processes” (Alwin, 2002, p. 43) while cohort is “a group of people who have shared a critical experience at the same time” (Alwin, 2004, p. 44). A generation, on the other hand is “a group of people born at the same time” (Alwin, 2002, p. 43). There are also generational differences, although not identified in this study. There is more research available on second-generation immigrant intergenerational relationships in other countries but not on Korean families living in Thailand. A historical timeline for Koreans immigrating to Thailand would supplement research on cohort effects, period effects and age effects. Additionally, different generations of Koreans living in Thailand would provide a diverse outlook on family life and generational perspectives.

Specific needs of the middle-aged generation of Korean people interviewed for this study were not identified, but would be beneficial for future study. In addition, the older generations living in Thailand should have their needs identified and as well as factors affecting health and life satisfaction. Treatment should be empowerment-focused as well as face-saving in nature to properly meet the needs of Koreans within their cultural context.
The field of gerontology can and should recognize specific issues related to aging among East Asians especially in those countries that are not America, China and Japan, the countries where most Koreans migrate. The overall conclusion is that families will need to find an effective strategy to adapt and help their children adapt in the ever-growing global community.

3. Limitations

This research study has many limitations, the most significant of which was time limitations. I was restricted in terms of how much time I had in the field to collect data for this study and finding willing informants was also more difficult than thought. I did not have much time to familiarize myself with the Korean community in Thailand or to form relationships before sampling. There are also many gaps in identifying specifics about the Korean community.

Four of the five respondents were church members which may reflect a biased perspective, only evidently obvious in responses regarding traditions for holidays. This divides Buddhist rituals and Christian adaptations, leaving only the traditional rituals that do not involve ancestor worship. The church members may also enroll their children in private Christian schools and Christian youth programs. Three of the informants were in their mid-50s, one was in his mid-40s and there was one young 30-year-old (half-Thai, half-Chinese), so this age bracket does not necessarily reflect the opinions of younger or older generations. It was unintentional to obtain respondents of similar age. Additionally, I conducted interviews in my secondary language and not my primary language. Language is a slight limitation as I am not fully fluent in the Korean language; this goes along with the time consumed transcribing and translating and the possibility that some subtle meanings were lost.

It is important to realize that the findings are not generalizable beyond the five Korean informants who participated in this research. The small scale of this study limits findings; however, I would like to address the fact that this research was an exploratory attempt to better understand how Koreans have adapted their traditional practices in Thailand. The sample was sampled at my convenience, mainly limited by time and scope to find more than five informants. I made an attempt to gain knowledge in the context of a qualitative study without previous professional academic qualitative research training. However, for the scale of the Master’s degree thesis and my willingness to only explore surface issues. I did my best in the time allotted
for research. It is my wish as a first-time researcher to use this thesis as a pilot study/introduction for future research. Future research would be benefited by suggestions.

4. Closing Words

This research attempted to recognize filial piety and its relationship to the Korean family living in Thailand. The added bonus is the exploration of the basic characteristics of Koreans of living in Thailand, the importance of filial piety and formerly unknown aspects of the Korean community itself in Thailand. This is the first pilot exploration regarding filial piety among the Korean families living in Thailand. It is difficult to find comparative research and very little is known about Koreans and the special relationship with Thailand. Several studies exist on filial piety and the Korean family living in different countries such as the United States, China and various other countries, but it seems that not much is known about the Korean community living in Southeast Asia. This research attempts to highlight the need to further study adaptation and maintenance of cultural values in adaptation and socialization in a non-native country. There are many implications for future research or expansion of this research study.
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APPENDICES
The following questions were asked as probes and were not necessarily a fixed outline for the interviews. This guide begins with demographic questions and progresses to issues related to filial piety. The interview itself was very flexible and I asked questions that were based on respondents’ responses to my probes. Not all questions were asked, but meanings and responses to those questions were even implied so it was not necessary to ask them all.

**Interview Guide**

Ask for demographic information from informants.

Do you have siblings?

How many years in Thailand?

How often do you visit Korea?

What does it mean to be a Korean person?

What does it mean to be a Korean person living in Thailand?

What is your role in the family?

What is your definition of filial piety?

What are some filial piety practices that you incorporate in your daily life?

How does your practice of filial piety differ from how you practiced it in South Korea?

How do you respect your parents?

How do you honor your ancestors?

How has living in Thailand changed the way your honor/respect your parents?

How do you teach your children about filial piety?
Do your parents here or in Korea feel you are filially pious toward them?

Are your parents currently living? Do you live with your parents? Where do your parents currently live?

How is their health? What happens if there is a health decline?

What does health care look like for your parents? Is there anyone who provides assistance?

Who provides care? Why do they provide care?

What do your parents do? In their free time?

How is your experience living here in Thailand possibly different than if you lived in another country, America, for example?

Why do you feel that you should repay your parents?

How did your parents raise you? How are you going to raise your children?

What do you see for your children? For the future generations?

Does your perspective differ from your spouse’s? How? Why?

Do you know any other Korean families?

What about the Korean community? What kinds of activities do you do?

What about other Korean families?

Do you worry about passing on your culture and values?

What are your expectations from your children? What kinds of behaviors do you expect? Do you expect filially pious behaviors?

How is this different from how others raise their children?