The stories are burning inside of us: exploring daily violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience in interracial family communication

by

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B.S. Université de Caen, Basse-Normandie, 2003
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Staley School of Leadership
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Abstract

The construction of interracial families in the United States was forbidden until legislation preventing antimiscegenation was revoked in 1967. As a result, interracial couples face many additional struggles not experienced by same-race partners, including marginalization as well as cross-cultural communication and socio-historical differences. It is challenging and sometimes impossible to have empathetic intersectional conversations about race and gender in the same breath within an interracial family in which family members hold both oppressor and Oppressed roles. As a result, communication about race and gender can feel dismissive to individuals who are facing oppression and disorienting to oppressors who have never been confronted or challenged by their racist or sexist blind spots. This dissertation seeks to push the boundaries of comfortable cross-cultural communication by exploring the ways we can embrace, accept, and learn to survive intersectional family communication from a point of critical hope, intercultural humility, and resilience, yet without negating conversations of race and gender and instead affirming the lived experiences of Oppressed people as we address our oppressor identities. As we engage in family communication, we find ways to address our role in daily violence, how we can be more adaptive and compassionate within these oppressor identities, and how to find peace within, between, and among people who are very different than ourselves.

This dissertation addresses three questions: (1) How does gendered and racialized communication manifest in my own family experience? (2) How does my intercultural experience with daily violence manifest in my own family? (3) And finally, how do I implement peacebuilding and resilience strategies within myself and my interracial family? Those questions are also posed with the background of other interracial family experiences

with intersectional healing. The results of the study indicate that RQ1 centered on (1) not escaping the white racial frame, (2) exploring the creative tension and transformative potential of talking about race and gender intentionally for the first time, (3) the unveiling of stock and concealed stories, (4) parenting biracial children through a lens of critical hope, and (5) storytelling as an act of peacebuilding and resilience. The three emergent themes for RQ2 were (1) personal experiences with daily violence on a spectrum, (2) the interconnectedness of childhood abuse, rape, and domestic violence in adulthood, and (3) violence as a ubiquitous phenomenon. Regarding RQ3, many tools for peacebuilding and resilience emerged during the study. Three conceptual frameworks were developed and explored with interracial families: intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective, the development of interracial family communication for intersectional healing and reconciliation (critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience), as well as the development of intercultural humility and resilience (courageous conversations about race and gender, motivational interviewing techniques, and narrative therapy techniques). In addition to exploring these three conceptual frameworks, three additional peacebuilding and resilience tools were identified because of the research being conducted: the couples debrief, cross-culturally congruent listening, and hybrid culture.

This study yielded several notable theoretical, methodological, and practice/engagement contributions to the field of leadership and communication. The theoretical contributions include listening as a recognized form of communication: Intercultural listening and cross-culturally congruent listening are frameworks that attribute more to listening than to speaking in critical intercultural communication. Intercultural listening attends to self and other awareness, power dynamics, and supporting the voices of marginalized peoples. Cross-culturally congruent

listening creates opportunities to further peacebuilding in cross-cultural communication by creating feelings of connection and belonging as interracial families collectively engage in storytelling and narrative resilience. Additionally, successfully navigating critical intercultural communication takes place first within, between, and finally among people following a similar framework as peace within, peace between, and peace among (Galtung, 1969). Finally, fostering interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation showcases the interracial family system as a catalyst to dismantle systemic oppression and daily violence that has the potential to impact larger educational and societal systems. Second, methodological contributions to the field include positioning art as emancipatory and community engaged. Arts-based narratives create a freedom of expression which are culturally responsive and support cross-cultural storytelling thus creating emerging freedom stories.

Finally, practice/engagement contributions involve intentionality and commitment regarding communication about race and gender naturally leading to intersectional healing: interracial couples/families organically practiced the peacebuilding tools of critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility. Additionally, community engagement and service contributed to intersectional healing and reconciliation and were defined by a desire to give back and provide support to the community and others struggling with daily violence, racialized and gender-based trauma, and cross-cultural communication. Lastly, utilizing the interracial family system as a catalyst for developing critical intercultural communication could be used to inform numerous fields including but not limited to education/teaching, therapy, civic and community development, and organizational leadership.

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Major Professor
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My grandmother, Lucile Sours. who spent time with me as a kid, read stories to me, and encouraged me to reach for the stars. I am proud to be your only granddaughter. You were born

shortly after white women got the right to vote in the United States. Today, I celebrate being an extension of you and being able to be the first person in our family with a doctoral degree. I love you!

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Linda Waller – Thank you for helping me fill out my application to become a graduate student. You coached me and mentored me as I accessed higher education for my master’s program and you pushed me to believe in myself. I will always remember what an incredibly strong woman you were. I miss you.

Don – I leave my acknowledgement of you for last even though you have never cared much about words. I know that actions mean more to you. Thank you for being a part of the research team to help this study access the perspectives of Men of Color. You sat through every interview, debriefing with me even when we both experienced discomfort. You have consistently strived to be the very best version of yourself for our family and intentionally committed to peacebuilding with me. Thank you for all your acts of service: folding laundry, doing dishes, taking care of the kids and not doing 50/50 but many times, 100% at home. I appreciate and acknowledge all these things and the sacrifices you’ve made. Through the interview process, I understand now that coming to Kansas to start a family with me was a second immigration for you and I know it has been very hard. I’m so glad we have made it and our kids can experience a peaceful loving home where we can have courageous conversations. When I walk across the stage, I wish you and the kids could walk with me. You exemplify embracing discomfort in order to grow. You're my hero.

There are so many people within my community and my world that have supported me and lifted me up so that I could access higher education. I could not have done it without you. Thank you for being on this journey with me now and in the future.

Dedication

To Landon and Mateo

You Embody Critical Hope

Never Lose Faith in Humanity

The future is yours.

Love, Mama

Preface

This story is about race and gender, how we communicate and make meaning of this within ourselves, our family systems, and society at large. Therefore, it is also about trauma and acknowledging the trauma of racism, sexism, and misogyny that have been inflicted upon marginalized communities as well as perpetuated violence when we hold an oppressor role. Sharing stories about how we communicate about race and gender especially within our individual interracial family system is an extremely complex psycho-social communicative phenomenon. Therefore, I urge you, the reader, to try not to evaluate or interpret the stories you listen to within this manuscript. Instead, I ask that you attempt to listen in such a way that you accept the stories that are told as the ultimate truth of the storyteller. When we honor the stories being told and accept them as the truth of the individual, couple, or family who tells them, we enter a space of no longer having to evaluate the story through our personal cultural lens that morphs it into another interpretation. Instead, in this way, as listening practitioners, we can all become part of supporting the voice and story of the storyteller and engage in peacebuilding work that impacts you, those around you, your community, and the world. When someone tells you their story, believe them. That is their truth. Denying the story of marginalized people because it doesn't fit our understanding of the world contributes to perpetuating violence and erodes the very nature of cross-cultural peacebuilding.

Intersectional and cross-cultural storytelling take on many literary and visually artistic forms that represent our daily lived experiences as interracial couples/families. This dissertation is an art piece: a critical evocative autoethnographic work that presents an intersectional coinquiry within a specific social-cultural, political, and historical context. Within this context, the research team and researcher/participants partake in storytelling at an intrapsychic level and

within their family and with other interracial couples and families. As we collaboratively create literary and visual art representing our lived experiences, we unearth daily accounts of oppression at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. As a poet, I cannot tell my story of survival as a woman and my understanding of cross-racial dynamics without the power of arts-based narrative inquiry. Poetry speaks to my intersecting identities as both Oppressed and oppressor because violence and peacebuilding exist on a spectrum of everyday experiences.

These stories represent many ways of being and knowing about the world. As we tell our stories, we support a platform for the communicative and relational interplay between intersectional oppressor and Oppressed identities. When we acknowledge and intentionally respond to our roles within systems of oppression, we learn how to make collective steps toward peacebuilding and resilience. It is important to note that we do not seek closure or certitude as we tell these stories because we acknowledge that "a single-minded quest for absolute certainty in human matters has far too long dominated the Western philosophical tradition" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p.14). In our single-minded quest, we miss the stories of many marginalized communities and as a result, how we can create more peaceful equitable systems. Therefore, it is the intention of this interracial team of families, scholars, and practitioners to kick up dust, embrace disequilibrium, and openly interrogate the world through arts-based means (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p.14), which allows the psychosocial communicative interactions, of people with intersectional identities, to be more grounded in the true nature of cross-cultural human experiences even if it makes us uncomfortable. Discomfort is expected from the research team composed of my husband and me, the researcher/participants, and you, the reader, as you try to make sense of your own humanity from the stories, we share with you. To begin to set a foundation of disturbance and humanistic understanding, it is important for the reader to

recognize that the writing in this dissertation is considered academic writing as a feminist bricolage (Handforth & Taylor, 2016).The poetry, personal excerpts, theories and methodologies presented, personal evocative writing, and analytic memos: are all qualitative research representative of the daily experiences of individuals navigating and trying to make meaning of how they oppress others and how they are Oppressed within the context of cross-cultural communication and interracial relationships. This dissertation is a mélange of traditional academic writing and disruptive artistic expression as its own form of academic writing. As we engage with tradition and disruption, we engage "an experimental feminist praxis of doing.... writing differently" (Handforth & Taylor, 2016, p.627). There is not one form of writing that is more important than another, in this manuscript, even though the world of higher education tends to value traditional, conventional, emotionless academic writing as superior as it was created by white men in a neoliberal context. I intentionally push back on this oppressive framework and will not adhere to it as a feminist, queer, disabled, trauma survivor. I am also the white mother of two biracial children. Even though I will never know what it is like to navigate the world like them, I have a responsibility to interrogate the daily experiences of my interracial family even though I cannot escape my own white racial frame[1]. In this way, the different genres of academic writing in this dissertation allow for the opportunity to find collective meaning making, transformation, and a path towards liberation instead of being confined to one type of literary expression.

[1] The white racial frame refers a socialization of whiteness that includes racism, discrimination, implicit bias, stereotyping and an overall worldview that is deeply ingrained into American consciousness and institutions (Feagin, 2020)

The stories presented from our research team and the researcher/participants are those of Men of Color and white women within the context of their interracial couple/family as they navigate their intersectionality. As a feminist scholar and trauma survivor,[2] I make my own footprints beyond the neoliberal institution of academia because these walls were not built for me or my interracial family. So, what you are about to read may elicit some tension or discomfort for you and this feeling of disorientation is to be expected as I push the boundaries of what is considered academic writing as a qualitative researcher and practitioner scholar of autoethnography and arts-based narrative inquiry. If you are a trauma survivor, what you are about to read may be triggering. I support you in taking care of yourself wherever you are in your healing process. The stories will always be here if you want to come back to them later.

Doing doctoral work is an ongoing process of redefining and reframing the boundaries set up by the social institution of academia (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). Writing a doctoral dissertation is a way of developing a scholarly identity (Hay & Samra-Fredricks, 2016; McDonald, 2013) within the hegemonic institutions from which the dissertation was created. These stories are traumatic, soulful, dark, and bring in the light of critical hope. Weatherall (2019) explains the messiness of writing doctoral work differently, "I oscillate between empirical and theoretical material throughout the article, drawing theory into immediate relief with lived

[2] Throughout the manuscript, I will continue to identify my intersectional identities to both myself and the reader to get in touch with my own voice as both a feminist scholar and trauma survivor as I make the transition from victim to survivor. Furthermore, because of gaps in awareness due to my white racial frame, I will remind myself of my whiteness many times throughout the manuscript and hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of times throughout my lifetime to acknowledge my limitations as a white practitioner scholar and the necessary and needed collaboration with People of Color.

experience" (p.102). The theoretical frameworks presented in this dissertation may serve to set the stage for the stories we share. However, there are authentic moments when the stories spring up from the theory and illuminate the page in an authentically vulnerable manner that cannot be denied even if it is disorienting for the reader. Embrace your disorientation as part of the process we need to grow in cross-cultural contexts because the theories cannot tell these stories – only the lived experience of the storytellers can do that.

This dissertation is about trauma and violence subjugated on minority groups of which I and the other researcher/participants are a part of. Sometimes violence originates within us, and we perpetuate it onto others, and other times, we are subjugated to violence. This violence is not just an outside societal force, but it resides within our very beings and as a result, we navigate these tensions within our own interracial families. Therefore, this story is not nice, and it is not neat: It is gut wrenching to describe our own understanding of violence and support the stories of others who navigate violence daily. Weatherall (2019) discusses her work as an ethnographer at a feminist domestic violence organization:

> I was committed, like my colleagues, to facing insidious violence against women on a daily basis. I am still sometimes lost for words when I sit down to write about the sexual, physical and emotional abuse my colleagues and our clients suffered. Initially, when I started to write my thesis, I struggled. How could I condense my research into a series of neatly defined chapters? I was attempting to follow the normative pattern of a conventional thesis; a scientific-like structure that moves from an "introduction" to a "literature review" to a "methodology" to the "findings" to the "discussion" and summed up in a "conclusions and contributions" (Piantandia & Garman, 2010). It seems ordered and elegant; a neatly bound object that represents your competency. I knew I was a

> competent and clever doctoral student, but still my research did not look like that neat and tidy output. My research was messy, emotional, and not an easily divisible and logical process. So, I decided that I wanted the writing of my thesis to reflect what I felt was the nature of my research: messy, confrontational, emotional, and violent. I wanted to write my thesis differently. (p.100)

Traditional academic writing is fundamentally oppressive in nature and does not allot for many forms of creative expression that go beyond discourse and dialogue to shine light into a fuller expression of humanity. Writing an autoethnography as a queer, disabled, female trauma survivor intentionally begins to erase the objective white male cisgender heteronormative able-bodied researcher (Pullen et al., 2016). "A formal, objective and masterful tone erases or marginalises the messiness, emotional turbulence and uncertainty involved in doctoral research (Wegener et al., 2016)" (Weatherall, 2019, p.108). Reimagining the dissertation as a catalyst for learning and social change and conveying through literary and other artistic mediums makes room for embodied critical truths.

These stories bring out the subjective in research and aim to reduce the hegemonic undertones that structure traditional academic writing. As a result, I want my stories to resonate with community members that may never read a journal article or a traditional dissertation. Additionally, I want People of Color[3], women, trauma survivors, interracial families, multiracial children, and folks without a formalized education to feel heard in their lived experiences just by viewing the artwork and reading the accompanying poetic expression. This manuscript is

[3] People of Color will be capitalized in this manuscript to illuminate the assets they bring as researchers, practitioners, and members of society and as a reminder to white academics to intentionally seek out the perspective and input of People of Color in academia and support platforms for their voices to be heard.

intentionally written with you all in mind. In this manner, I explore new ways of epistemological and ontological frameworks that illuminate the feminine and the subjective that respond to conventional academic structures that marginalize and impede my scholarly identity and the identities of other marginalized communities.

These stories are emotional. They are violent and they are messy. Arts-based research may use design elements that foster a sense of uncertainty that create jarring opportunities to "...redirect conversations about social phenomena by enabling others to vicariously reexperience the world" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p.20). Marginalized stories seep into the pages where traditional writing such as literature, theories, and methodologies are found because these artistic means are the only authentic way to share the embodiment of violence, peacebuilding, resilience, and transformation within the interracial family system. They cannot be erased by academic jargon as feminist scholars and People of Color are often erased in academia. Writing and sharing these stories as a feminist scholar allows for new possibilities to unfold that further my scholarly identity and embodiment of the truth and the stories of myself, the research team, and researcher/participants. Participating in this project allowed them to reveal their concealed stories, access resistance stories to find critical hope, and as a result, discover freedom.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Narratives and storytelling are a way to glimpse into the daily lives of average people and as they tell their stories, the aspect of daily life is one of the extraordinary (Kim, 2016). Throughout this dissertation, I will weave in my own daily experiences as both Oppressed and oppressor to highlight the impact of these experiences of social location for my reader. Many of these experiences, I have never shared or even been able to articulate until this intentional point and time. I had to make a firm commitment to my healing process. Many of these stories involve the people I interact with daily including my immediate family, extended family, friends, and individuals in my professional work environment. Evocative autoethnography is one of the methods by which stories can be told that urges the reader to critically examine the cognitive and emotional aspects of narrative and meaning-making (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In essence, the evocative autoethnographic process is a way for the researcher/participant to make meaning of their daily experiences with their senses to bring about the embodiment of their story on a deeper level (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). This dissertation unfolds through a series of layered accounts where I use different fonts and styles to denote a certain focus on the experience of oppression (single space, regular font), oppressor language, and/or societal discomfort with my interracial family's ambiguity or my privileged identity as the white mother of biracial children (single space, italics), or cultural marginality and the shared interracial family experience (single spaced, bold, italics). I specifically denote the interracial family experience as existing in the margins between multiple worlds, as intersections of social location, as well as part of a marginalized community. As such, the daily interracial experiences I share about my interracial family will lie on the right margin of the page.

I start this chapter with excerpts about how different parties have tried to negotiate my child's biracial identity and how I am positioned as a white professional, woman, and mother within the context of my interracial family, system of education, professional work environment, and societal system. What struck me is the discomfort that has consistently surfaced in conversations about my family and race and how my gendered experiences further complicate this phenomenon.

Intersectional Confusion in the Interracial Union

The white friend, neighborhood kid, relative, People of Color and white people in monoracial relationships, or random white person: *Don't marry outside your race. Don't you want your kids to look like you…Why don't you date white guys? You must like exotic...You must not like white people...Your kid looks like an Eskimo…Your son looks Indigenous…He looks like Ryan on TV…I wish I had your son's skin…What is he? That's so exotic!...What adoption agency did you get your kids from? You'll have to put Asian or white on the form. There isn't a place for Other.*

> My four-year-old biracial son: My dad is Asian. I'm Asian too…Mama, the kids in the neighborhood think I'm funny looking. (Crying) They don't want to play with me. I don't have any friends. I'm sad, Mama.
>
> My Thai partner: I'm afraid to go to the spaces where you go with the kids. I'm afraid I'll haveto protect myself and them. You don't understand. You can't understand. I'm afraid to go outside…Don't take the kids to

> that demonstration…You could get hurt…He's biracial becausehe comes from you and me. He doesn't get to choose one race or the other. He is what he is.

My mono-racial white family of origin and mono-racial Thai in-laws*: He looks Asian. I don't see him in me...He looks white.*

People of Color: *He's a twinkie; He's a cultural marginal. He'll never belong to any one culture.He'll always feel like an outsider…Just because you're his mother doesn't mean you know what it's like to be him…You can't protect him from this.*

As a society, we seem to lack understanding of how to navigate these cross-racial gendered tensions to be effective parents, partners, and community members. As such, the interracial family is a place where there is the potential and possibility to negotiate and experiment with different modes of communication as we engage inevitable conversations about race and gender with loved ones. In this case, interracial families have a unique position to play by engaging in intercultural communication as we explore violence, peacebuilding, and how to adapt to encompass resilience strategies into our daily life. My story is about navigating systems: my desire to achieve inner peace, peace between, and peace among (Galtung, 1969) with those who are vastly different from me; as I identify daily violence, peacebuilding approaches, and tools for intercultural humility and resilience.

Whether it is a family system, a system of higher education, or society at large, systems that perpetuate dominant racial and social norms were made to privilege some and disadvantage others. The family system is a place where these racial and gendered tensions can be deeply felt with those with whom we love and trust the most and partner for our survival, livelihood, life satisfaction, and fulfillment. Through these layered autoethnographic accounts, I identify my interracial family as a system that is a microcosm of a gendered, racialized, and Oppressed

world as we interact with and are impacted by our family members, community, and other societal systems. I also identify my own inner world as a system of cognitive reasoning and emotional processes as I make meaning of my social location and intersectionality in the context of my interracial family system and other systems I navigate. My inner world is the first lens through which I navigate the world around me. This is an intrapsychic place where I sit in silence with myself and navigate the whole of cultural identity composed of primarily my white racial identity within the context of my interracial family, my transgenerational trauma and marginalization as a woman, and my journey from victim to survivor of childhood sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence at the hands of men. I must first practice listening with myself and strive to better understand the multiplicity of identities that impact my values, beliefs, and perceptions about the world before I can practice listening and cross-cultural understanding with others. Audre Lorde, a Black lesbian poet, author, and mother pioneering revolutionary texts in women, Black, and queer studies, discusses in, her book, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984) that

> For women, then, poetry is not a luxury, it is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams towards survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, and more tangible action. Poetry is a way that we give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives. (p.36)

I share the critical intercultural experience of navigating my inner world as I interact with my family, my community, and the world around me through critical arts-based narrative inquiry and more specifically through poetry, short stories, and narratives as they organically come to the surface as an outgrowth of the tension between theory and practice, oppressor and

Oppressed, as I seek to identify and dismantle systems of oppression to make the invisible visible.

In the following excerpt, I illustrate the embodiment of the trauma I carry as a woman and girl after being subjected to multiple accounts of violence over my lifetime. As violence is a known experience, I question how I can heal myself so that my sons will not carry the same burden I do. I want my Sons of Color to know the power they hold as males in society and not perpetuate violence because of transgenerational trauma. I wonder how I can free myself from the tight hold of oppression enough to be able to show up and model a feminist upbringing to my sons. The following interlude is a testament to my embodied experience of being exposed to violence since childhood. As I write, I identify, confront, and cast out these oppressors and their violent nature to make way for my own peacebuilding process as I explore the possibility of emancipation:

Daily Violence

I've been called a *bitch*

More than I can count.

I HATE YOU.

Words ringing in my ears.

Piercing my heart.

So I walked like a board

When I was 10

I was a girl but I looked like a woman.

Catcalls

Stunted painful pubescent years

No celebration of womanhood

Just the fear of-

Being seen like a whore

I'll dance on your grave

You bastard.

No one will miss you

We're glad you're gone.

I stomped until I could feel it all

The ground, the earth, the hollowness of the tomb below

Your brittle bones cracking under the weight

As I take my power back

Your grave might as well be unmarked

Because no one will visit you

We prefer to forget

I waited to walk away

Taking pleasure in leaving a gnarled branch on your tombstone

I waited until the sky opened up

I've wasted too much of my life

On what you did to me

We were in a play and we both had roles:

You Oppressed me and I tried to forget.

Disassociation.

But I couldn't.

Because no matter how far I try to run away

#fightorflight

Trauma finds us-

I saw it reflected in every.single.relationship.

I have had with a man since -

You laid your hands on me.

You called me a *bitch*.

But you didn't have to say it out loud

You said it with *your hands*.

Your stone silence.

Your dehumanization of me.

The play keeps repeating.

Like a broken record.

And I know the lines by heart:Love and abuse coexist.

Cellular memory.

The psychosomatic.

The body never forgets.

Trigger WARNING.

Violence.

Childhood lost.

The patriarchy.

My perpetual lifelong gendered experience of dehumanization.

What would it be like to be free?

Rationale for the Study

Context: Interracial Families and Couples

The construction of interracial families in the United States was forbidden until legislation preventing antimiscengenation[4] was revoked in 1967 (Sue & al., 2022). As a result, the bi-racial baby boom started in the late 1960's. According to the 2010 US Census, around nine million people reported more than one race accounting for 3% of the United States (U.S.) population (Census Bureau, 2010). This data can be a misrepresentation of current numbers because manymultiracial individuals choose to identify as only one race for a variety of socio-cultural historical and political reasons. As the U.S. becomes increasingly diverse and complex, so do our questions and tensions about race and racial dynamics in our country, community, and family. Brummett and Afifi (2019) indicate that interracial romantic partners (IRPs) experience additional relational struggles in comparison to partners of the same race. Societal pressures and social norms that impact dominant/non-dominant racial identity groups can also have negative impacts on interracial relationships (Lewis, 2013). Examining the interpersonal communication within interracial relationships can provide more information about conceptualizing American racial relationships in general (Lewis, 2013). When provided with the right familial support, interracial families can be a safe space to navigate different socio-cultural, political, and historical climates from an intercultural context (Moriizumi, 2011).

Data from the National Alliance for Caregiving (2009) indicate that around 66 percent of the population of caregivers within a family unit are women. What is more surprising is that 45 percent of these 66 percent feel that there was no choice involved in taking on this role. More

[4] The act of lawful enforcement of racial segregation not allowing the marriage or cohabitation of persons of a different race dated back to the late 1600's during the colonial period of the US.

recently, the COVID-19 caregiving crisis brought to light the oppressive norms disproportionally impacting women (Htun, 2022). The pandemic ushered in the closing of schools and daycares, which resulted in less accessibility to care workers and many challenges for women from many diverse backgrounds and perspectives (Alon et al., 2020). The economic backlash of the pandemic resulted in more unemployment for women due to the closures within female-dominant fields such as daycares, food service, personal care service, and sales (Alon et al., 2020; Petts et al., 2021). In fact, one in four women explored quitting or minimizing their career because of pandemic-related stress (Peck 2021).

Gender microaggressions are just one way society makes it obvious that patriarchal ways of knowing are privileged and oppressive (Sue, 2010). Even though women make up over half of the US population, they are considered a special and marginalized population due to a patriarchal system structure supporting prejudice, discrimination, and disadvantaged status (Sue & al., 2022). Feminists responded to systemic oppression and have made historical gain shifting from voting and property rights to reproductive rights, psychosocial safety (domestic violence and sexual assault), to the workplace and other forms of discrimination. Even though gender microassaults expressed as blatant, explicit, and intentional ways to target women are on the decline in the workplace, scholars note that discriminatory behavior is not decreasing but it is becoming more covert and ambiguous (Basford et al., 2013). Women currently and historically have faced many challenges and as a result, my story within my interracial family, workplace, and society reflect these challenges.

In this evocative critical autoethnography, I explore and balance the multiplicity of identities that make up my social location as a white woman in an interracial family. In addition to bringing my inner voice to the surface, I share the platform with other interracial couples and

my interracial family as our stories talk back and forth across the page. In the following passage, my partner and I explore in a co-constructed cross-racial narrative, my privileged identity as a white native-born American and his status as a Thai immigrant, going to elementary school in a high school in LA that was primarily Latinx as well as the rise of Asian-related violence in the United States (Nguyen et al., 2020). In this cross-racial dialogue, we explore how our identities and roles as parents in an interracial family can impact our children and our partnership and our development of critical hope for a better tomorrow.

The Emancipatory Nature of Coinquiry

My family came to this land of opportunity

For the education

But in school

I got into fights

Because I was Asian

Chinky eyes (infamous slanted eyes gesture)

And now they are killing us

In this moment - I have nothing to say.

Nothing I can say will make this better.

I'm sittin' here thinking that they treat me like

My life has more value than yours

What will happen to the boys?

You told me that whatever they get called in school

To let them embrace that stereotype

"It'll make them stronger."

Jackie Chan – Bruce Lee – Ryan

"I sure am. So what?"

Minimization is a safe place to be.

Don't rock the boat.

#freshoffttheboat

Just survive.

Coinquiry and Peacebuilding

I wanted to post my thoughts

But I thought it might draw too much attention to me

So I let my feelings build up

My rage

My sadness

Of a lifetime of being treated

Like the perpetual foreigner

Where are you from?

They always ask me

Didn't you know I'm just as American as you are?

My whiteness lets me get away with a lot: I get impatient.

When the white folks keep asking you where you're from

Every. Single. Time. We meet someone new.

I internally roll my eyes and somehow think I'm further along

I get to be impatient (That's my white privilege)

But you're calculated every time.

The thing is – your interrogator and I

We both profit from the same system that

Oppresses You

I told you that you were just as American as I am

But in doing that I dismissed your lived experience

Cultural marginality

I need to listen more.

Violence and peacebuilding exist on a spectrum.

One way that I navigate everyday violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience is as a listening practitioner and storyteller. As I lean into my own story, I can more deeply understand the stories of Others and develop my ability to adapt and employ different leadership communication frameworks. Violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience exist on a continuum. Violence can range from war crimes to sexual assault, domestic violence, workplace harassment, racialized violence to daily bullying, race and gender microaggressions, to not understanding good intent versus impact. For this study, peacebuilding involves navigating the permeable structures of peace within, peace between, and peace among (Galtung, 1969) in interracial gendered family relationships in which there is the existence of both oppressor and Oppressed identities within those individuals and the family system. Intercultural humility moves beyond the intercultural competence paradigm which explores

cultural awareness, intercultural awareness, and sensitivity. Intercultural humility is an engaged consciousness that represents the integration of critical empathy and intercultural listening in cross-cultural contexts. Intercultural humility involves the experiential acknowledgment that human beings are confined in their ability to understand Others that are culturally different from themselves (Mestrovich et al., 2022). Intercultural humility works with intercultural resilience strategies to address and anticipate systemic oppression and the reactions of fragility and cognitive dissonance that often accompany dominant cultural viewpoints in the face of difference to create more equitable systems. Intercultural humility is deeply rooted in a listening practitioner's ability to practice intercultural resilience being open, curious, and anticipating that cross-cultural misinterpretations and conflict will occur. Intercultural resilience is connected to a cross-cultural exchange and/or intrapsychic phenomenon that operationalizes storytelling as a means to experiencing and surviving loss, destruction, trauma, and violence (Buzzanell, 2017). Narrative resilience represents a dialogic interplay of the intersections of people, place, and identity to inform a multilevel understanding of resilience (Okamoto, 2020).

Narrative inquiry and counterstorytelling[5] allow society to understand the daily life of culturally different Others and catalyze an emancipatory process that is co-constructed. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Researchers often make use of collective experiences during a self-study but seldom are these experiences the focus of the study (Davey & Ham, 2009). Even though I am constructing an autoethnography, my story will encompass committed and intentional coinquiry with my interracial family and other interracial couples and families. Co-constructing across shared, yet different experiences, allows for collaborative critical reflexivity

[5] Narrative inquiry and counterstorytelling are qualitative methods of inquiry bringing to the surface the daily lives of people with stories that may be concealed from the stories that are told by mainstream culture.

which will enhance professional research ethics, methods, and community-engaged scholarship (Banks et al., 2017). Coinquiry illuminates and utilizes 7). As I reflect on my own racialized and gendered experiences, my spouse and I as a research team, will work with interracial couples as researcher/participants and support them as they share their own stories. Coinquiry is one way to surface systems of oppression that are often invisible in mainstream culture to dismantle and transform these systems to more equitable lived experiences. Coinquiry is an area of research that needs more scrutiny and development as critical reflexivity is becoming more prevalent in literature and scholarship (Davey & Ham, 2009).

This manuscript could be interpreted akin to a collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2016, but I decided to focus this critical evocative autoethnography as one voice expressing the collective voice and story while engaging in a coinquiry with my spouse and interracial families. Creating a critical evocative autoethnography as a cross-racial gendered coinquiry created an opportunity for me as a practitioner scholar to come face-to-face with my own Oppressed and oppressor identities more deliberately as I engaged in critical reflexivity. Additionally, using my voice to express the collective story positioned me in such a way that I had to more fully address my own assumptions, biases, and internalized racist and sexist ideologies while learning how to co-facilitate these cross-cultural conversations with other interracial families. Coinquiry allowed for my whiteness to not end up engulfing the entire research as People of Color were actively involved in sharing their lived experiences with daily violence. Additionally, coinquiry widened the scope of this autoethnography so that not just my stories were told through my white racial frame. If my spouse and other People of Color had not been involved in the research and I had written a traditional autography, the research on interracial families would not have been as accurate of a representation of the interracial family

experience. It is important to note that all the collective poetry about my spouse and I was inspired by cross-cultural conversations that we had had together over the past ten years. The poetry came from coding, analytic memos, direct quotes, and was then arranged by me. Then, my spouse provided feedback and edits as a way to align himself with my autoethnographic process as we collaboratively processed our interracial and gendered experiences.

Intercultural Listening and Equity Work

Research has typically not focused on exploring how listening can be different in different cultures even though there is research showcasing that culture does influence our thinking (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). When individuals from different cultural backgrounds, come together, interact, and engage in listening, implicit assumptions of how listening behavior is communicated could end up producing significant lapses in understanding which can be disorienting and confusing in intercultural contexts (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). Intercultural awareness is an essential part of how we communicate with culturally different others as cultural misunderstandings are an unavoidable aspect of communication (Zhu, 2011). As such, Zhu (2011) regards intercultural awareness as the most important aspect of communication. In this study, when I lean into purely autoethnographic content, I will be employing different listening strategies within my own inner world from an intrapsychic point of view as well as with my family and other interracial families. I would like to explore how these findings can create greater awareness in larger societal systems.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of the study is to investigate how I experience daily violence, use peacebuilding approaches, and cultivate tools for intercultural humility and resilience within my gendered experience and interracial family as I interface and personally reflect upon the

experiences of other interracial couples and families who have a connection to the field of education. More specifically, my dissertation study will explore three key questions:

1. How does gendered and racialized communication manifest in my own family experience? In others?
2. How does my intercultural experience with daily violence manifest in my own family? In others?
3. How do I implement peacebuilding and resilience strategies within myself and my interracial family? How do I make meaning of how other couples/families explore resilience strategies?

As I respond to these questions by sharing my story, I will provide insight into how I navigate intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective as a resilience strategy towards anti-racism work and my own marginalization and survival. I will also explore my own lifelong gender-based oppression at the hands of men more than I ever have before because that voice needs to speak and to be heard. I need to hear Her. This critical evocative autoethnography is designed as a cross-racial coinquiry that involves developing recommendations as a practice that leads towards working through racial and sexist tension, conflict, and misunderstandings in gendered interracial relationships.

In what follows, my narrative shifts to more traditional academic writing as I introduce my theoretical and methodological framework that serves to situate my dissertation work within academic literature. Theoretically, I employ a social constructionist lens using the theoretical framework of critical whiteness and feminist/gender studies (Bhattacharya, 2017; Crotty, 2015). This is appropriate because racialized and gendered experiences necessitate acknowledging and dismantling systems of oppression with collective intentionality and

commitment: whiteness as righteousness, systems of oppression, racial tension and trauma, sexism, misogyny, and everyday violence and peacebuilding are all widespread accessible social phenomena that are socially constructed. As I employ a critical lens to envision the dismantling of racism and sexism and the reconstruction of a more equitable and just world, I will frame my study with a consciousness of intercultural humility and resilience in which discursive ways of being and knowing are employed to create a new way to frame my daily life often informed by racial and gender-based violence, oppression and other forms of trauma (Buzzanell, 2017). This discursive consciousness to signify narrative resilience will also be employed by my family and other interracial families as they authentically share their stock, concealed, resistance, and emerging freedom stories (Bell, 2009). Additionally, I will lean into my own story and feminist voice as I navigate and respond to my own oppression as a woman. I conclude by showcasing the methodological framework and research design that will be adopted to conduct the study. In addition to critical evocative autoethnography, I plan to use head, heart, and gut analysis (Ellingson, 2017) and a mix of narrative inquiry, critical arts-based research, and arts-based narrative inquiry to explore different aspects of communication situated beyond discourse and dialogue (Barone and Eisner, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2017; Harris et al., 2015; Kim, 2015; Lipari, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

I draw from literature grounded in social constructionism and critical theories to disrupt and dismantle dominant narratives related to the racialized experiences of U.S. interracial families. The domain of interracial relationships is an area of research which is

often overlooked (Lewis, 2013). As such, topics such as rearing children, family acceptance, and how racialized experiences play a part in interracial relationships often receive superficial treatment at best. As issues of race continue to persist in the U.S., interracial marriages may experience the burden of these microcosmic racialized experiences within their family and relationship (Drakulich et al., 2020; Lewis & Ford-Robertson, 2010; Mir & Zanoni, 2021). As I pay close attention to cross-racial experiences, I will also be exploring gender dynamics with interracial couples/families that align with my interracial gendered family experience. Finally, I propose the methodological focus of my study to be grounded in critical arts-based narrative inquiry. Art transcends cultural barriers and allows for researcher/participants to find culturally relevant ways to express their lived experiences. My hope is that art will serve as a culturally responsive way to unpack highly emotive experiences and create new opportunities and communication about race and gender within committed cross-racial relationships.

Social Constructionism and Critical Theories

Macro level theory incorporates a holistic interpretive paradigm to frame a research study (Kim, 2016). This holistic theoretical approach to research will incorporate both a social constructionist and critical lens. Much qualitative research is framed within a constructionist epistemology (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Constructionism is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world while developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 2015, p. 42). In other words, meaningful reality is constructed by human beings within the social, cultural, political, historical context in which they navigate and interpret the world. We construct our reality and our understanding of the lived experiences, perceptions,

behaviors, and values of others through our experiences with them. Social constructionism is, in essence, people shaping reality through their interactions with other people (Crotty, 2015).

Additionally, I adopt a critical stance toward issues of race, whiteness, gender and dominant narratives regarding U.S. interracial families. Family units are a microcosm of social relationships and as a result, they are created by power relationships. Critical theory is positioned as "counter hegemony to confront injustice in socially and historically rooted power relations" (Kim, 2016, p.80). As such, the goal is to find ways to disrupt dominant narratives that contribute to systems of oppression which can result in societal change. Critical theory is reconceptualized as a framework to inform research and depict new social movements. Critical theory can be paired with narrative inquiry to bring about the authentic lives of everyday people through storytelling and decrease the distance between the academy and the real lives of Oppressed people (Kim, 2016).

Intercultural Awareness and Listening

Intercultural awareness is an essential part of how we communicate with culturally different others as cultural misunderstandings are an unavoidable aspect of communication (Zhu, 2011). Zhu (2011) regards intercultural awareness as the most important aspect of communication. As the U.S. becomes increasingly diverse and continues this trajectory over the next few decades (Cohn & Caumont, 2016; Jones et al., 2016), intercultural awareness becomes not just an international but also a local phenomenon. Intercultural awareness is predicated on transformative listening "that does not merely tolerate but openly embraces difference, misunderstanding, and uncertainty, and invites entrance to a human communication and consciousness beyond discursive thinking, to dwelling places of understanding that language cannot, as yet, reach" (Lipari, 2010, p.360). Effective intercultural listening is such an important

aspect of communication, yet research has tended to focus more on the speaker than on the listener (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). What is needed potentially to help foster intercultural listening is an integration of critical empathy, or the realization that one can never truly and deeply understand the lived experience of a person. As a result, critical empathy focuses on the intentionality that is exemplified through the sharing of significantly different cultural experiences (Buzzanell, 2011). With a focus on social equity and inclusion, the concept of critical empathy in an intercultural context could be understood as recognizing and understanding how these feelings are culturally grounded (Zhu, 2011).

Intercultural listening is conceptualized as an integration of different ontological and epistemological frameworks grounded in the practice of listening being (Lipari, 2010), active listening (Gearhart & Bodie, 2011), as well as constructivist and narrative listening (Hyater-Adams, 2011). Intercultural listening facilitates a storytelling process to unfold "with an intentional focus of unconditional positive regard, critical empathy and supporting the cultural and emotional experiences of marginalized voices with the listener practitioners' acute awareness of systems of oppression. The result is the potential opportunity for new narratives to be explored which separate the speaker from the problematic situation with a focus on positive change and new stories of transformation to be told (Coleman et al., 2023)."

For my critical evocative autoethnographic study, I utilize intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective. Critical whiteness studies (CWS) asserts that race shapes our everyday experiences (Matias et al., 2017). Since white racial identity is experienced in the U.S. as a societal norm, white Americans are not used to thinking about how they benefit from oppressive systems of inequity related to whiteness (Frankenberg, 1997; Hartmann & al., 2009; McIntosh, 1989). The pairing of intercultural listening and critical whiteness is an

intentional way to deepen this conversation about inequity with tangible ways for white people to show up differently in interracial relationships. Additionally, as I practice intercultural listening with myself and others in interracial families, I will be viewing every interaction through a feminist lens to acknowledge the daily violence that women are subjected to in a man's world.

Feminism and Feminist Theorizations of Violence

The World Health Organization (2022) defines violence as being on a spectrum of intentional use of power to threaten a person, group, or community at large which can result in neglect, psychological hurt, or even death. In the context of this manuscript, these threats originate from relationships and communication involving both oppressors and oppressed who are targeted by such violence and how trauma is created through these different daily interactions within the interracial family and society at large. Van Der Kolk (2014) discusses trauma as being an integral part of our societal framework. Human beings can experience trauma through acts of racism and sexism which can leave a residual and negative impact on marginalized communities. As a result, this hinders cross-cultural communication, interpersonal relationships, and the ability to have healthy relationships.

Feminism is a way to dismantle and re-envision a world that has traditionally been man-made (Bhatttacharya, 2017). White and colleagues (2001) outline the four principles of feminist research: "inclusiveness and diversity, the importance of social and historical context, combating power and privilege, and social activism" (p. 267). Feminism critiques systems of oppression which support patriarchal ways of being and knowing while providing supportive frameworks towards equity and liberation of women holistically. Addressing feminist theory means addressing how patriarchal structures work within other social structures on local, national, and international fronts (Beckman, 2014). Celebrating women and their continual fight against

oppression is another way to utilize feminist theory and bringing concealed and resistance stories to the surface is both an intentional and political move. More specifically, feminism brings to light how race and gender dynamics are involved in every cross-cultural communication and interaction that exists while seemingly invisible to the dominant culture

The eight basic principles of feminist research include: (1) power imbalances, (2) reframing questions asked to support women instead of further oppress them, (3) listening acutely to women's voices, stories, and experiences, (4) focusing on diversity and intersectionality, (5) a multidisciplinary and mixed method approach, (6) reflexivity in the research process, and (7) strong collaborative relationships with researcher/participants during the research process (Beckman, 2014; White et al., 2001). Feminist theory and methodology attend to power differences between men and women in all aspects of life including the world of work, political and organizational status, romantic partnerships, as well as through the research process. These power differentials also impact how research is being framed, who is included in the research process, and how questions are being asked (Fischer & DeBord, 2012). As such, it is important to be cognizant of how to reframe and expand questions in a way that prioritizes women's voices and experiences. For instance, instead of asking women how we can assist them in protecting themselves from intimate partner violence, we can ask what government policies could be ameliorated to create more satisfactory and fulfilling lives for women (White et al., 2001). Listening to women's voices and focusing on their strengths and resilience as well as the societal problems associated with oppression (Worell, 1996) grounds research in women's lives and make them the identifiers and examiners of how feminist problems are constructed. Historically, white able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgender, middle class feminist scholars have failed to address the heterogeneity of women and the multiple social identities they hold. For this

reason, it is important to address diversity and intersectionality in contemporary feminist research (Cole, 2009). Additionally, feminists believe that there is not one single method to acquire knowledge and support a multidisciplinary multi-method approach to research (Grossman et al., 1998). Feminists encourage researchers to utilize well-developed critical reflexivity to attend to ethical concerns, heightened self-awareness during the research process, and more egalitarian relationships (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012). Finally, feminist researchers strongly discourage research that exploits subjects based on differences in power and privilege. Instead, feminists prioritize benefiting participants, improving women's quality of life in the process, and engaging participants in the research process (Grossman et al., 1997; Gringeri et al., 2010). This dissertation seeks to emulate these eight principles of feminist research while aligning the narratives generated from the autoethnographic coinquiry as a way to support and illuminate the lived experiences of both the female researcher and researcher/participants while engaging the male spouses in the process of allyship.

In my daily life, oppression has manifested because of my gendered experience as a woman particularly within my family over the course of my lifetime. Bhattacharya states, "oppression of women is one of the oldest forms of oppression and one that runs the deepest in our societal fabric" (p. 81). As such, there is a daily experience that women share that are not known to men. This is not negated in a family unit or in the workplace but continues to be perpetuated in present-day society even though it can often be more ambiguous and pervasive. As such, the following autoethnographic poem spotlights the ubiquitous and pervasive nature of gendered-based oppression.

The Ubiquitous and Pervasive Nature of Gender-based Oppression

I often chuckle

Sarcastically

When women do all the prep for a company meeting.

And the male presenter is thanked for his ideas.

And when something spills during a staff meeting

The women are the first to clean up

They are “elected” to take notes.

But it’s really an assumed obligation.

I refuse to take notes anymore.

Because it’s expected of me.

I have often been invited by men in my community

They want to hire me to do menial work.

Takin care of kids and answering the phone.

Buddy, did you know I have an education?

It is assumed that since I am a primary caregiver

That I don’t work outside the home

And my life revolves around my children 24/7.

It’s not just the act of note taking or cleaning up spills.

It’s because it is implicitly expected that

Those are the spaces where I am most needed and useful

And that’s just plain wrong.

And don’t get me started on how many times I’ve been asked about my kids

Instead of advancing in my career or my dissertation

It’s like that doesn’t even matter

It hurts the most to acknowledge my own dehumanization

And how long it took for me to finally scream these words onto the page.

To allow my anger to take the place of my socialization to be sad.

I'm angry about all the opportunities I lost and continue to lose out on.

The blindness of men and the lack of allyship.

I want more from my daily experience of life than this.

One way that feminist theory can come to life is through the understanding of gender microaggressions in everyday life. Like how racial microaggressions are commonplace, gender microaggressions which are overt or covert, intentional or unintentional, highlight the reasons why feminism is a way to push back against these oppressive societal norms that dominate and use power and control to keep women in inferior status (Sue, 2010). For example, the following are excerpts from multiple workplace and familial conversations that I have had with male supervisors, colleagues, family members, and women perpetuating their own internalized oppression, that allow me to better understand how social goods will be withheld from me and other women as a means for systems to benefit some and oppress others. For much of my life, I have been socialized and conditioned to believe these stock stories[6]. To access my concealed stories, I had to acknowledge my own trauma of gender-based violence by listening to my inner

[6] Stock stories are stories told by the dominant culture to perpetuate the status quo and systemic oppression of marginalized groups such as People of Color and women. Concealed stories are stories told by marginalized communities that are often inaccessible in mainstream culture. Concealed stories make the invisible visible. Resistance stories have a foundation in anti-racism and set the tone for how we will navigate racism and sexism in the future. Resistance stories bring to light the continual fight of women and People of Color to attain humanization, equity, and the absence of daily violence (Bell, 2020). Emerging/transforming stories discussed later in the manuscript deepen our awareness about the other three types of stories. For the purpose of this dissertation, the author refers to emerging/transforming stories as freedom stories.

voice engaging with intrapsychic phenomena such as peace within (Galtung, 1969) and listening being (Lipari, 2010). In the following short passages, I identify daily violence (concealed stories) and my inner monologue in these situations as an example of my resistance story.

The Beginning of My Resistance Story

- Male supervisors and a female supervisor at different stages of my career about a pregnant female job applicant in my department: *Why is she applying for a job if she is noticeably pregnant? I didn't hire her because she didn't justify what she would do about childcare once she gives birth to the baby.* (Thanks for letting me know that I won't be able to show up authentically and will not be valued like my male counterparts since I have a vagina, a uterus, and ovaries. And if and when I do get pregnant, I'll make sure to hide it as long as I possibly can and be at a job where I've worked myself to the bone long-term so I can be potentially considered indispensable).
- My male supervisor as soon as I made my pregnancy announcement at work: *When my wife had a high-risk pregnancy, she quit her job and I was totally supportive of that.* (And your point is? I'm one of the primary breadwinners in my family so I won't be able to quit work. That would make it so my family has no health insurance, and we wouldn't be able to survive on one salary so thanks but no thanks.)
- A male politician at a work event inferring that work was less important and that I should focus on childrearing. *What really matters right now is your unborn child. Work can wait. We've got it taken care of here! You just focus on your baby. That is what is the most important.* (Must be nice looking down from the ivory tower and smiling as you oppress me. You don't even know what you're doing but your good intent makes a terrible impact on me. Did you ever ask me what I want? No, you didn't. So, you're basically speaking FOR me.)
- A female administrator urging a pregnant woman not to take on too much work post-partum even though the employee has voiced interest in coordinating a certain event: *I told her that she is going to have her hands full! I just want her to know that we support her and don't want her coming back too soon and taking on too much.* (Did you know that your well-intentioned comments have a negative impact and are oppressive? Maybe listen to what SHE wants. She doesn't need you to tell her what you think is best based on your lived experience as a mother.)
- My male supervisor while I was taking FMLA: *I'm just wondering when you'll be back to work fulltime. (Chuckle) Or should I ask HR instead?* (I'm gonna bite my tongue because you hold the purse strings and the power even though you have no idea of the power you hold.)
- My male supervisor treating me like one of the guys and confiding in my: *Men are so much easier to work with than women. So much less drama I have had to find coverage every year since I have been in this management position for employees (women) taking*

FMLA. I know they say "be fruitful and multiply" but geeze. It makes it harder on me. (Ummmm….yeah, I was one of those employees that took FMLA if you've forgotten? Yes, I'm the one with the vagina and my body can carry humans. I'd like to see you try.)

- My male supervisor the day I left for maternity leave: *Have a nice break. We won't being having a respite here.* (I'm too exhausted to even think up a response to counter your male toxicity).
- A female colleague who believes that most women share her desire to be a mom first and a professional second: *Don't worry about work. Your kids need you. They're the most important thing. We'll take care of your job if you have to be gone.* (I feel replaceable.)
- A male family member: *I question your emotional self and don't trust that your childhood sexual assault even happened to you. You make things up and don't remember them as they actually happened.* (Wow, thanks for retraumatizing me.)
- Multiple males in my family when I disclosed being a survivor of childhood sexual assault by a male family member: *Are you sure that really happened?* (Seriously. When someone tells you their story, believe them. You think I'm making this up for attention? Damn you and your privilege.).
- Male supervisor: *I don't like it when you're angry.* (Apparently, it's only socially acceptable for men to be angry.)
- Male supervisor: *I know you want to talk about the dress code policy for youth and especially girls but we don't have time for that today. Talking about this will distract from the conversation I need to have with you about other things and will take up too much time.* (I'm going to talk about it anyways because girls shouldn't feel ashamed like I did.)
- Male colleague: *What's for dinner tonight?* (So you are inferring that making dinner is what I will be doing with my evening? I'm actually working on a book chapter.)
- Faculty mentor: *You should focus on your husband and sons. They need you. Your PhD can wait. I'd advise you to only go to school part-time with your kids being so young.* (So you want me to take 8 years to finish my PhD so I'll have even less of a chance of cracking the glass ceiling. You are assuming my priority is my family first and academic career second. You are assuming that I am a mother first and everything else comes second. You know what they say about assumptions?)
- Male administrators: *Hey sweetie!* (Often accompanied by being patted like a dog)
- Many men and women with whom I work and know personally: *She's such a nice girl.* (You're referring to a grown woman. Show some respect.)
- Male supervisor: *Your emotion is misplaced* (This feels condescending and lacks the relational value I place on my workplace relationships and the empathy I feel for others which is one way I practice gender-based leadership).

The intersectional nature of racialized and gender-based violence have often been the focus of feminist theory while being ignored by the dominant culture. Violence takes on many different facets of harm from genocide to domestic violence, to daily microaggressions which dismiss marginalized peoples (Lokeneeta, 2016; Sue et al., 2007). As such, racial and gender-based violence can be identified within interpersonal and cross-cultural communication dynamics as microaggressions in daily life (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions are ubiquitous and exist anywhere people communicate with each other because blind spots are an inevitable form of everyday bias (Sue, 2010). It is important to understand contemporary forms of sexism and how they impact women in the realms of home and work (Lewis, 2018). Sexism can manifest as overt and covert, intentional and unintentional, conscious, and unconscious (Sue, 2010). Overt forms of sexism may include sexual harassment and domestic violence as well as discriminatory workplace practices for hiring and firing (Lewis, 2018). In addition, research shows that women's experiences of subtle forms of sexism often impact women negatively (Sue, 2010) and can lead to psychological distress and mental health challenges (Lewis, 2018). As such, in both my professional and personal lives, I have experienced all the above which has impacted my mental health and my self-perception as a woman, mother, and partner within my interracial family. I have often felt silenced, and my sons have born witness to this directly and indirectly. Just as we can use the family system as a lens into societal systems of racial violence, peacebuilding, and resilience, we can also turn a similar focus on oppressive gender dynamics.

Feminist theorizations of violence are unique in that they have transformed society's understanding of how violence exists on a spectrum from wars across nations to daily forms of covert violence which is often invisible to the dominant culture (Coronil & Skurski, 2006). For instance, within the family unit and society at large, patriarchal frameworks create daily living

environments in which violence is normalized and tolerated resulting in the oppression and silencing of women. In addition to feminist theory addressing a wide variety of women's challenges related to sexuality, reproductive rights, and societal violence concerns (sex trafficking, rape and other forms of sexual assault, domestic violence and battering), feminist violence centers itself from an intersectional perspective on both individual and collective experiences related to both race and gender (Lokaneeta, 2016).

Feminist scholars assert that violence is part of the everyday experience of modern nations (Coronil & Skurski,2006). Feminist scholars make a connection between daily perpetuated societal violence and how modern nations utilize "trivialization of violence against women in organized conflict" (Lokaneeta, 2016, p.237) such as rape being "a weapon of war and a crime against humanity" (Lokaneeta, 2016, p.237). Feminists assert that rape survivors go through similar experiences as war/torture survivors and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. As a result, women who are raped during periods of war should be given the same social status as torture survivors (Aswad, 1996). MacKinnon (1994) explains:

> Attacks on women, it seems, cannot define attacks on a people. If they are gendered attacks, they are not ethnic; if they are ethnic attacks, they are not gendered ... But when rape is a genocidal act, as it is here, it is an act to destroy a people. What is done to women defined that destruction. Also, aren't women a people? (p.10).

Genocidal rapes are also noteworthy in that they are raping to uphold policy to destroy whole communities (MacKinnon, 1994). My great grandmother was one of the many women raped in former Yugoslavia before she could escape the first world war and come to America. She explained to my aunt in broken English what had happened to her. Her husband never forgave her for a crime she never committed but she was still guilty somehow for the violence of soldiers

against her. After the genocidal rape in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, human rights activists called for a change in international law for rape to be identified as a crime against humanity as well as a method of torture (Lokeneeta, 2016).

Lokeneeta (2016) discusses how the state and legal system contribute to violence against women. The state has created exclusions for women, People of Color, and interracial marriages favoring white men. Women and People of Color have long been excluded from rights, liberty, and equality (Stevens, 1998). As a result, the state has historically created material racial and gendered hierarchies that privileged whites and allowed them to pass material wealth on to their children but did not allow interracial couples to do the same (Stevens, 1998). Baxi explains, "The legal system, always and everywhere, seeks to delegitimize and criminalize violence by actors other than those authorized to use violence ... and provides a normative language which camouflages the core coercion underlying the law" (Baxi 1993). As a result, the liberal state seeks to make violent acts seemingly more humane by creating perceived limitations to violent acts like execution (Sarat, 2001) or making it legally impossible to rape a slave because slaves were deemed as property and not people worthy of basic human rights (Hartman, 1999).

Additionally, within the framework of feminist theorizations of violence, it is important to attend to *structural*, *representational* and *symbolic*, and *epistemic* violence (Lokeneeta, 2016; Shiva (1987). Structural violence refers to the harm that is caused to human beings due to economic and political matters related to resource distribution and existing disparities and inequities. Representational and symbolic violence serve to dialogically dehumanize while creating the perception of superiority and oppression while epistemic violence creates sources of knowledge which dismisses the integrity of certain groups (Lokaneeta, 2016).

Feminist theorizations of violence bring to the forefront that dominant narratives serve to minimize violence and promote it as rare in the contemporary world and in modern nations (Sarat & Kearns, 1991). As a result, it is important to explore the spectrum of violence within the interracial family unit in which there are both oppressor and oppressed identities and the impact this has on daily life as a fundamental part of the study of violence and peace. My choice of feminist theorizations of violence evolved from my own trauma story of childhood abuse from a male family member and my evolving identity as a battered woman in my quest to move from victim to survivor. Feminist theory of violence addresses both racialized and gender-based violence which is often largely ignored by society (Lokaneeta, 2016). Feminist scholars' address of intersectional violence of race and gender as a daily occurrence aligns with my research questions and lived experiences. My intention is to utilize feminist theories of violence to bring racialized and gendered oppression to the forefront of daily interactions. If we acknowledge these social phenomena dialogically, we can take intentional steps towards peacebuilding activities.

Methodological Framework

Reflection on the Process of Critical Evocative Autoethnography

Bochner and Ellis (2016), in their book, *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories*, pilot evocative autoethnography as a methodology. This methodology connects the intellectual and the emotional from the point of view of the storyteller. I connect with this methodology at a deep level through my own autoethnographic journey and typically use prose as a way of bringing the embodiment of deep emotion to the surface. As a marriage and family therapist, I often use cognitive behavior therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, and mindfulness to support clients in connecting cognitive and emotional aspects of themselves. For instance, I use

the five senses to take my clients through mindfulness practices. I have them hear, see, taste, feel, and embody different sense sensations to ground their thoughts and feelings in the present moment. These mindfulness practices support them in acknowledging and then better regulating their mind, body, and emotional spirit. I find the evocative autoethnographic process a similar journey of mindfulness and self-discovery as researcher/participants react and reflect with all their senses to more deeply connect to the embodiment of lived experiences. Critical autoethnography is founded on the principles of intersectionality addressing societal issues such as power dynamics and social inequity related to race and gender (Boylorn & Orbe, 2021). This is a natural way of writing for me that grounds me in my mindfulness journey of intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective. This methodology supports a framework for me to speak in a transparent way about my own process of becoming an anti-racist and unpacking whiteness while bringing forth my authentic voice as a woman, mother, and scholar. Within this framework, I feel free to express my deepest experiences and emotions.

Critical Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry

I will be employing critical arts-based narrative inquiry as the methodological framework for this study (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2017; Harris et al., 2015; Kim, 2016. Kim (2016) because it introduces narrative inquiry as "… narrative research [is] where a true life begins" (p.53). In essence, narrative inquiry is when research becomes art and art becomes research that extends beyond the limitations of scientific knowledge rooted in positivism (Kim, 2016). When narrative inquiry utilizes arts-based approaches such as poetry, fiction, drama, photography, video, drawing, and other arts mediums, arts-based narrative inquiry is born (Kim, 2016). In addition, visual-based narrative inquiry grounded in experiential learning (Sutherland & Jelinek, 2015) in the form of stories and prose, will be

employed for this evocative autoethnography to illustrate the stories that are told and retold by the researcher/participants to heighten awareness about political, social, cultural, and structural issues in their understanding and connection to the social world (Fook & Askeland, 2007). Critical arts-based research is a way to appreciate various and diverse ways of doing research and obtaining knowledge (Harris & al., 2015).

Critical arts-based methodology is informed by the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2022), a primary scholar who operationalized critical race theory (CRT) founded by Derrick Bell to include intersections of race, gender, and class in the field of education. While this study is not positioned as a CRT study, it would be appropriate to acknowledge that CRT is informing this work because of the natural relationship between studying intercultural lived experiences and the backdrop of past and present race relations in the socio-cultural context of the U.S. As such, narrative inquiry and arts-based approaches will interact with CRT as a methodological framework within the theory.

I draw from literature grounded in social constructionism and critical theories to disrupt and dismantle dominant narratives related to the racialized experiences of U.S. interracial families. Finally, I propose the methodological focus of my study to be grounded in critical arts-based narrative inquiry. Art transcends cultural barriers and allows for researcher/participants to find culturally relevant ways to express their lived experiences. My hope is that art will serve as a culturally responsive way to unpack highly emotive experiences and create new opportunities for cross-racial and gendered examination and communication within committed interracial relationships.

Study Design and Incorporation of Methods

Study Design

This study was conducted with 3 semi-structured interviews with 4 interracial couples/families over a 6-month period (May/June 2022-November 2022). At least one family member was connected to a larger societal system: the field of K-12 and/or postsecondary education. For example: this connection to the field of education comes in the form of having an assigned role as a faculty, staff, or administrator in higher education, an interracial couple/family with biracial children attending K-12 school, or interracial couples who are college students. In this way, we were able to unpack the family system as well as other systems of impact and interest to the interracial family. As listening practitioners, the research team and I engaged in critical reflexivity as we utilized intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective to interview the interracial family members about a critical incident or critical incident(s) related to race and gender, and more specifically daily violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience in personal and/or familial relationships, nuclear or extended family, community and other societal systems like education. These lived accounts allowed me to engage in critical reflexivity as I wrote this critical evocative autoethnography as a cross-racial and gendered coinquiry.

Vande Berg's (2017) linear 5-step critical incident process was adapted to use in an organic semi-structured manner based on the preference of the interracial couple/family. The 5-Step Process asks the interracial family or family members to describe the incident, what they did, what meaning they were making within that particular cultural context, and the consequences involved resulting from the critical incident. In the second interview, the interracial family/couple and the research team reflected on the natural experiences of critical empathy, intercultural humility, and intercultural listening that occurred during the first interview and continued to explore narrative resilience. At the end of the second interview, the

interracial couple/family had the opportunity to choose different art forms to illustrate and unpack their lived experiences using literary, visual, and/or performative forms. They could submit cultural artifacts during the interview process that aligned with their lived experiences. After I coded and analyzed the data of the first two interviews, I submitted a summary of findings to the researcher/participants to use in their arts-based project so that the art reflected the coding process and responded to the research questions. The researchers/participants chose how they wanted the research team to interact with their arts-based narrative process. Some researcher/participants wanted me to write a literary art piece so they could respond with a visual one. Another couple chose to write a story of their lived experiences and unpack it with the research team afterwards. Another researcher/participant chose to co-write a poem with me as we navigated healing from trauma and my husband intentionally provided a holding space for us to partake in narrative resilience.

Data collection came from a variety of sources including: my own critical reflexivity journal, analytic memos, and transcriptions of recorded video interviews. I used a hybrid approach of emotion, values, and versus coding (Saldaña, 2021) tobring out cultural and emotional themes and patterns related to the racialized and gendered experiences of the interracial families as well as the head, heart, and gut analysis (Ellingston, 2017) to work through the data as a process of embodiment. As a result, I shared my autoethnographic reflections of my lived experiences and how this intersected with these findings. The final arts-based narratives reflected these themes.

During the final/third interview, the researcher/participants and research team unpacked the literary and/or visual arts-based narrative together, explored the overall emergent themes of the study, engaged in collaborative critical reflexivity, finalized the art piece and determined

their individual and collective interaction with critical hope by answering the question, “Now what? Where do we go from here?”.

Discomfort and Growth Opportunities

As I engaged with my own interracial family and other interracial couples, it was impossible to escape the white racial frame and gendered violence. This was expected to take place in the interviews with interracial family members and within my own family as I worked through this research design. I have found that I personally struggled with the discomfort that comes with unpacking my own marginalization and that at times, I had to stop writing or collecting data to take care of myself. Likewise, unpacking critical incidents related to race and gender with interracial families was something that they sought me out and elected to do but this also came with a great deal of discomfort for the interracial families/couples which could create roadblocks to unpacking highly charged emotional experiences in 3 sessions. In fact, one research participant warned me that they and their family had many “ugly” experiences and wanted to make sure I still wanted to interview them. The societal pressure to feed into stock stories and internalized oppression is still prevalent in these dialogues as we try to push back and deeply listen to our concealed and resistance stories.

Additionally, focusing on intercultural awareness and listening within the context of critical intercultural communication development can open up many research opportunities in fields that have not made listening the primary focus. There is much room for innovation with a large gap in research, which is interdisciplinary in nature, to explore different possibilities to inform pedagogy and practice within the domain of qualitative inquiry. There are many reasons why listening has often not been a primary focus and one major reason is that it is often hard to

explore without the use of the spoken word and as a result, the speaker ends up becoming the primary focus once again.

Chapter Summary: My Daily Life: Through My Gendered Racialized Lenses

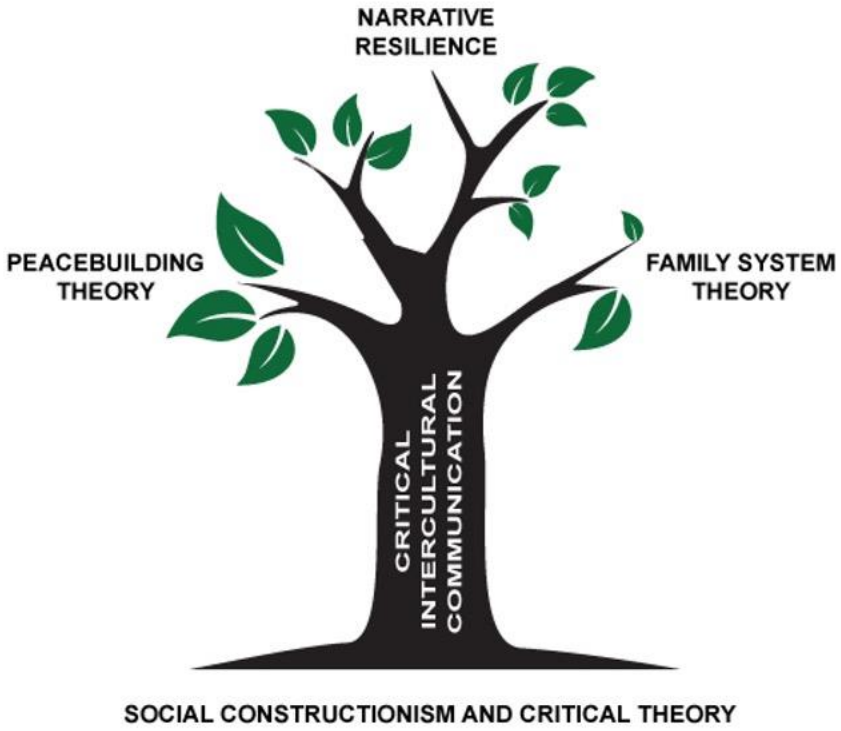
Women are considered a special and marginalized population within the United States that adheres to a patriarchal societal structure which favors and advantages white heterosexual cisgender men (Sue & al., 2022). Women have faced historical prejudice, and discriminatory behavior as well as disadvantages in the form of societal status. Presently, women encounter daily systemic oppression and psychological distress. The way I push back on gender norms, daily violence towards myself, my children, and my family and how I get in touch with my own blind spots about race is through poetry and short stories. My critical evocative autoethnography speaks to accounts of systemic oppression and my reach towards peacebuilding and resilience. This autoethnography will tell itself using narrative inquiry, and more specifically through the mediums of poetry and short stories. As a poet, I cannot tell my story of survival as a woman and my understanding of cross-racial dynamics without the power of arts-based narrative inquiry. Poetry speaks to my intersecting identities as both Oppressed and oppressor because violence and peacebuilding exist on a spectrum of daily lived experiences.

As I unpack my Oppressed identity, it is important for me to unpack the racial dynamics in my family that I do not understand through my lens of whiteness. Oftentimes, I have found it challenging to have intersectional conversations about race and gender in the same breath with my family members because it can often feel dismissive to both Oppressed parties. This dissertation seeks to push the edges of what has been comfortable and to interrogate from a point of critical hope and intercultural humility and resilience how we can embrace, accept, and learn to survive family communication about race and gender without negating one or the other but

affirming the lived experiences of Oppressed people as we intentionally address our oppressor identities. As we engage in family communication, we find ways to address our role in daily violence, how we can be more adaptive and compassionate within these oppressor identities, and how to find peace within, between, and among people who are very different than ourselves.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Figure 1. *Theoretical Underpinnings*



Section 1: Epistemological Foundation

In this chapter, I discuss the most relevant theoretical and conceptual ideas that inform my study as portrayed in Figure 1. As such, I will discuss the foundations of social constructionism and critical theory through the lenses of critical whiteness and feminism. Then, I will demonstrate the multidimensional aspects of intercultural communication theory by exploring different conceptual frameworks (1) intercultural listening, (2) the development of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation which shifts the intercultural competence paradigm to intercultural humility and resilience and operationalizes

critical empathy and intercultural listening, and (3) the fostering of intercultural humility and resilience through motivational interviewing, narrative therapy techniques, and courageous conversations about race and gender. Additionally, I illustrate how critical intercultural communication is a form of localized peacebuilding. Finally, I will explore how family systems theory plays a part in interracial family communication and education about race and gender, which focuses on the very context of the study. Poetic interludes will be presented as a feminist bricolage (Handforth & Taylor, 2016).

Social Constructionism and Critical Theory

When identifying a theoretical framework to inform a study, it is important for it to be both useful and serve a function (Kim, 2016). Macro level theory incorporates a holistic interpretive paradigm to frame a research study (Kim, 2016). This holistic theoretical approach to research will incorporate both a social constructionist and critical lens. Most qualitative research is framed within a constructionist epistemology (Bhattacharya, 2017). Constructionism "is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 2015, p. 42). Constructionism and more specifically social constructionism originate from the conceptions of Berger and Luckmann (Crotty, 2015).

Critical theory relates to different systems and structures of oppression that are demonstrated through people's lived experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017). Critical theory is positioned not only to eradicate oppression but to create critical consciousness.
Paulo Freire (1972) introduced the notion of conscientization, or critical consciousness, which is an awakening of consciousness. Freire (1972) asserted that conscious human beings

have creative imagination and the freedom to create new realities out of dire situations. Critical theory is positioned as "counter-hegemony to confront injustice in socially and historically rooted power relations" (Kim, 2016, p.80). When using critical theory as a theoretical framework, the goal is to employ a deconstructive perspective to interrogate institutional structures, disrupt dominant narratives contributing to systems of oppression, and bring about societal change. Social constructionist and critical theories will be explored using the interracial family as a valuable resource, collaborative system, and catalyst for heightening awareness about racial and gender dynamics, interracial dialogue, and systems of oppression in the United States.

The Social Construction of Racism and Sexism. An understanding of oppression often begins with the recognition of inherent differences that human beings possess related to the different diversity dimensions of ethnicity, language, ability status, race, sexuality, gender, (Bishara, 2022) and economic class among others (Harro, 2000). With this new understanding of difference, human beings also often dismiss its significance by believing that if we value difference and live our lives in a respectful way that oppression will cease to exist. White people also believe that if they have a Black friend, biracial children, a Black president, or a spouse who is a Person of Color, that we are living in a post-racial society or that we understand what their lived experience is like due to emotional and relational proximity. This could not be further from the truth because race is socially constructed and with this social construction comes unequal roles of power, domination, oppression, and subordination (Harro, 2000). Sexism may not have the same tone as in years past, but bigotry in the form of modern sexism is still maintaining the status quo (Sue, 2010). Negative attitudes towards women are a worldwide phenomenon (Zastrow, 2004). Thus, we are not all created equal within the society in which we live. We have social identities related to different diversity dimensions that predetermine unequal roles

that are deeply intertwined within systems and structures of oppression. Sometimes, we are so socialized to be Oppressed that we unconsciously perpetuate it, and other times we are so socialized to dominate, we do not even realize we are doing it (Harro, 2000).

The socialization process is pervasive, consistent, self-perpetuating, and oftentimes invisible which is another reason why it is so difficult to eradicate (Bishara, 2022; Harro, 2000). This cycle of socialization starts with being born into a world where systemic oppression is already engrained into every fiber of society. This is perpetuated by our primary caregivers who have grown up in this system, and we continue to be bombarded by it during our institutional and cultural socialization. For example, from a gender socialization lens, "people are born males and females, and through education society makes them 'boys' and 'girls'...they dictated the principles of behavior, their attitudes and roles are defined...and they are taught how to communicate with others (Bishara, 2022, p.13). If we do nothing, the cycle continues to promote the status quo and individuals with power and privilege continue to benefit from the systems of domination and power that are in place (Harro, 2000). Other times, human beings are confronted with dissonance and disequilibrium that make them challenge these systems. Through the interrogation of racism and sexism in the interracial family system and society at large, the following theoretical communication frameworks speak to social constructionism and/or critical theory as they intersect with these intercultural frameworks.

Individuals of multiracial descent coming from interracial relationships often come into the world existing between the margins of society and may represent the discomfort society has historically felt for interracial unions (Root, 1990). This socialization begins the moment they are born and does not initially involve choice regarding racial identity development (Harro, 2000). Root (1990) discusses that this discomfort comes in part from society not accepting races as

equal due to our socialization process. Therefore, people of multiracial descent are consistently referred to as fractions of people instead of whole and as a result, multiracial individuals may not be accepted by any one group of people (Sue & al., 2022). This societal reactive response to race can present many stressors for multiracial individuals especially adolescents and these stressors have been connected to both substance abuse and other maladaptive destructive behavior issues (Choi et al., 2006; Sue et al., 2022). The following is an excerpt of a daily interracial family experience of my son navigating his ambiguity with two monoracial parents and a society that does not accept the two races that exist within him.

My Twinkie

What is he?

They asked me.

He's so exotic. I like his skin. I wish I had his skin.

He's mixed. He's got an Asian dad and a white mom.

It's simple. That's all he can be.

Mama, I'm Asian. Dada is Asian too.

Mama, I want to be white like you.

Mama, are you Asian too?

Mama, I'm peach. That's what I am!

He doesn't act like an Asian kid. He acts white.

That's not a good thing.

He can't go around pretending he's white.

Society will never see him as white so he can't be.

There is no place on the form for biracial.

Mama, I'm brown.

You can choose Asian or white or Other.

Those are the only choices we have.

As indicated in the excerpt above, young multiracial people are beginning to resist certain traditional ways that society oppresses their identity development by having a more fluid sense of self (Saulny, 2011). Multiracial identity development is a complex phenomenon that is impacted by many different factors including physical appearance, racial self-identification, and environmental conditions such as where the multiracial individuals grow up (AhnAllen et al., 2006; Sue et al., 2022). Racial identity development models have often fallen short as they are more attune to monoracial individuals instead of individuals of multiracial descent as well as their inadequate linear framework from one developmental stage to a resolution to another developmental stage. Root (1990, 1998) discusses four different ways to healthily work through the social conditioning of marginality with multiracial people: (1) Accepting racial identity society assigns, (2) Work through marginality by identifying with both racial groups, (3) Internalizing a single racial identity, and (4) identifying as a multiracial person. Navigating these stages within an interracial family as we grapple with our own monoracial socialization and society's responses is often very challenging for monoracial parents and caregivers and creates additional stress and disorientation for the multiracial child. In other words, navigating a multiracial child's ambiguity is directly connected to how interracial families navigate communication about race and gender, daily violence, peacebuilding, and tools for resilience.

The interracial family system is the first place that a multiracial child is socialized to learn about their race and gender in an intersectional context. This is a place where self-concepts and societal and/or familial rules are made (Harro, 2000). It is possible that monoracial parents, caregivers, and educators, have limitations with the ambiguity and tensions of raising and working with multiracial children as the lived experience of cultural marginality is different.

Root (1996) created the bill of rights for racially mixed people that I have tried to integrate into conversations with my family, multiracial individuals, and other interracial families.

The multiracial bill of rights speaks to three different ways multiracial people can navigate oppressive social conditioning through *resistance*, *revolution*, and *change*. *Resistance* refers to multiracial children refusing to marginalize and fragment themselves: allowing their identity to be whole and fluid, not having to justify the disorientation that society feels with racial ambiguity and allowing to hold races as separate if desired (Harro, 2000; Sue & Sue, 2022). *Revolution* refers to multiracial individuals being able to cross racial boundaries: identifying different than siblings or how a stranger may perceive them, not accepting society's or parent's racial identification of them as the only truth and identifying differently based on the socio-cultural context and environment. Finally, change refers to creating a sense of being whole and belonging that is outside of what multiracial individuals have been conditioned to do: creating vocabulary that represents multiracial identity, changing multiracial identity over time, choosing who to befriend and who to love (Root, 1990, 1998; Sue & Sue, 2022). As such, interracial families are constantly navigating these cross-cultural tensions and just as multiracial individuals need to explore resistance, revolution, and change, interracial families also need to explore these dynamics as well to create a more whole and healthy family system. Just as we are socialized to navigate race in a certain way, tensions exist regarding how we communicate and are socialized to navigate gender.

Gender, like race, is a social construct (Coates, 2015). West and Zimmerman (1987) note that gender is performed and sustained as something that is routine-driven and integrated into daily interactions amongst people. Through institutional and cultural socialization, starting with the family system, our socialization towards gender-based communication and how

conversational dominance exists benefits those from the dominant culture and supports and reinforces social inequities in non-dominant cultures (Harro, 2000; Coates, 2015).

> If we are members of groups that benefit from the rules, we may not notice they aren't fair. If we are members of the groups that are penalized by the rules, we may have a constant feeling of discomfort. We learn that these rules, roles, and assumptions are part of a structure that is larger than just our families…We learn that black people are more likely to steal…boys are expected to fight and use violence, so they are encouraged to learn how…White means good; black means bad. Girls are responsible for birth control. It's a man's world. (Harro, 2000, p.49).

As interracial families navigate daily violence, peacebuilding, and tools for resilience, multiracial children are being directly impacted (negatively or positively) and socialized by these experiences through the family, societal system's understanding of racial relations and the acquisition of gender-differentiated language (Coates, 2015). Language, race, and gender intersect with our socialization, oppression, and resistance stories to form a place for the emergence of critical hope. As the interracial family develops a new story and heals from racism and sexism, multiracial children may be able to develop a new path free of transgenerational trauma. This future is what I wish for my family and other interracial families. This is my critical hope.

It is important for me to investigate how race, gender, and class are both "an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and a means of justifying" divisions and difference in society (West & Fenstermaker, 1995, p. 9). I am the white mother of two biracial

children, and they will never have the privilege I have. I am a victim-survivor[7] of childhood sexual abuse, rape and domestic violence. I am the white American wife of a Thai immigrant man. I am a practitioner scholar, an artist, and qualitative researcher. Through these intersecting identities, I tell my story and my story connects to my family's story, and to the stories of the interracial couples and families participating in this study. I believe that these stories can heal and provide a place to foster critical hope through narrative resilience. Critical theory provides one needed avenue to address systemic violence, oppression, and the importance of how these social arrangements continue to perpetuate division.

Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) serve as a foundation of Critical Studies literature which informs this autoethnography as a cross-racial gendered coinquiry. CRT is informed by the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2022), a primary scholar who operationalized CRT founded by Derrick Bell to include intersections of race, gender, and class in the field of education. The theoretical framework of CRT draws attention to systems of oppression, interrogates and dismantles structures that encourage oppression, and intentionally examines and elaborates upon pre-existing systems that promote oppressive ideologies (Ladson-Billings, 1997). CRT acknowledges the impact that racism has on the everyday life of People of Color, addresses dominant discourses related to white privilege and being colorblind, and upholds the lived experience of People of Color as valuable and legitimate (Kim, 2016). Even though the focus is on race and how racism plays out in our society, CRT focuses

[7] Victim-survivor refers to the spectrum of healing and self-identification as the result of sexual trauma and other forms of gender-based violence. I identify as a victim-survivor because I still see myself as a victim while I try to reframe my lived experience into survivor stories.

on intersectionality specifically related to systemic oppression related to class and gender. I will utilize CRT to inform my research as a framework to connect underlining systems of oppression such as racism and how the eradication of racism is not a universal experience. I will interrogate racism within the interracial family and co-construct meaning with my partner/research team and other interracial families and my role as an oppressor. I will also co-construct meaning with interracial families about how racism and whiteness/light skin privilege show up in their daily lives with each other and within societal systems.

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) asserts that race influences our lived experiences everyday (Matias et al., 2017). In addition, whiteness is an oppressive system that makes privileging white people and marginalizing People of Color a societal norm (Cabrera & al., 2017; Earick, 2018). In the United States, white racial identity is often perceived and acted upon as the dominant social norm. As a result, white Americans are not familiar with interrogating their own whiteness and how in being white, they are able to take advantage of systems of oppression and inequity connected to whiteness (Frankenberg, 1997; Hartmann et al., 2009; McIntosh, 1989). It is important to distinguish between whiteness and white people (Cabrera et al., 2017). Whiteness involves systems of power that interact in such a way that race privilege is reserved for white people- a way of racialized being and knowing that determines how they view themselves, others, and the world around them. A worldview comprised of cultural values, beliefs, and practices that make up a societal norm privileging white people that oftentimes is invisible to white people is also a major part of whiteness (Frankenberg, 1997; Hartmann et al. 2009).

Applying the concept of whiteness to higher education systems, Cabrera et al. (2017) outlines the key tenets of critical whiteness studies: whiteness as a colorblind lens,

whiteness as an epistemology of ignorance, whiteness as an ontology of expansiveness, whiteness as property, and whiteness as centering racial comfort of white people. Colorblindness refers to white people finding a way to interpret the daily violence of racism as being caused by something else other than racism; race is minimized into nonexistence. Whiteness as epistemology of ignorance is the phenomenon that white people are averse to suffering and if they don't know what they don't know, they cannot in fact, be held accountable for that suffering. Whiteness as ontological expansiveness involves white people believing that all spaces from geographical to economical to psychological, belong to them. Whiteness as property means that white people determine who is and who is not white and also enjoy the privileges of being white. Whiteness as assumed racial comfort allows white people to avoid feelings of discomfort about race, centers and normalizes whiteness, and supports daily microaggressions. Because of the intersecting and self-sustaining nature of these tenets, the problematic system of whiteness reinforces and masks the racial hierarchy that continues to privilege to white racial frame (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022).

For this study, the research team will extend Cabrera's CWS (2017) in higher education and apply it to the interracial family system by specifically exploring aspects of CWS that are most salient to the interracial couple/family such as the harmful impact of colorblindness, whiteness as ontological expansiveness or property when white women may take up too much dialogic space, as well as whiteness as assumed racial comfort and provide space for Men of Color to discuss the contrary. Exploring CWS with interracial couples/families, when appropriate, will further the development of their critical intercultural communication.

As such, interracial families participating in this study will reflect upon their racial identities of domination and subordination, their racialized experiences, and how whiteness impacts their

relationship with storytelling. During the interviews with interracial couples/families, we will also explore gender and racial intersections with language and how conversational dominance impacts communication (Coates, 2015). As a white researcher, I will utilize CWS to better understand the narratives that unfold and commit to my own critical reflexivity and positionality.

Limits to Social Constructionism & Critical Whiteness Studies. Qualitative research is often informed by a constructionist collective meaning making process (Bhattacharya, 2017) however, for this cross-racial study, there are limits to social constructionism within the realm of navigating and learning from interracial relationships as a white-identifying person. Oftentimes, white people lack the psychosocial stamina to discuss race and understand the complicit nature of how they navigate the world while benefiting from the oppression of others (Applebaum, 2017). This phenomenon has been coined white fragility (DiAngelo & Dyson, 2018) and can cause undue harm to People of Color as well as an emotional and psychological burden. Since white people are in a place of power and privilege in socio-cultural environments in the United States, a typical dominant culture response is to comfort white people when they experience fragility regarding their lack of understanding of their involvement in racism (Applebaum, 2017). For this reason, there are limits to social constructionism within interracial dialogue as it relates to unpacking whiteness in the relationship, which informs why my study with interracial families involves intentional time for journaling and critical reflexivity. This allows me to build awareness about how I can support the lived experiences of the stories being told during the interracial family interview by the People of Color. Developing individual agency is often necessary regarding a white-identifying person developing deeper self-awareness about their racist ideologies and does not always have to entail collective meaning-making with a Person of Color. However, my research team partner, who is both my

husband and a Man of Color, has elected to unpack racialized communication dynamics and my own blind spots about race in the framing of the study which adds to the authenticity of the cross-cultural communications. Just as race shapes our everyday experiences, gender also plays a part in how we navigate the world and oppressive systems. Feminist theorizations of violence introduce how violence exists on a spectrum, disproportionality impact women and girls, and is commonplace in modern nations (Lokaneeta, 2016).

Feminist Theorizations of Violence

Violence, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation" (WHO, 2002, p. 4). The WHO speaks to the spectrum of harm caused by violence but does not capture the experience of the Oppressed or the oppressors and the reasons behind the harm caused. Van Der Kolk (2014) explains that one doesn't have to be active in the military to experience trauma. Trauma is an integral part of our societal framework as it is related to oppression and daily violence. Even though human beings are resilient, trauma from racism and sexism can leave a lasting impact on marginalized communities and interpersonal relationships.

Feminist theory of violence has its own specifications and scope which has widened society's understanding of the spectrum of violence occurring from war, genocide, civic unrest, and terrorism to daily violence that is often invisible to the dominant culture and to individuals who have internalized the violence as commonplace (Coronil & Skurski, 2006). Feminist scholars assert that instead of taking a posture of postmodern violence, that violence is in fact inherent in part of the framework of modern nations.

> Focusing both on individual and collective experiences of violence and resistance, feminist theory and practice have significantly expanded understanding of complex and multilayered forms of violence, as well as their physical and discursive effects, while also creating a methodology attuned to racialization and gendering in the study of violence and resistance (Lokaneeta, 2016, p.1025).

Feminist scholars are intentional in making the connection between *daily* violence which is perpetuated in society and how nations are built and challenge the "trivialization of violence against women in organized conflict and fought for the recognition of rape as a weapon of war and a crime against humanity" (Lokaneeta, 2016, p. 237). Violence could be understood as on a spectrum of many different iterations of harm as well as daily microaggressions that dehumanize and dismiss marginalized people and communities (Lokeneeta, 2016; Sue, 2010). Along these lines, racialized and gendered violence could be manifested in daily life through interpersonal communication in the form of daily microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007).

Racialized and gender-based violence have been placed center stage in feminist theory while being ignored by mainstream society. These types of violence speak to the socio-political history and impact of slavery, segregation, rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment just to name a few. Feminist theorizations of violence intentionally draw attention to *structural violence* when human beings are harmed due to economic and political matters related to distribution of resources; *representational and symbolic violence* that are dialogic and serve to dehumanize and objectify while creating a sense of superiority in others as well as *epistemic violence* which are ways of producing knowledge that dismiss the integrity of certain groups (Lokaneeta, 2016). A limitation of violence historically and in present-day society has been to partake in the dominant discourse of forgetting violence, minimizing it, and conceptualizing it as rare in the

contemporary world for liberal states to take on a more humane appearance. (Sarat & Kearns, 1991). An example of negotiating race and gender in the realm of violence would be a female slave's inability to give consent since she was property of a male master and this societal dehumanization made it legally impossible for her to give consent (Hartman, 1999). This is a powerful example to bring to the conversation of interracial families. How do we situate our intersecting identities in a way in which our partner or children experience dehumanization? How does our relationship impact their daily experience of violence in which they may feel entrapped in an oppressor/Oppressed dialogic experience which is the embodiment of racism and/or sexism? How does our communication give way to perpetuating violence or creating opportunities for peacebuilding?

Patriarchal societal framework often creates family environments in which violence is tolerated and normalized – oppressing and silencing women. Within families, violence against women is defined as "any behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors" (WHO, 2016). Additionally, violent acts such as intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence against children (VAC) are defined as violations of human rights and are widespread social phenomena (Namy et al., 2017). It is important to explore the spectrum of violence within a family and how it impacts daily life. Violence against women often has a direct impact on children through "bystander trauma, negative role modeling, protection and further victimization, and displaced aggression" (Namy et al, 2017, p.40). How violence impacts daily lives and subjectivity is a fundamental part of the study of violence and peace (Lokaneeta, 2016). In this study, I want to normalize how commonplace gendered and racial violence is through daily intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal activities that occur in

both micro-level and macro-level systems. My intention in centering racialized and gendered oppression as a daily occurrence is that these social phenomena can be explored with dialogic and action-oriented strategies to diminish or eradicate them.

Section 2: Intercultural Communication Theory

Understanding culture and its multifaceted dimensions to language has been an integral part of language pedagogy and communicative competence (Risager, 2007). Interculturalists use culture to increase communicative competence and use communication to increase cultural competence. This symbiotic relationship exists because it is nearly impossible to understand communication without authentically understanding the sociocultural aspects of the origins of the languages being spoken (Hymes, 1972: Baker, 2012). How the speaker, or storyteller, makes use of the language is what creates its meaning. For intercultural communication to be successful, it is important to understand the knowledge, beliefs, values, and sociocultural contexts that undergird the intercultural communicative experience of the storyteller (Baker, 2012). The essential nature of intercultural awareness is reflected in requests for intercultural training programs to support participants to increase their ability to be interculturally aware (Landis & Bhagat, 1996; Yum, 1989) with the common goal of exploring and understanding cultural differences which impact intercultural communicative competence to decrease naturally occurring cultural misunderstandings (Chen & Starosta,199; Seidel, 1981).

Various scholars conceptualize intercultural awareness differently depending on their vantage point. On an international level, intercultural awareness can be a desire for social change and the understanding of how different cultural groups connect with each other (Zhang & McCornae, 2013). Another argument could position intercultural awareness as a starting

off point for navigating cultural differences and similarities not just in international contexts but domestically as well. Many scholars assert that intercultural awareness is "the cognitive perspective of intercultural communication" (Chen & Starosta, 1998). This cognitive perspective demands a certain level of self-awareness that we are cultural beings, and this knowledge impacts our values, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions and can ultimately shape our worldview. Zhang & McCornac (2013) assert that "Intercultural awareness is necessary in order to achieve competence and intercultural relations" (p.1). Korzilius et al. (2007) define intercultural awareness as the "ability to empathize and decenter" (p.2). Intercultural awareness is in part, "an awareness of culturally based frames of reference, forms, and communicative practices as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication" as well as "the capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent socioculturally grounded communication modes and frames of reference" (Baker, 2012, p. 66). More specifically, in a communicative experience, it is the ability to take on the perspective of the conversational partner from another cultural background and be able to understand and take into consideration the interlocutors' different perspectives simultaneously. Given the multidimensional definitions of intercultural awareness, that have been presented, it is evident that harnessing its ambiguous nature is not an easy task in theory or in practice.

Intercultural communication has historically been framed within a positivistic epistemology and criticized for not having alternative approaches to research (Fretheim, 2016). Scholars in the field have discussed a more constructionist approach that would aim to explore "where reality is negotiated and constructed in cultural contexts and situations, rather than distributed from a sender to a recipient" (Falkheimer & Heide, 2006, p. 180). In addition, crisis occurring on national and global scales requires that the process of intercultural communication

be addressed to reach more successful outcomes however, “the issue of listening is rarely discussed at any considerable length in crisis or intercultural communication textbooks, though the issues of non-verbal communication, hermeneutics, and conversation-stopping are often addressed” (Fretheim, 2016, p. 11). Effective intercultural listening is such an important aspect of communication, yet research has tended to focus more on the speaker than on the listener (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). In the book *Communication, Race, and Family*, Socha & Diggs (1999) explain that “If education to combat racism is to be effective, it needs to happen on both sides of the racial divide, occur through societal institutions, especially home, and, in particular, focus on ways to increase intercultural sensitivity” (p.19). As such, I employ critical intercultural communication theory as a localized approach to peacebuilding and family systems theory as primary lenses through which this study is conceptualized.

Thus, in what follows, I will explain the different yet interrelated elements of cultural awareness, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence and the importance of going beyond the competence paradigm within the interracial family system to enact peacebuilding and resilience approaches. I will discuss how the development of these concepts and integration of critical empathy and intercultural listening could represent the engaged consciousness of intercultural humility in the development of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation.

Critical Intercultural Communication

Bennett (1986) developed the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) which illustrates how individuals respond and adapt to cultural similarities and differences. Bennett (1986) places particular emphasis on how intercultural sensitivity is not a naturally occurring state for human beings to master and oftentimes, cross cultural contact has resulted in

war, mass genocide, cruelty, and discrimination. Even though the DMIS was created on an individual level, Socha & Diggs (1986) believe that this developmental model can be extended to family systems: "some families hold values that create a home where communication practices and rituals reflect ethnorelative and culturally plural values whereas other families hold ethnocentric and segregated ones" (p.19). Since the genesis of the DMIS, much has changed in intercultural communication literature to incorporate critical scholarship (Moon, 2010).

Oftentimes, intercultural communication has been conceptualized as differences on an international level instead of domestically, interpersonal communication across cultures instead of addressing systems change, and the concept of how power operates within intercultural dynamics was absent in literature. In fact, intercultural communication scholars have noted this discrepancy in recent years and there has been a movement in the field to rethink foundational concepts related to intercultural competence, adaptation, and identity within a critical framework (Moon, 2010). For instance, interracial families, including my own family, navigate power differentials daily related to gender and race while our family unit is also considered outside of the dominant cultural norm in the United States. If we only attend to how intercultural communication dynamics such as how my partner and I come from high or low context cultures or our cultural communication styles (direct vs indirect) are different based on our cultural upbringing, we are missing the very foundation of the power differentials that impact our family and our perceived place in society. In the following excerpt, my partner and I transition from wanting to believe the myth of our family unit being a safe haven to sharing the pain we both feel acknowledging that our home is still perpetuating systemic oppression as we both hold oppressor and Oppressed identities as a white woman and Man of Color. In this acknowledgement to each other, we enter the realm of critical intercultural communication

which addresses daily violence, the potential for peacebuilding, and tools for resistance that address and respond to power, privilege, and oppression.

You Can't Go Home Again

Let's build a Safe Haven-

Here we are just people you and me.

Universalism.

It sounds good in theory, doesn't it?

There is no race or gender.

We're JUST PEOPLE.

But there is something so dismissive about this

It doesn't sit right with me.

It's supposed to be a safe place.

That is what I want it to be.

Not like the rest of the world.

#asianhate #metoo

Then why do I feel your power as a man over me?

Why do you hate white people?

Yeah, I know it.

I trigger you a lot through my lens of whiteness.

I get to walk around this rural place

So easily

But there is supposed to be someplace we can hide

From all of this.

A foundation of wellbeing should be the family.

They say our first born acts like he's white but he says he's Asian.

We don't really have the luxury of pretending.

The power differentials between you and I exist.

Cause we naturally oppress each other.

We naturally trigger each other.

Trauma overlaps in the same household.

Our family trauma shapes who we are.

Sometimes we don't even recognize when we do it.

#blindspots

#traumabonding

But it comes out in other ways

Unspoken resentment and pain of the Oppressed.

Feeling less than. Unworthy. Silenced. Stifled.

We have kids now.

How do we come up for air?

How do we heal this?

Can you ever trust me?

#intimatepartnerviolence

Will we ever truly know the power we hold?

How do we end this trauma cycle?

In order to better understand how critical intercultural communication can be positioned as a localized form of peacebuilding, it is important to understand the theoretical trajectory from cultural awareness to intercultural awareness and the paradigm shift from intercultural competence to intercultural humility.

From Cultural Awareness to Intercultural Awareness. Cultural awareness acknowledges culture as a part of the communicative experience and as a result, cross-cultural

learners need to become more skilled at understanding their cultural selves and the culture of others to boost their cultural awareness (Baker, 2012). Baker (2012) proposes that cultural awareness is an earlier version of intercultural awareness, and it is important to consider how "knowledge of specific cultures has to be combined with an awareness of cultural influences in intercultural communication as fluid, fragmented, hybrid, and emergent with cultural groupings or boundaries less easily defined and referenced" (p.66).

Baker (2012) highlights and adapts Bryam's (1997) cultural awareness model to incorporate both cultural and intercultural awareness into three levels: basic cultural awareness, advanced cultural awareness, and intercultural awareness. First, basic cultural awareness entails conceptualizing culture as shared values and beliefs, impacting contextual interpretation of how we make meaning of the world, an understanding of our own cultural values beliefs and behaviors and the ability to express this as well as other cultural similarities and differences in values beliefs and behaviors of culturally different others and the ability to compare this with our own (Baker, 2012). Advanced cultural awareness brings with it the iterative nature of culturally general frameworks and the ability to understand that culture is fluid, evolving, changing and open to revision: there are multiple perspectives that exist and multiple truths within a specific cultural setting and that there can be a possibility of common ground among different cultures as well as the possibility of significant conflict and miscommunication within the diversity of intercultural experiences (Baker, 2012). In addition, advanced cultural awareness, emphasizes the importance for learners to further develop their understanding of both culture and language within intercultural contacts that can lead to adaptive strategies for successful intercultural communication. Finally, Baker (2012) conceptualizes intercultural awareness as an extension of cultural awareness and defines intercultural awareness as "… a conscious

understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real-time communication" (p.66). The interculturally aware practitioner understands that oftentimes intercultural communication starts based on cultural stereotypes and that there is the possibility of moving beyond these initial frames of reference. Some of the foundational knowledge and insight needed to be interculturally aware involves committed intentionality around understanding culturally general frameworks and communicative practices that are culturally specific but also multidimensional (Baker, 2012). It is important to note that individuals making up an interracial family system may operate communicatively from any point in this culture/intercultural awareness continuum. For this study, the importance of the development of intercultural awareness lies in the intentionality and commitment in the cross-racial relationship for there to be cross-cultural understanding (Mestrovich et al., 2022).

Chen (2007) explains that "unless a person shows a positive emotion towards learning, understanding, recognizing, and respecting the cultural similarities and differences, intercultural awareness is unreachable." He further describes that having an authentic and engaged intercultural interaction is founded on the principles of learning and responding to cultural similarities and differences based on the cultural identities that are played out in the conversation. An important aspect of the development of intercultural awareness when engaging in intercultural communication is to move from a single cultural frame of reference which is defined as ethnocentrism to a multidimensional ethnorelative mindset which requires sustained intentionality and commitment (Bennett, 1984).

In other words, intercultural awareness is developmental in nature and in a later stage, there is an ability to mediate and negotiate between different sociocultural modes and frames of communication based on the understanding of different cultures within the specific experience of the cultural communication (Bennett, 1984). Additionally, Baker's conceptualization of intercultural awareness evolved to being "expanded beyond its everyday usage to include knowledge, skills, and attitudes and used as a more holistic alternative to intercultural competence, which avoids the problematic competence-performance distinction" (Baker, 2015, pp131). Furthermore, it is important to note that some scholars use intercultural awareness and competence interchangeably because of the following similarities which are shared: having knowledge and awareness of communicative practices in different socio-cultural settings, the skills and abilities to use and apply this knowledge appropriately and with flexibility, as well as the attitudes and beliefs towards cross-cultural communication that encompass de-centering and relativizing (neutralizing) one's owns values, beliefs, perceptions and behaviors (Baker, 2012). For this study in order to explore how my family and other interracial families navigate critical intercultural communication, it is first important to define and clarify intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence.

Intercultural Awareness, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Intercultural Competence. Intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence have been treated in a convoluted way in literature dating back many decades and are often treated as synonymous or closely related (Chen, 1997). As previously mentioned, many scholars define intercultural awareness as a cognitive set of skills related to intercultural communication. Intercultural awareness shapes our everyday interactions with culturally different others and is considered a foundational aspect of communication (Zhu, 2011). These cognitive skills are connected to a cultural framework

that impacts how people process information and respond at a behavioral level. Intercultural awareness is perceived as a cognitive ability to distinguish oneself as a cultural being. This can be used as a foundational understanding to then distinguish traits of other people's cultures to better understand and interpret their actions, perceptions, and values through an intercultural context (Triandis, 1977) Since cross-cultural misunderstandings are common within the context of the interracial family system, it's important for us to demonstrate both intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity in order to more deeply understand and adapt to inherent similarities and differences in cultures different from our own.

Intercultural sensitivity can be understood as a certain level of cross-cultural relational positivity: positive affect and emotions regarding learning, understanding, and respecting cultural similarities and differences. More specifically, intercultural sensitivity encompasses skills like "self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and non-judgment" (Chen, 1997, p.10). Our process of cultural and intercultural awareness is enhanced by intercultural sensitivity. Without intercultural sensitivity, it would be very difficult to reach later stages of intercultural awareness (Chen, 1997). The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) describes the various levels of intercultural awareness associated with navigating cross-cultural situations of cultural commonality and difference. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity is related to a change in affect and cognition as well as the ability to adapt to attain intercultural communicative competence (Chen, 1997).

Bennett (2004) addresses how some people are more skilled at communicating in cross-cultural situations than others. The DMIS (Bennett, 1986, 1993; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Bennett et al., 2003) illustrates the shifts in consciousness and connection that occur when individuals navigate within monocultural and intercultural mindsets. Bennett (2004) asserts that

the quality of the communication experience of individuals with an intercultural or ethnorelative mindset is drastically different than individuals who navigate within a monocultural or ethnocentric framework. A listening practitioner with an ethnocentric mindset understands the cultural experience of the other party solely in relationship to the listener's own cultural experience whereas an ethnorelative mindset allows for cultural perspective taking to take place (Bennett, 2004). As such, Bennett (2004) explains that "the crux of intercultural adaptation is the ability to have an alternative cultural experience…that more or less matches that of people in another culture" (pp. 10-11). Just as the DMIS encompasses the cognitive and affective elements of cross-cultural experiences and intercultural communication, critical evocative autoethnography attends to the cognitive and affective elements of navigating daily lived experiences through a lens of social justice as the embodiment of the narrative truth of the storyteller. Finally, intercultural competence refers to the action-oriented and adaptive nature involved in operationalizing intercultural communication.

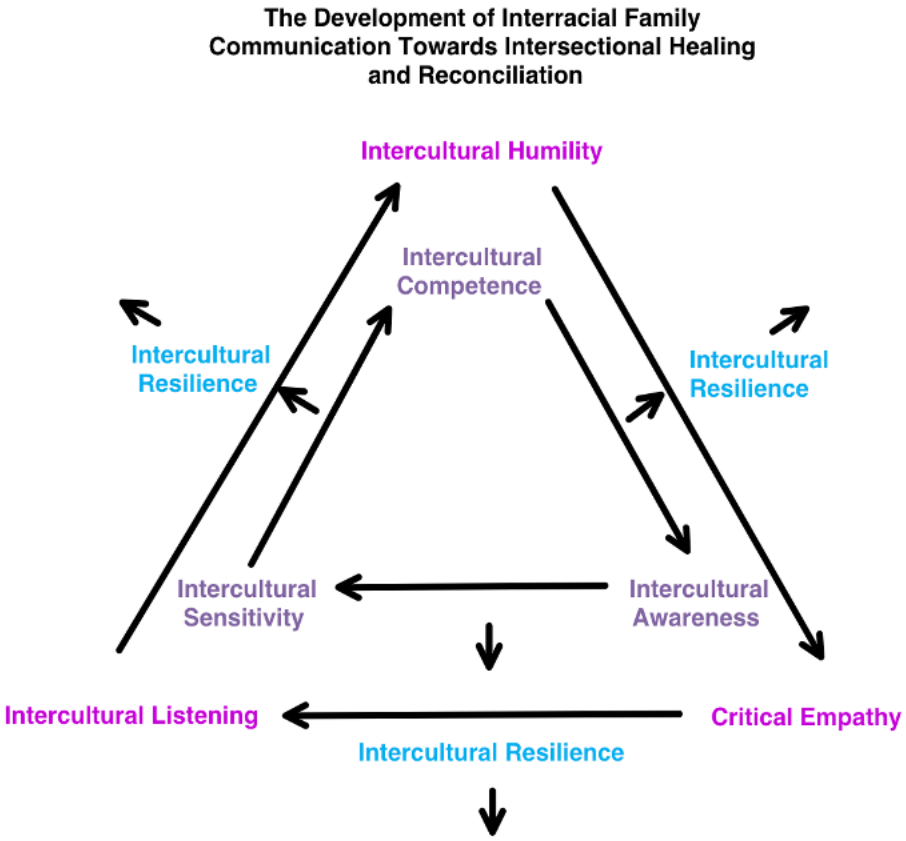
Intercultural competence refers to appropriate behavioral adaptations regarding certain cultures and contexts (Chen, 1997). Intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity are present at each developmental spectrum of intercultural knowledge and competence to varying degrees and the effectiveness and overall success of the intercultural communicative interaction is determined primarily by these how we shift and adapt our behavior to factors related to cultural similarities and differences. Bennett (2008) defines intercultural knowledge and competence as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills, and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts". In collaboration with teams of interculturalists and educators in higher education, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (2020) developed a rubric to support the integration of intercultural

knowledge and competence skills in higher education. These characteristics were taken from Bennett's DMIS (1993) as well as Deardorff's intercultural framework (2006). Cultural self-awareness, knowledge of cultural worldviews, empathy, verbal and nonverbal communication, curiosity, and openness are all part of the developmental framework that espouses intercultural knowledge and competence (Bennett, 2008).

In summary, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence create a triad of the cognitive, affective, and behavior aspects of the intercultural communicative experience. They are distinctly separate but interdependent elements that support successful intercultural communication. For contemporary cross-cultural communication about race and gender within the interracial family system, these concepts rooted in competence-driven frameworks do not seem to position interracial families to authentically and critically make meaning of their lived experiences and effectively communicate with one another in cross-cultural situations. Competence-driven frameworks are not critical consciousness or humility-driven and focus more on intent rather than impact in intercultural contexts. Intercultural competence does not attend to the power differentials that exist in cross-cultural experiences which impact racial and gender dynamics in intimate partnerships and interracial families. Competence-driven intercultural communication frameworks provide an ineffective one-dimensional approach to cross-cultural communication in interracial families. As a result, more refined psycho-social cross-cultural communication tools are needed for intersectional healing and reconciliation to occur. For future research to take place in the field of intercultural communication, it is important for researchers to make a better distinction (Chen, 1997) and an expanded conceptualization between these three terms.

A Conceptual Framework: Intersectional Healing and Reconciliation. In order to fully explore the development of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation, it is important to shift the paradigm from intercultural competence to intercultural humility and resilience. Figure 2 proposes a conceptual framework that moves from a competence-centered model of intercultural communication to one that incorporates critical intercultural communication. The larger triad composed of critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience depicts the development of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation regarding racism, sexism, misogyny and other forms of racial and gender-based violence. Just as intercultural competence is a developmental process (Bennett, 2004), this conceptual framework positions intersectional healing and reconciliation as a developmental journey. As interracial families learn these psychosocial cross-cultural communication skills, their ability to be interculturally resilient creates transformative opportunities to navigate conversations about race and gender and oppressor/Oppressed identities. As a result, I propose a paradigm shift from intercultural competence to intercultural humility and resilience which incorporates the use of critical empathy and intercultural listening in cross-cultural communication within the interracial family system.

Figure 2. *The Development of Interracial Family Communication Towards Intersectional Healing and Reconciliation*



Intercultural Humility and Resilience. Two important synergistic components of the development of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation are intercultural humility and resilience (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022) Intercultural humility involves recognizing that human beings are limited in their understanding of others that are culturally different from themselves. "Through this lens of intercultural humility, people engage in interactions knowing that non-closure and incomplete knowledge are inevitable, but also that these do not diminish the connection that someone can have with another human being" (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p. 143). When we lean into intercultural humility in our daily interactions with others, we learn to stay emotionally connected even if we are

disoriented by the cultural differences, nuances, and tensions that can occur in intersectional relationships. As a result, intercultural resilience is a "...commitment to learning despite setbacks, discomfort, and challenges" (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p.171) so that there is the opportunity for more meaningful connections in cross-cultural relationships. Intercultural humility and resilience work together to create intersectional healing and reconciliation because they support cross-cultural communicative frameworks so that we can leave our emotional portal open and connected even if we do not understand the lived experiences of the storyteller.

As a result, we commit to the inevitability of disorientation, confusion, and discomfort as we navigate cross-culturally thus tolerating discomfort in order to grow. In other words, intercultural humility is reliant on a listening practitioner's ability to engage in intercultural resilience with the knowledge that intercultural misinterpretations and conflict can be a natural and expected part of intercultural communication. Instead of the focus of the cross-cultural interaction being on the good intentions of the dominant group member, the shift in consciousness is towards how our communicative interactions could negatively impact a marginalized community and/or family member. When we focus on the impact of our harmful microaggressions (Sue, 2010) instead of our good intent and expect cultural miscommunication to occur in cross-cultural relationships, we demonstrate intercultural resilience.

Part of understanding intercultural resilience is understanding cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance involves a state of disequilibrium that may cause individuals to want to alleviate the associated stress of the inconsistency between two pieces of knowledge by dismissing the piece of information that is the most resistant to change (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007). "Intercultural resilience takes effect when we expect, welcome, and appreciate the disequilibrium that takes place [due to] cognitive dissonance. Cognitive

dissonance, when used as a catalyst for heightened awareness and change, can create a new understanding of the world ... through...disequilibrium" (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p.164). As interracial families learn to use these communicative tools, they increase their capabilities to develop anti-racist and anti-sexist identities as these skills are interdependent and synergistic. For instance, instead of relying on the performative characteristics of the myth of intercultural competence and the safe white person, intercultural humility and resilience position the white-identifying listening practitioner to expect to make mistakes, have socially constructed blind spots about race, engage in cultural faux-pas, and offend or harm culturally diverse others.

For example, if we were to use the intercultural competence paradigm, we could explore the notion of white people who are interculturally competent and have the ability to adapt to culturally commonalities and differences through heightened intercultural awareness and sensitivity. However, as we understand critical intercultural communication frameworks, we can explore that there is no such thing as a safe white person because of the identity they hold as an oppressor. So instead of focusing on developing ourselves as safe white people, we learn how to exercise intercultural humility and resilience in the development of an anti-racist identity. Shifting from intercultural competence to intercultural humility and resilience is a powerful step towards creating opportunities for peacebuilding in cross-cultural relationships. In order to build capacity for intercultural humility and resilience, it is important to understand critical empathy and intercultural listening as part of an integrated framework for the development of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation.

From Perspective Taking to Critical Empathy. As a conceptual framework proposal, an important part of developing intercultural humility and resilience could be the ability to develop critical empathy and intercultural listening. Just as I will be practicing critical empathy

and intercultural listening skills as a listening practitioner within my own interracial family, I will also be implementing these strategies during interviews with interracial families as they unpack their experiences navigating race and gender.

Ibrahim (1999) discusses the importance of engaging in expressing empathy based on the culture and context when working across cultures because without engaging in empathetic cross-cultural interactions, adaptive interactions are limited. With a focus on social equity and inclusion, the concept of empathy in an intercultural context can be understood as recognizing and understanding how these feelings are culturally grounded (Zhu, 2011). Zhu (2011) explains that "the prerequisite and assurance for effective cultural communication" (p. 117) is the ability to be interculturally empathic. Empathy leads to greater self and other awareness as we go through a reflection process of comparing the other person's feelings to our own emotive experience (Zhu, 2011). In organizational leadership literature, empathy has been found to positively correlate with more socially just and ethical decision-making due to a more profound understanding of social injustice (Mencl & May, 2009). As a result, intercultural empathy is an integral part of building strong relationships to attain effective intercultural communication.

Zhu (2011) asserts that to have successful cross-cultural communication it is important to practice intercultural empathy. The AACU (2020) explains that empathy at level of mastery is the capability to understand different intercultural experiences from our own viewpoint, at least one other worldview, as well as the ability to be supportive while acknowledging the emotional experiences of culturally diverse others. It is also important to note that one way to prevent perspective taking is by engaging in judgment of others. Judgment impedes the emotional potential of people to take in and deeply listen to a storyteller's experience while engaging in perspective taking (Lipari, 2010). Therefore, critical empathy is a vital component to successful

intercultural communication and transformative change “critical empathy is a consciousness, an action, an embodied experience intentionally connecting with another person and acknowledging that we will never truly understand the lived experiences of another human being, especially when they are culturally different from us” (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p.142). Consciously applying critical empathy to different intercultural situations whether it be within an interracial family or within the system of education, it is important to tune indifferently to concerns raised around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to expand our own worldview and create more inclusive spaces.

Critical empathy is a foundational approach to developing intercultural listening skills (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022) and can be explored as a tool for resilience within the interracial family unit. Critical empathy acknowledges that we cannot completely access the lived stories of people that are culturally different from us (Buzzanell, 2011) and as a result, we have to move beyond perspective taking to be able to support their lived experiences (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022; de Coning, 2021). We also expect to have awareness gaps and lapses of understanding due to the dominant narratives we have internalized (Mestrovich Seay et al, 2022). When we focus our intercultural efforts beyond perspective taking and ground our listening experience in the understanding that we can never attain the cultural and emotional experiences of another person coming from a cultural background different than ours, we experience the symbiotic relationship between critical empathy and intercultural listening. Critical empathy predicates intercultural listening as a foundational aspect of conceptualizing equity-in-action (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022). The listening practitioner leans into critical empathy to deeply acknowledge that they will not engage in perspective taking as if the storyteller’s lived experience was their own. With critical empathy comes the focus of critical studies, which

interrogates inequitable systems of power, and focuses specifically on the suffering of minoritized communities (Lobb, 2017). As such, there is significant potential for the listening practitioner to utilize critical empathy to redress "specific ethical and moral harms as part of the healing process" (Fricker, 2007, Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p.152) which can lead to individual and collective peacebuilding approaches.

Critical empathy and intercultural listening exist in a symbiotic relationship with one another to create opportunities to foster equity and therefore a peacebuilding approach in which intercultural humility and resilience are fortified. Intercultural listening is grounded in the foundational practice of critical empathy as a tool to facilitate a deeper understanding of the role that systems of power play in systemic frameworks of inequity. Because the nature of a developmental journey is a focus on becoming rather than being, the work of developing critical empathy is never complete (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022). "Critical empathy is a consciousness, an action, and an embodied experience of intentionally connecting with another person and acknowledging that we will never truly understand the lived experiences of another human being, especially when they are culturally different from us" (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p.143). As listening practitioners grow their capacity for critical empathy, they must continue to make the ongoing commitment of critical reflexivity and decentering of self to further the expansion and transformation of their understanding of the world. As we employ these concepts within the interracial family as we navigate the social construction of race and gender, we can foster greater understanding of interracial family communication by understanding how families negotiate communication about race and gender and create an intercultural family communication experience centered in peacebuilding.

The Role of Intercultural Listening. I introduce the role of intercultural listening within the conceptual framework of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation with the origins of my journey as a listening practitioner.

When I Became a Listening Practitioner

I was eighteen and I had been accepted to a private liberal arts school on the West coast, and given a partial yet generous scholarship to attend. My career goal was to become a psychologist – that never happened. Psychologists have to go through a practicum with no pay – I found that out later. My high school guidance counselor had helped me find this school and walked me through the enrollment documents. Never, did she think that my folks wouldn't be able to pay for enrollment in the chance that I was accepted into Freshman year along with a few other hundred students. I was filled with excitement as I opened the acceptance letter while my parents were up all night trying to find a way to break the news to me. There was no financial way that my family could afford for me to attend even with financial aid, working 2-3 jobs, and my parents cashing in whatever little retirement they had saved up if any. I had no college fund: I was proud to be a clockmaker's daughter and there were tradeoffs. The next day, my dad sat me down and told me that I couldn't go. I thought education would be my way to break and dismantle the glass ceiling – I was wrong for now. I worked in a coffee shop and saved money while I took classes at a local university biding my time until I had saved enough to buy a plane ticket to France. I knew that in France, education was free if you could pass a linguistic exam and get into first year studies and that's exactly what I did - twenty years ago. Little did I know that I would begin my listening career as soon as I set foot on the plane. I listened to understand French but the utterings were much too fast for me in the beginning so I listened with excitement to other things – the crunch of the mini baguette on my plate, the different type of intonation of each new French word, the gestures that I didn't know yet – I soon found that learning a language was much more simple than the experience of truly listening out for the cultural cues and unspoken rules that would accompany each one of my interactions abroad.

One specific experience comes to mind when I think about my initial understanding of intercultural listening: it was Leslie, a young Black woman from a French territory in the Caribbean. She was one of the few POC in my first-year clinical psychology program that was made up of nearly 900 students in a mid-sized public university in Northern France. Leslie and I were both similar and quite different from each other when I think of the other white French students attending our first-year program of study. We were similar in that we were both treated like foreigners by white French nationals. However, what I found strange was that as a foreigner, I had an American passport, but my friend's passport was French. Leslie was from a French département; it just wasn't part of the mainland. Leslie was a French citizen, and I was not. However, neither Leslie nor I were accustomed to the French system of higher education, ways of speaking in the North of France, even the colloquial expressions were different than what we were used to as was la vie quotidienne. But the difference between my friend and me was that I was dismissed quite differently than she was and still given the benefit of the doubt by white French nationals for my Germanic accent, not knowing certain expressions, and making linguistic or grammatical mistakes in the beginning of my séjour that the Académie française

would find cringe worthy. Yes, I was an expatriate, an cultural outsider based on my national origin, and faced discriminatory acts. Yes, I still got hate mail at my job teaching English telling my American ass to 'go home!' as the wars raged between the US and Afghanistan. But the difference was that I could easily pass for a white French student if I didn't open my mouth.

Every day after class, Leslie and I would walk back home together: we lived in the same apartment complex on the other side of campus. The more our friendship deepened, the more I began to listen differently than I ever had before. I noticed that the way she learned was different than my white French counterparts and even me for that matter. She also presented in class with a very different style than our white peers and used storytelling as a means of getting her point across. Her skin was a deep Black so much so that it almost looked blue and made the skin of the young French women seated next to her extremely pale in comparison. Her clothes were bright and colorful amidst the blacks and grays that the white French students would wear, subdued colors which were very typical dress in Northern France. Her voice accentuated the French words differently – it reminded me of the milky rich flavor of the accent of the Ivory coast but yet extremely different.

I notice upon reflection now that I had listened to all of these sensory experiences with great care: she was my friend, and we shared a similar bond even though we were very different. As we progressed through the program, other listening dynamics took place and I found myself within several different ethnic and cultural worlds where I was established as an insider. I was an insider with Leslie because we were both treated as foreign, though our foreign identities were treated differently by white French nations. I was also treated as an insider with my white French classmates with certain conversations where whiteness was the underlying connection. When I wasn't with Leslie but with white French students that semi-befriended me in class, comments would be made about how Leslie must have learning disabilities and how she did not "parler correctment" (speak correctly). I was still afforded the opportunity of being part of the dominant narrative just because of the color of my skin and that the white French students and I shared the colonizer experience. And it wasn't just how they talked about her when she wasn't present, it was the way they treated her in class - a cordial coolness, a brisk formality, which was more formal than the French formalities I had grown accustomed to as a way of life in France. Following that critical incident experiencing Leslie's dismissal as an equal not only in the classroom but in French society among our peers, I shifted my focus to listen to the lived experiences of my friend who had a French passport but was treated more like a foreigner than I was because of the color of her skin. That was 20 years ago and I'm still listening. As the waves of language come onto the shore, I am listening to the undercurrents that speak to everything that language does not.

Though she may never know it, Leslie made of me a listening practitioner. I graduated and quickly had to return to the United States to support the immigration of a family member. As we were halfway around the world, we ended up losing touch we each other. I tried to find her whereabouts in France contacting a mutual friend but wondered if she had returned home. I know she had to repeat a lot of different core classes and I am not sure if she ever graduated from the rigorous Eurocentric clinical psychology program. In my time with her, I came to understand that it may not have been the French language that caused her academic struggles – it may have been the many things that were unspoken – it was a system that did not include her or allow for her to learn or feel safe within those institutional walls. It was colonization. It was oppression. It was her dehumanization in fact. And since I came from a colonized educational

experience in the United States and identified culturally as a colonizer, I could still somehow relate to the French educational system and benefit from it unlike her.

When listening is regarded as a part of the communication process, it is important to keep in mind both cognitive and behavioral components. While listening happens within the mind of the listener as they are constructing meaning, speakers cannot truly understand if the listener is authentically listening unless verbal and nonverbal cues are expressed (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). Research has typically not focused on exploring how listening can be different in different cultures even though there is research backing that culture does in fact influence our thinking (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). Culture impacts our time orientation, whether we identify as collectivistic or individualistic, and many other factors so why shouldn't it impact how we listen to one another? As Fretheim (2016) explains "language is used in spoken communication, and if words activate different knowledge structures based on culture, then it stands to reason that listening to a language would activate a specific knowledge structure as well" (p. 2). When individuals coming from different cultural frameworks come together, interact, and engage in listening behavior, implicit assumptions of how listening behavior is communicated could end up producing significant lapses in understanding which can be disorienting and confusing in intercultural contexts (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). Thus, with these potential lapses in understanding, disorientation within the interracial family as cross-cultural communication occurs should be an expected part of daily life.

Listening plays an essential role in successful intercultural communication especially in times of crisis in which people are challenged, suffering, and concerned (Fretheim, 2016). Fretheim (2016) asserts that to respond successfully to contemporary crisis it is necessary to practice intercultural listening. The experience of living within an interracial family and the tensions that are inherent across racial and gender divides, can be positioned as a contemporary

crisis. It is evident that a great deal of learning can be accomplished in times of crisis that moves humankind to a more peaceful way to practice research (Fretheim, 2016). A topic often ignored in intercultural communication is the development of a framework of intercultural listening and learning that seeks to respond to human crisis in a critical and constructive manner (Fretheim, 2016).

Intercultural listening is a new approach to intercultural communication which allows the listening practitioner and the storyteller to engage in communication that goes beyond discourse and dialogue which focuses on unconditional positive regard (Frankel et al., 2012), critical empathy (Buzzanell, 2011), and "supporting the cultural and emotional experiences of minoritized voices with the listener practitioners' awareness of the systems of power that can perpetuate oppression" (Hyater-Adams, 2010; Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, pp.145). The synergetic relationship between critical empathy and intercultural listening can create space for more experiences of inclusion in which individuals from marginalized communities can feel valued, seen, and heard (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022). "At its core, intercultural listening is understanding one's own positionality and intersectionality to adapt to cultural similarities and differences through the process of an intentional listening practice that furthers the storytelling experience of minoritized communities" (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, pp.145). As we enhance our ability to understand and practice critical empathy and intercultural listening, we develop intercultural humility.

As we develop intercultural humility, we strengthen our ability to use a multifaceted approach to listening. The more the listening practitioner attunes themselves cognitively and emotionally while shifting their behavior to address cultural similarities and differences from an ethnorelative mindset, the more they are able to engage

authentically in intercultural listening for intersectional healing and reconciliation. Intercultural listening is conceptualized by four unique yet interrelated constructs: (a) listening being, (b) active listening, (c) constructivist listening, and (d) narrative listening (Hyater-Adams, 2010; Lipari, 2010). Intercultural listening is a communicative tool I use both with myself as I navigate my story and as I conduct interviews with interracial couples.

Listening being (Lipari, 2010) is at the very heart of the intercultural listening process and like all intercultural listening frameworks, it requires a listening practitioner's commitment towards developing their intercultural humility and resilience to strengthen intercultural communication. Listening being is not an evaluative form of listening in which the listening practitioner tries to interpret the message or have some type of strategized response (Lipari, 2010). Alternatively, listening being is a consciousness that has been developed with inspiration from Zen Buddhism and it pushes back against the westernized emphasis on logic, speaking, action, and binaries in the communicative process. When listening practitioners engage in listening being, they come to the conversation empty without an agenda other than listening so deeply that they become the act of listening (Lipari, 2010). The following is an interlude exploring the intrapsychic process of listening being as someone with an oppressor identity.

My Journey to Listening Being

My journey to listening being.

For a moment, I can imagine that I listen so intently that I am forever changed by the experience of listening because I have purposed to listen like I have never listened before (Saunders & Parker, 2011). Thus, I open myself to acknowledging that I do not completely understand and with the acknowledgement comes the freedom of transcending my own self. Listening brings about a paradigmatic shift in my awareness of myself and the world around me.

Listening becomes a catalyst to bridge across difference and nurture racial healing and reconciliation to take place.

In my conceptual autoethnographic framework, I explore listening being as the core intercultural listening skill that I use intrapsychically to navigate my own internal world. This is also a core intercultural listening framework when engaging with difference. As a result, I will dedicate more time to explaining listening being in intercultural contexts.

Lipari (2010) initiates the perspective of *listening being* which encapsulates the notion of what occurs in the human experience beyond discourse and dialogue. The field of communication often neglects the role of listening and more specifically, intercultural listening even though there are many opportunities for overlap and convergence. As a result, the minimizing of this phenomenon may encourage researchers to explore the concept of listening in new ways and more specifically, within intercultural contexts. The focus of listening being is not on hearing or trying to interpret the message or even having a strategized response or agenda but rather embracing and becoming the experience of deep listening (Lipari, 2010). Lipari (2010) cautions that striving for listening as an element of being is "dangerous because it is otherwise. It resists certainty, closure, categorization, and the imperatives of narrative flow; chromos, logos, and our insatiable appetite for the familiar" (p. 359). This proposition is a new challenge in the field of Communication Studies because it requires researchers to conceptualize communication in a new way that is not just centered in the speaker but also in the listener (Lipari, 2010). This provides a new way to look at intercultural awareness with listening as a fundamental aspect of communication.

Lipari (2010) explores how when cultivating the practice of listening being, the listener intentionally suspends person-centered goals and understanding to solely focus on the other

party. Furthermore, Fiumara (1990) explains "the cognitive dedication to the word of the other demands…a kind of inner abnegation. Without this inner renunciation the individual can only hold dialogue with himself" (p. 125). When we only hold dialogue with ourselves, we fail to develop an ethnorelative mindset because the focus of our cultural worldview does not extend beyond our own experiences (Bennett, 2004). In other words, our experience of the other is limited to only the experience of our own cultural reality (Bennett, 2004). Within the context of the interracial family, listening being allows family members to accept the stories their family members share with them as their truth which allows for a more authentic story to be shared.

Lipari (2010) addresses that language can cause a barrier within the process of deeply listening because the listener may misinterpret the speaker's message in a desire to understand which can result in premature processing of the information provided. This dynamic may result in the distortion of the intended message relying purely on the listener's limited understanding. As a result, the message may be pigeonholed into a "verbal formula" (Lipari, 2010, p. 361) oriented around the listener's monocultural worldview. Inversely, an individual with an ethnorelative or intercultural mindset understands their values, beliefs, behaviors, and cultural perceptions "as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities" (Bennet, 2004, p. 1). Bennett (2004) discusses the phenomenon of "value relativity" (p. 8) as it relates to interaction within intercultural contexts as accepting, ethnorelative, and open to values and beliefs that are different from that of the listener's yet equally important. In other words, an ethnorelative mindset co-constructs meaning of the world and understands that there is more than one truth within intercultural contexts.

Kaplan (1994) supports the essence of intercultural awareness and listening from an ethnorelative framework when he asserts "When I am really listening to you, I have nothing to

say" (p. 40). Listening being requires that the listener comes with intentionality to not have a predetermined agenda and is "coming to the conversation empty" (Lipari, 2014, p.355). When we arrive at an intercultural conversation empty, it may be possible to adhere to and uphold a greater capacity for ethical commitments and intercultural awareness when values differ. This is not to imply that a listener practicing intercultural awareness does not bring in their own life experiences or histories, but these experiences do not create the ultimate meaning of the communication exchange. Listening being is a place of "being empty of possession and of all intentions other than the intention of engagement" (Lipari, 2010, p. 355). Lipari's (2010) listening being offers innovative approaches to a new way of understanding the field of communication that allows one to experience difference in new ways which permits not just an increase of tolerance of the other but the potential to be transformed by the act of listening that extends beyond the act of dialogue.

Active listening can be important as part of the listening journey as we're developing an understanding of our cultural selves and others. It allows us to touch the surface of the storyteller's experience and connect with them through the corporation of sensing, processing, and responding to their story (Gearhard & Bodie, 2011). Active listening can be used to strengthen the listening practitioner's cultural awareness in the beginning stages of the cross-cultural communication exchange. "For the novice listener practitioner, learning active listening techniques can be an important first step towards practicing intercultural listening" (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022).

Constructivist listening is a form of listening that takes its inspiration from the Rogerian psychotherapy approach of unconditional positive regard (Iberg, 2001). This type of listening framework depends on the listening practitioner's ability to harness an additional approach to

listening in which no evaluative methods are used. Instead, the listening practitioner deepens their commitment to suspending judgment and embracing the identity and cultural and emotional experiences of the storyteller. As the listening practitioner, when we practice unconditional positive regard, we understand that the storyteller is separate from us and they have their own emotional and cultural experiences.

Narrative listening is composed of some characteristics of constructivist listening and is also similar to narrative therapy (Morgan, 2000) in that the listening practitioner does not provide any "critical feedback in the moment, questions, and clarifications…the focus is on positive change, building on what is working well, thriving, and effective" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Hyater-Adams, 2010, p. 223). As a result, narrative listening creates an intercultural communication space for the storyteller coming from a minoritized community to be part of a healing process that separates them from the problem situation (Morgan, 2000). Narrative listening centers the speaker's storytelling experience in such a way that the speaker feels supported in reframing their lived experiences that can contain trauma, racism, sexism, oppression, and other forms of systemic violence into a story that pushes back on dominant narratives/stock stories (Bell, 2009). This narrative listening practice supports the storytelling experience to unfold which allows for the storyteller to feel empowered to authentically narrate their own story and benefit from the listener's commitment to their deep listening practice (Hyater-Adams, 2010). This is especially important when it comes to supporting the authentic voices of People of Color and women in their transformative process of communicating their concealed stories, resistance stories, and emerging and transforming freedom stories (Bell, 2009) about racial and gender-based violence.

In summary, intercultural humility and resilience integrates critical empathy and intercultural listening into an adaptive critical intercultural communication framework addressing how listening practitioners can shift and adapt their behavior to cultural similarities and differences to create opportunities for intersectional healing and reconciliation in interracial families. Intercultural humility goes beyond the myth of competence (Chen, 1997), the evaluative quality of listening (Hyater-Adams, 2010), the experience of empathy as perspective taking (Bennett, 2004), and leans into an understanding of language, culture, socio-cultural, political, and historical factors that encompass a flexible expanding worldview creating a space for transformative healing to occur. The practice of intercultural humility involves the ability to engage in critical empathy by welcoming cognitive dissonance, decentering the self and engaging in critical reflexivity (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022). The more interracial families develop multidimensional malleable intercultural humility and resilience skills, the more we can engage in intercultural interactions within our family system so that our family members feel seen, heard, and supported to collectively create more equitable systems within families, higher education, and society at large. The more we develop intercultural humility and resilience, the more deeply we can authentically engage in the later stages of ethnorelativism by deepening our intercultural listening skills. All the above-mentioned constructs of critical intercultural communication theory have the potential to contribute to dismantling systemic oppression and creating an emergence of new co-constructed equitable structures grounded in peacebuilding. In other words, critical intercultural communication could be likened to a localized form of peacebuilding.

Section 3: Peacebuilding Theory

This study explores how interracial families can access cross-racial psychosocial communication skills that will assist them in acknowledging and navigating daily violence and engaging in peace-building work through dialogue about race and gender. One way to work towards intersectional healing and reconciliation is to engage in peacebuilding. Therefore, peacebuilding theory informs research in the exploration of how we transform our thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors regarding race and gender by taking everyday lived experiences and creating peacebuilding ones. Galtung (1969) describes peace as the absence of violence and includes nonviolent and creative conflict resolution. In addition, Galtung's (1969) work describes negative and positive peace- with negative peace being the absence of violence and positive peace consisting of intentional peacebuilding acts like acts of kindness and developing wellbeing for self and others. These definitions make us think about social structures which influence different types of violence (structural and cultural) on individuals.

Hansen (2016) offers an alternative viewpoint of Galtung's (1969) conceptualization of peace. Instead of only focusing on the absence of violence, Hansen (2016) discusses differences in interests, values, beliefs, worldviews, narratives, and identities. More specifically, "peace could be thought of as three interrelated branches of peace: "peace within" (inner peace), "peace between" (relational peace) and "peace among" (structural/environmental peace)" (p.212) This holistic definition brings to light critical intercultural communication that we have with ourselves, culturally different Others, and society at large as we break down systemic violence and oppression (Chapter 3, Figure 3). Regarding this study, *inner peace* refers to the intrapsychic dialogic exchange I have by listening from a critical intercultural and feminist perspective to my inner voice as I uphold my lived experiences as legitimate forms of knowledge. *Peace between* refers to the dialogic embodied exchange of cross-racial and gendered coinquiry within my

interracial family and the interracial families as we share our stock, concealed, resistance, and emerging freedom stories. Finally, *peace among* draws our attention to the systemic inequities that exist on a societal level such as within systems of education and the critical hope to create an action-oriented and urgent framing for a better tomorrow.

Holistic peace is composed of inner peace, peace between, and peace among and can be aligned with the interrelated concepts of individual, relational, collective, and societal innerworkings of peacebuilding. Inner peace or "peace within" is what Thich Nhat Han (1987) suggests is foundational to peace work in individually becoming more peaceful. In other words, as we learn about peace, we need to cultivate peaceful values, demonstrating peace through words and actions such as compassion, humility, egalitarianism, appreciation of differences, and kindness, and nurturing peace-related skills. This also encompasses listening and speaking the truth respectfully and harnessing a knowledge and deep understanding of the experiences of Oppressed groups (Hansen, 2016). In this study, I follow the same trajectory and begin with interrogating my inner world and cultivating intercultural listening, critical empathy, and intercultural humility. This necessitates leaning into our fears and biases and unpacking them so they will not continue to harm others in the same way thus developing intercultural humility and resilience. Hansen (2016) asserts that "peace within" means having physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and holistic self-care.

This peace development work can be extended to family and work teams as we emphasize the interconnectedness of all life and how peace is demonstrated through our intentional words, actions, and relationships. As a result, as peacebuilders, we can support and uphold more peaceful societal norms. "Peace between" refers to the relational aspect of peace and creating better than harm in the interaction. From an interpersonal

standpoint, Curle (1990) discusses supporting others in their ability to understand their potential for compassion.

As I deeply listen to my inner voice and learn to acknowledge and understand my story of Oppressed and oppressor, I create opportunities for transformational change within myself and inner peace to take place. As I find inner peace, I am able to expand my ability to show up and deeply listen to my family members as we communicate about race and gender dynamics in our family and society at large. As we find peace between, we can extend our reach to positively impact our social circles, community, and world in an exchange founded in acknowledging societal violence, engaging in strategic peacebuilding, and developing tools for resilience. This critical hope is necessary in order to access resistance stories and collectively build peaceful cross-cultural relationships. In the following narrative, I write about my understanding of working towards inner peace and peace between within my interracial family in order to access peace among to create transformative systems change.

From Inner Peace to Peace Between

After I got hurt as a kid
I never really wanted to take care of myself
Overworked, overextended, perfectionist
I was taught that I didn't matter
So I found my way to survive was just
Exceling at everything
Never taking a breath, never coming up for air
And it was easier to listen to the stories of others
Have compassion for them
Because listening being with myself was too painful

Too raw

No matter how far you run, trauma always finds you.

The body remembers: the body keeps score.

So here I am - midlife, finally addressing it

To find inner peace, a peace within that I've never known

In order for me to listen more deeply to others

Authentically

I have to take care of myself

I have to slow down

I have to get in touch with my intrinsic human worth

Taking care of that child within

Peace can't exist without justice.

How can there be justice if we don't understand the violence we cause

In our speech, gestures, and blindspots

In our intention to take whatever control we have from our oppressor identities

How can there be unity in diversity

How can we survive this

If we do not know the power we hold.

In the tools of resilience, we go beyond perspective taking

We tune in differently

To listen in new ways to create space for each other

To heal ourselves, each other, and the world.

"Peace between" is an aspect of peacemaking that intentionally builds "non-harmful, and morally inclusive relationships…nonviolently and constructively transforming our challenging

differences, establishing and building more trusting and reliable relationships and offering mechanisms to seek more peaceful resolutions and platforms for addressing specific concern" (Hansen, 2016, p.218). Finally, "peace among" takes on the societal, cultural, and ecological structures the uphold freedom and potential in life. For interracial family work, "peace within" and "peace between" provide avenues for individuals and small groups/families to work through cultural differences that lead to transformative change through the practice of intercultural listening, critical empathy, and intercultural listening skills (Hansen, 2016).

In *Cultures of Peace*, Boulding (2000) explains what culture is and how culture is influential and constantly evolving while we co-construct it within our social groups. These shared norms and values can reinforce or undermine peace.

> Peace then becomes a part of the cultures of our everyday lives and life patterns, rather than simply being legitimated by them, and our participation in those cultures can reinforce or inhibit the peaceableness of those cultures. It is also clear that we all participate in a variety of societal cultures, rather than only one overarching mainstream culture. Culture should then be seen as very fluid and pluralistic (p.216).

An example of engaging in intentional peacebuilding is navigating the last ethnorelative stage within the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity called Integration, an ethnorelative mindset (Bennett, 2004). This state of integration of cultural differences involves the expansion of different cultural worldviews in which people are working through their own cultural marginality. This place of cultural marginality can be a daily experience of the navigation of interracial families in which identity lies as the intersection of multiple cultures.

Cultural marginality may manifest in one of two ways: encapsulated or constructive (Bennett, 1993). Encapsulated marginality is defined as alienation or separation from culture whereas constructive marginality is the ability to move fluidly within different cultures as a part of a person's identity. There are an increasing number of people especially those from non-dominant cultures that experience the negative and positive impact of cultural marginality. For instance, many non-dominant group members in the United States may feel trapped between the marginalized and dominant racial groups as an experience of encapsulated marginality. Constructive marginality is defined as a resolution to the integration mindset within the DMIS (Bennett, 2004). Cultural marginals can effectively build bridges across ethnic and racial differences while engaging in critical reflexivity while shifting their perspective and adapting their behavior to cultural similarities in differences. When this occurs, racial reconciliation and healing and a peacebuilding process may be more attainable. In the paper *Becoming Interculturally Competent*, Bennett (2004) speaks of the ethnorelative bridge-building mindset:

> All we can say about more ethnorelative people is that they are better at experiencing cultural differences than are more ethnocentric people, and therefore they are probably better at adapting to those differences in interaction. Perhaps you believe, as I do, that the world would be a better place if more people were ethnorelative. I hope that we will continue to act on this commitment, and that we will do so with intercultural sensitivity. (p.9)

Daily Violence and Everyday Peacebuilding

To understand everyday peacebuilding, it is first important to understand what it is not. Galtung (1969) asserts that "Peace is the absence of violence (p. 1). In other words, peace work

can be conceptualized in many ways such as the action against violence. Violence calls into question human potential and the gap between what is occurring and the potential of what could be. Violence is an intrapsychic, interpersonal, and societal phenomenon and it exists on a spectrum that includes covert and overt expressions impacting individual freedom which is reflected in society at large. Violence can be physical, psychological, negative and positive approaches, whether or not there is an object that is hurt, as a threat of physical violence, and whether or not there is a subject who acts (Galtung, 1969). In the critical reflection below, I address the psychological ramifications of violence on my own family, and I explore with my partner how we can access peacebuilding together.

Emancipatory Peace

Maya Angelou (1991) wrote a book

"I know why the caged bird sings"

She got hurt too

By a family member

The ultimate form of violence

Internalized oppression

When we are finally able to open the door to the cage

The bird does not believe it has wings to fly and be free

The very nature of being a bird is to have wings

#Dailyviolence

The oppressor has created a psychological framework

Built on power and control

Internalized oppression intentionally

Strips the bird of its wings

How do we find the path to freedom?

We're both in entangled cages, you and I

Can you do me a favor?

Help me open the latch.

oppressor and Oppressed

Oppressed and oppressor

Co-construction, liberation, intentional emancipatory peace.

We must understand the mechanisms of violence to understand paving a road to peace. Violence has a consciousness and intentionality that benefits some and oppresses others. It is important to speak to how violence shows up in the daily lives of ordinary people to expose what is invisible to some from the dominant culture and deeply felt by those coming from marginalized communities who are trying to survive. In this way, one of the ways violence shows up within interpersonal interactions is through daily racial and gender microaggressions that are inherent within our daily interpersonal interactions including those with our loved ones with our family system. It is possible to explore how the expressions of personal violence could allow for a gateway to understand structural violence which is sometimes harder to ascertain. Negative peace would be pushing back and resisting personal violence in our daily lives. When the caged bird realizes they have wings and the door to the cage is slightly agar, they must use strategies to push back, open the door, and experience a new reality of freedom from oppression.

When the Oppressed experience freedom, so do the oppressors (Mumby, 1997) and this is the nature of true reconciliation and healing: it is reciprocal.

Violence prevents marginalized communities from fully realizing their true potential. Positive and negative peace approaches operate in this manner so that the Oppressed is impacted by not only the oppressor enacting violence when the oppressor considers what the Oppressed has done as wrong but also the oppressor rewarding the Oppressed for what the oppressor thinks the Oppressed has done as right or correct. When resources are not distributed equitably and some individuals and systems have the power and control to decide how these resources are distributed, the unequal distribution of resources is also violent at its core (Galtung 1969). This is social injustice which can take the form of both intended and unintended measures – but what is of utmost importance is not intention, but impact. In order to understand the impact dominant culture groups have on non-dominant cultural groups there needs to be a commitment and an intentional process of self-awareness.

Just as an expanded definition of violence has been discussed, so will there be an expanded definition of peace and peacebuilding research. Peace is multidimensional and calls for an understanding of the absence of both personal violence (negative peace) and structural violence (positive peace) (Galtung, 1969). Theories grounded in peace are part and parcel of conflict theory and development theory. The absence of personal violence and social justice are aligned in such a way that neither one is given importance and they function together in symmetry to bring forth an evolving definition of peace. Peace psychology aims to navigate violence to prevent it from occurring while supporting social justice endeavors (Christie & Montiel, 2013). Negative peace speaks to the interpersonal experience of preventing human beings from being harmed and positive peace focuses on the systemic structures that are unjust

that are political, social, and economic in nature (Cohrs et al., 2013). Peace psychology is finding a way to enact peace in a peaceful way through the lens of social justice.

Section 4: Narrative Resilience

Healing from Trauma

In *The New York Times* Best Seller, *The Body Keeps the Score – Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, Dr. Van Der Kolk (2014) discusses the impact and origin of trauma and different ways to face it.

> Research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has shown that one in five Americans was sexually molested as a child; one in four was beaten by a parent to the point of a mark being left on their body; and one in three couples engages in physical violence. A quarter of us grew up with alcoholic relatives, and one out of eight witnessed their mother being beaten or hit. (p.3)

Trauma is all around us so how do we heal from it? Van Der Kolk (2014) speaks of human beings as a resilient species and explains how traumatic events impact and shape the body and brain. One of the steps to recovery is self-awareness and attending to the bodily sensations that are trauma zones instead of avoiding these areas which can lead to more feelings of panic, overwhelm, and regression. Being aware of our body, mind, and emotional spirit creates opportunities for mindfulness and healing from trauma. Additionally, Van Der Kolk (2014) outlines many ways to heal from trauma based on the relationships we form with others.

Traumatized human beings find healing connections in the relationships that can develop with others (Van Der Kolk, 2014). In other words, "Recovering from trauma involves reconnecting with our fellow human beings" (Van Der Kolk, 2014, p. 212). Being able to access family or community groups like AA, psychotherapy, and/or religious groups in a place that is

emotionally and physically safe can allow victims to work through feelings of shame and guilt and transform into survivors. However, it is deeply confusing for traumatized people to yearn for connection with the very people in their family that caused the abuse. Specifically, women and children are the most likely to be victimized by their parents or intimate partners. When caregivers and/or trusted adults are responsible for the traumatic event, it is even more challenging to heal and oftentimes as adults, victims struggle with additional, repeated abuse, hypervalent responses, post-traumatic stress disorder, explosive relationships and/or they become abusive. Healing begins to take place when victims confront the trauma, connect to feelings of fear and shame, and understand how the shadows of the past play a part in their terrorizing present.

East et al., (2010) discuss storytelling as an approach to developing resilience. Stories allow for people to share their culture, values, emotions and lived experiences that can create connections of understanding. Storytelling is a way to give voice to the victims of trauma but can also re-traumatize victims "when people who have experienced highly traumatic events, such as displacement, sexual violence or witnessing a massacre, are required to recount their stories multiple times, often without seeing any concrete benefits" (Shaw, 2007, as cited in Clark, 2022, p. 457). Therefore, it is important that victims/survivors of violence can tell their story the way they want to tell it and these stories may go beyond discourse and dialogue to incorporate dance, music, art, meditation, self-observation, and bodywork among others (Van Der Kolk, 2014). As such, this dissertation aims to provide a space for couples and families as well as my own interracial family to have the space to tell our stories the way we want to tell them through literary and visual arts-based narratives. When working with families, family-based narratives allow for both individual and collective meaning making of traumatic or stressful events and

ways to respond or adapt to these external stressors that allow for more engaged communication to take place (Saltzman et al., 2013).

Storytelling connects us with our inner selves, creates meaning between people and is a building block of civilization to relay knowledge that can affirm our lived experiences (Atkinson, 2012). East et al. (2010) assert that "...storytelling aids in the development of personal resilience and provides opportunities to celebrate the hardiness of research participants who contribute to knowledge by recounting their stories of difficulty and adversity" (p.17). Using stories, individuals can overcome trauma (Dyer & McGuiness, 1996; Hauser et al., 2006; 1996; Rutter, 1999) as storytelling "has the ability to bring about strength and healing" (East et al., 2010). The nature of storytelling builds resilience factors in both the listener and the storyteller as we gain insight collectively on how to overcome adversity and these resilience tools can be incorporated into our daily lives (East et al., 2010). The nature of storytelling can enact not just personal but collective resilience as we partake in community support networks leading to connection and belonging and as a result, positive feelings associated with healing. Storytelling, reflection, and resilience go together and together, can bring forth fortitude and healing (East et al., 2010).

Types of Storytelling

Kim (2016) discusses how when we tell stories, stories end up telling us. Bell (2020) identifies different types of stories that are told about racism and can also be framed to discuss sexism and other isms. For example, stock, concealed, resistance, and emerging/transforming (freedom stories) stories align with racial and gender-based oppression and liberation (Bell, 2020) as they may serve to fortify oppressive systems or dismantle them. Stock stories perpetuate racism and sexism and originate from a place of power and privilege. They are told by individuals from the dominant group and these stories are fortified through historical and literary

documents, and celebrated through public rituals, law, the arts, education, and media representations to name a few (Bell, 2020). Stock stories tell what the dominant cultural narrative considers to be important and can provide a lot of information about how racism operates. Concealed stories are told by individuals that hold marginalized identities that the dominant culture does not value or are seen as invisible in mainstream culture. Concealed stories unpack how power and privilege work, make the invisible visible, and demonstrate how people in positions of power benefit from systems of oppression (Bell, 2020). Communities of Color and women tell concealed stories about their daily challenges with oppression and how they have survived living in the United States. These stories demonstrate how white people have benefited from racism and how men have benefited from sexism. Resistance stories have a foundation which is grounded in anti-racism to set the stage for the future (Bell, 2020). Resistance stories also illuminate the plight of women in their continual fight towards equal treatment, non-violence and humanization, reproductive rights, and gender-based equity in the workplace. Finally, emerging/transforming stories are told through the deepening of awareness regarding the three other types of stories. These stories consider the impact of our collective histories and cultural backgrounds going beyond concealed and resistance stories to explore the potential for new freedom stories to be told.

Interracial families serve as a microcosm for racial and gender dynamics at play in our society at large. The family unit is an exemplar for different social, political, historical, and cultural phenomena. As such, exploring storytelling and intercultural listening within interracial families may be one of the first steps towards shifting towards a more socially just way to engage and respond to create more equitable partnerships as stock, concealed, resistance, and freedom

stories are brought to the forefront of our understanding regarding race and gender dynamics within the family and societal systems at large.

Section 5: Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory conceptualizes the individual and the presenting problem within the context of a family unit while observing the strengths of the family and supporting the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Nichols, 2008). Communication practitioner scholars discuss the family system as a place of stability and change (Nichols, 2008) as family systems often tend to unconsciously revert towards stability or homeostasis (Jackson, 1965) even if that state is toxic and dysfunctional. Dysfunctional family dynamics and the inability to adapt to change are symptoms of an inflexible, rigid, and closed family system. Family systems theory also utilizes the family system as a valuable source of knowledge, creativity, and the potential for adaptive change (Dell, 1982).

Constructivism emerged in the 1980's in family therapy circles and shifted the focus from pathology to supporting clients with creating new patterns in their lives through dialogue. Family systems are a place of social constructionism in which family members' lives are shaped by those around them, how beliefs impact their actions with one another, and more specifically how culture shapes these beliefs (Nichols, 2008). Constructivism also uses the technique of reframing to support family members in reviewing, revising, and restructuring problematic behavioral patterns to learn how to communicate and respond differently. The family communication frameworks of narrative therapy, motivational interviewing, as well as courageous conversations about race and gender support the development and teaching of these critical intercultural communication skillsets as tools for fostering intercultural humility and resilience will be explored within the context of interracial families. Challenges and

resistance regarding family communication about race and gender will be discussed as well as the potential impact within larger systems and the identifying and dismantling of oppressive systems.

Communication, Race, and Family.

Due to the socio-cultural and historical aspects of interracial unions, there exists many issues about race (Spickard, 2002) and gender that are unresolved. Historically, the impact of interracial marriage being forbidden creates a societal understanding and implicit expectation of communication being grounded in the myth of white superiority (Kenney, 2002). In 1967, the US Supreme Court's Loving ruling allowed legal sanctions to be lifted which allowed interracial marriage to become legal yet there is still much present-day criticism and scrutiny. The myth of white superiority denigrates racially marginalized communities and illustrates that racial mixing creates racial impurity, which is dangerous to the purity of white people (Davis, 1991; Pascoe, 1991). The origin of these myths, stereotypes, and daily microaggressions still exist today: marrying for ulterior motives, experimenting with the exotic, citizenship motives, challenges with self-esteem, hating oneself and one's race (Kenney, 2002). These challenges are deeply entrenched within the fabric of our communicative structures and engrained within our psyche and continue to be the source of prejudice, discrimination, violence, and rejection of interracial unions. Interracial families may be confronted with alienation and isolation from family, friends, and community (Root, 2001; Rosenblatt et al., 1995; Solsberry, 1994). These socio-cultural factors vary based on socioeconomic status, education, and community influence (Rosenblatt et al., 1995; Solsberry, 1994; Zebroski, 1999) however, the power dynamic related to whiteness manifesting in the interracial relationship may account for additional conflict, miscommunication, and harm. As such, it is important for interracial couples and families to

explore their own racialized identities (Kenney, 2002) as well as interrogate the communicative dynamics and power structures within the relationship which also impact gender dynamics. Since the population of interracial relationships is on the rise, it is important to be ready to explore and address the conflict and tension that is inherent when familial interracial dynamics are at play (Kenney, 2000).

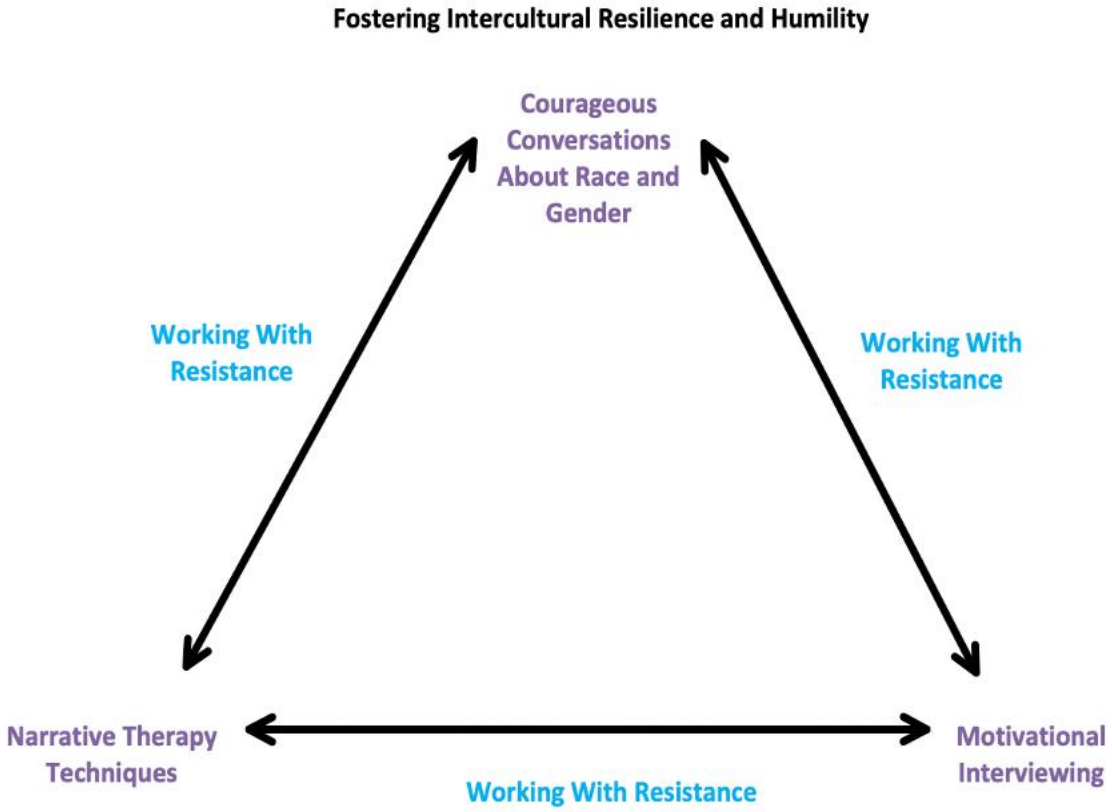
Family communication brings forth and influences conversations about race (Socha & Diggs, 1999) and gender. In fact, Socha and Diggs (1999) propose that one way to manage America's dramatic history involving issues of racism is not just in public meeting halls or within schools, news, and social media but within one of the most valuable learning systems that exists: families communicating about racial and gender dynamics within their own family system. It is possible that managing family communication challenges and education around race and gender can allow for a better future for all people in a multicultural society.

Schnarch (1999) discusses the importance for couples to take risks and try new things in order to enter a growth cycle. Part of entering a growth cycle is creating more trust and commitment to experience growing pains within a family in regard to intercultural communicative challenges regarding race and gender. When family members position themselves to embrace anxiety as a catalyst for positive change specifically related to the topic of intersectional healing and reconciliation, interracial families may be a catalyst for positive societal change and transformation to occur (Socha & Diggs, 1999).

Fostering Intercultural Humility and Resilience in the Interracial Family System. As part of my conceptual framework, I am proposing that in order to foster intercultural humility and resilience within an interracial family to bring about peacebuilding, a psychoeducational approach is necessary. The figure below illustrates how interracial families/couples can learn

how to have courageous conversations about race and gender, utilize narrative therapy techniques and motivational interviewing skills as a pathway towards fostering intercultural humility and resilience. Interracial couples/families practicing these psychoeducational techniques may experience intersectional healing and reconciliation which is vital to promoting healthy interracial relationships.

Figure 3. *Fostering Intercultural Resistance and Humility*



The communication frameworks identified by narrative therapy and motivational interviewing may create intercultural communication opportunities to uncover blind spots related to race and gender dynamics within the interracial family unit and further opportunities to develop critical empathy, intercultural listening, and as a result, intercultural humility and resilience so that the interracial couple and family benefit from this learning. Through this

process, family members and couples may experience a deepening of their ability to communicate, understand their racialized and gendered experiences, and practice intercultural humility and resilience individually and collectively. The result of employing these communicative structures has the potential to be a catalyst for courageous conversations about racism and sexism. Figure 3 illustrates the interconnectivity of these different dialogic frameworks to support interracial families/couples in fostering intercultural humility and resilience as they make use of these psychoeducational communicative frameworks (motivational interviewing, narrative therapy techniques, and courageous conversations) and work with resistance, which is a natural part of growth and transformation (Mestrovich et al., 2022). As a result, interracial families develop peacebuilding techniques, in their daily experiences with race and gender. This type of intercultural dialogic engagement may allow for a shift of power within the family system so new ideas can emerge to create more opportunities for emotional connection and healing within the interracial couple and family.

Communication practitioner scholars discuss the family system as a place of stability and change (Nichols, 2008). Family systems tend to unconsciously revert towards stability or homeostasis (Jackson, 1965). As such, it is important for there to be intentional cross-cultural facilitation during the interviews with interracial families/couples to support their critical intercultural communication goals regarding race and gender to take place. It is important to note that even though I will not be acting in a therapeutic capacity within the interview process with interracial families, I will be making use of psychoeducational communication techniques grounded in psychotherapy to create a feeling of safety, openness, and acceptance for couples to communicate about their interracial family experience. As a white female researcher on a research team with my husband, a Man of Color, my intention is to align myself with the

interracial couple/family and model critical empathy and intercultural listening to provide a holding space of unconditional positive regard to allow the stories of their racialized and gendered experiences to be told. For this research, I identify as an interracial family communication facilitator.

Narrative Therapy as an Interracial Family Communication Technique.

Multicultural counseling can require adaptation to communication techniques that have traditionally been implemented (Richardson & Molinaro, 1996) for white audiences. As such, narrative therapy is a communicative framework that has been used in counseling settings for multicultural individuals and interracial individuals (Biever, 1998). Narrative therapy explores how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences and potential consequences through the stories they bring into the counseling session. Narrative therapy has been used in multicultural counseling settings between the counselor and the client(s) in a co-construction of meaning-making geared towards storytelling. Much of narrative therapy is similar to narrative listening which is at the heart of intercultural listening techniques and an appropriate way for the interracial couple to enter into teaching and learning intercultural listening frameworks (Hyater-Adams, 2010).

There are many internal and external forces at play within an interracial family dynamic. People of Color, women, and other marginalized communities are situated within a societal and cultural context that contain certain oppressive forces such as racism and sexism that can limit psychological growth (Sue & Sue, 1990). These forces can be internalized hindering the person's growth and development (Sue & Sue, 1990). This racial identity stagnation is also possible for white-identifying clients who are dramatically impacted both implicitly and explicitly by cultural and societal frameworks of white racial superiority (Helms, 1990).

Narrative therapy within a multicultural counseling setting allows for individuals to share their stories and find ways to come against internalized racism, white supremacy, (Semmler & Williams, 2000), sexism, and misogyny. This iteration of narrative therapy has a dual purpose as interracial families and couples learn how to relate to each other using intercultural humility and resilience with the oppressor's acute focus on intercultural listening techniques. The communications framework of narrative therapy is grounded in the philosophy that "human dilemmas are manufactured in social contexts rather than embedded in human beings themselves, problems such as internalized racism are placed outside the client" (Semmler & Williams, 2000, p.52). Furthermore, narrative therapy communicative interventions are co-constructed and characterized by focusing on strengths rather than pathology.

This study explores, in part, how the research team will work with interracial families/couples as family communication facilitators as we utilize narrative therapy techniques which deconstruct dominant narratives, externalize problems related to racism and sexism, and re-offer the story. This is done by confronting prejudice and developing new ways to integrate negative experiences to building a more empowered way of responding to racism. As a result, interracial couples/families can foster intercultural humility and resilience in their daily interactions with each other and find new ways to create opportunities for peace within, between, and among. Another approach to working towards intersectional healing and reconciliation is motivational interviewing and working with resistance.

Motivational Interviewing with Interracial Families/Couples and Working with Resistance. Motivational interviewing is a research-based approach to overcoming a state of homeostasis and ambivalence related to individuals perpetuating the same toxic cycles, in this case, within their family system. In this study, these toxic cycles could be related to racism,

white supremacy, and whiteness manifesting within the interracial couple/family and society at large as well as sexism, misogyny, and gender-based violence. One of the main points of motivational interviewing is harnessing the process of commitment to change, intrinsic motivation, and behavior change. Motivational interviewing is utilized within family systems with individuals and couples, with students in higher education, as well as within a broad range of fields (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

There are specific practical applications for motivational interviewing with couples and families. The four principles of motivational interviewing are: "expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-efficacy" (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Basic characteristics of motivational interviewing with couples include "asking open-ended questions, listening reflectively, affirming, summarizing, and eliciting change talk" (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, p.358). In addition, it is important for me, as the family communication facilitator,[1] to engage in my own critical reflexivity, my understanding of whiteness, racialized experiences, and gender dynamics in the interviews with interracial families and couples. It is also important that I am attune to the power differentials at play because of my role as the white female facilitator and my ability to engage in and model critical empathy and intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective. It is my goal to align myself with the couple or family as they share their stories of racialization and sexism and develop family-directed goals during the interview sessions.

Motivational interviewing will help me work through critical incidents while promoting increased communication about race, gender, and relationship cohesion. There is empirical support and rationale for involving significant others in motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). When there is a commitment to positive change, there is also stress that happens

to the family system (Nichols, 2008) so having appropriate social support is key and it also allows for uncovering hidden information because having diverse perspectives during an interview session can yield positive more in depth and diverse results. When couples/families are in a state of action and maintenance and are truly committed to the growth and healing process, partner support is one of the most helpful ways in maintaining resolution for change (Project MATCH, 1997). Part of my role as the family communication facilitator will be to align myself with the couples/families and support them as they work through cross-racial gender-based tension which can lead to opportunities for transformation and sustained growth. The following is an example of the cross-racial gender-based tension my husband and I experience as an interracial couple. In this tension exists both compassion for racialized violence but also resentment regarding gender-based oppression and violence.

Camping at Lake Wabaunsee

I'm afraid to go outside
But it's not fear for myself
It's for my children
and for my wife
As they walk beside me
For my friends and family
I wanted to share this on social media
How afraid I am for all the people I love
That could be targeted
Just because of the way they look
Or just by association with me

We went into the rural restaurant
Good Ol' Boys

They were drinkin' and throwin' shade

What to me was a quaint little family getaway

Turned into – all eyes on us, unfriendly laughter

Are the boys safe?

"We can just go," I said.

But you wanted to stay. Hold your ground.

I sat and listened with my eyes.

I saw your rage, felt your pain.

And I realized in that moment.

White violence reigned.

Gendered Experiences and Intercultural Listening

My Gender came as an Afterthought

Just like in this line of autoethnographic passages.

It comes last.

As I leaned into listening to People of Color

It was safer to listen to them because I was protecting myself

From listening to my own inner voice

Of pain and sadness and despair

To look at my own internalized oppression

It took daily violence again, again, and again

For me to finally look at myself in the mirror

To see how I have been socialized to accommodate, to apologize, to

Shut up

Let him talk. Let him lead. Let him interrupt: Degrading and devaluing me.

Listening to my own inner voice has been the very hardest of all.

Because I wanted to believe the stock story: powerful professional outspoken woman.

I could take the put downs, the condescension, the name calling: dismissal of my humanity

Because I was strong. I could take it. But day after day, moment after moment-

It wore me down until I couldn't recognize myself anymore.

I realized then that it would be hard to talk about race without talking about gender.
It would be a disservice to myself and to others.
To my boys and to their children.
Even though I didn't want to.
I had to lean into my own voice too.
I had to listen to forgive myself.
Listen to empathize with myself.
Listen to recreate the narrative from victim to survivor.
Listen to come to account with myself.
Listen so deeply that I can come to the core of the pain of a lifetime of oppression.
Listen to heal the little girl within. To finally choose her because no one else wanted her as she was: Outspoken who "acts like a man" and "earns like a man".
Listening being with that little girl is the scariest thing I've ever done.
I won't forget you. I will not forsake you. Listen, listen, listen, to my heart song.
#metoo DAMMIT #metoo[8]

Based on motivational interviewing and family communication/couples therapy frameworks there are four similarities that can allow for growth within the system: responding to resistance, honoring ambivalence, supporting self-efficacy, and eliciting change talk (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). A very important part of motivational interviewing is working with resistance (Miller & Rollnick, 2002) as a natural part of change work. In a family system, there are many reasons why there is an unconscious desire to maintain a state of homeostasis even if this state is harmful or toxic (Nichols, 2008). Resistance should be an expected part of the

[8] I intentionally conclude this section with no transitional paragraph to exemplify the jarring nature and tension that exists between theory and practice and the discomfort I feel daily as both oppressor and Oppressed within my interracial family.

interview process and can occur with one partner, the significant other, or the couple or family. Sometimes couples and families find themselves in a situation of comfortable discomfort in which they want to change and heal but they also do not really want to because certain aspects of not changing can be more attractive than change work itself (Miller & Rollnick, 2008). Sometimes, interviewing can include focusing on resistance promoting relational patterns (Miller & Rollnick, 2002) while working with the couple to partake in motivational interviewing that accounts for the development of intercultural humility and resilience and concealed stories to be shared. One main objective is to balance resistance and discomfort for growth as well as reduce negative interactions within the couple/family while promoting motivational interviewing with one another (Miller & Rollnick, 2008). (Miller & Rollnick, 2002)

Part of my role as a family communication facilitator is to support the interracial couple or family in exploring the benefits of change (unpacking racism and sexism) and the benefits of the status quo (maintaining the dominant narrative). The main goal of supporting interracial couple/family self-efficacy is focusing on solution-focused methods and the couple/family's strengths (development of intercultural humility and resilience) as much as possible. Eliciting changed talk needs to happen early on as interracial family goals are discussed and the family envisions critical hope for a different future. One approach to motivational interviewing is targeting the couple's or family's interactions so that they can explore alternative ways of interacting. One way this can be developed is by educating the couple or family about how to practice motivational interviewing with each other (Miller & Rollnick, 2020). In addition, there needs to be particular attention paid to racial and gender dynamics and power differences that exist within the interracial couple (Hyater-Adams, 2010). In this way, the white member of the couple can check in with their family member while practicing intercultural listening and support

storytelling to take place and the male identifying family member can do the same so that both family members engage in critical consciousness regarding race and gender. The interracial family can learn to be more attuned to the stories of marginalization coming from other family members as they share their cultural and emotional experiences which can allow their authentic voice to be heard. It is through this experiential process that growth and skill-building can be taught within this family communication framework to deepen the development of intercultural humility and resilience.

Courageous Conversations about Race and Gender.

White Face

My entire lifetime has been shaped and informed by race and more specifically, my whiteness. Whiteness is for many white people, invisible and goes unnamed, but for me it surrounds and informs how I navigate the world. My race has been present in and has shaped all my lived experiences. I was brought up in a world where I was taught to be colorblind and actively dismiss difference. #loveseesnocolor Whiteness seems to dominate everything, so why was it never actually discussed by white people in my life as I grew up? It seems that it is invisible to most people that look like me. I think back over the course of my life and realize how often I was afforded certain privileges just because of the color of my skin. Interrogating my own whiteness has become a daily commitment and occurrence as I challenge myself to support the manifestation of a more socially just world. This is a commitment to extend my own privilege in the name of deepening my understanding of critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience.

A final concept to explore related to supporting family communication about race and gender through the development of peacebuilding grounded in intercultural humility and resilience is the ability to have intentional and courageous conversations about race and gender. Courageous conversations involve engaging in authentic dialogue that creates a pathway towards more equitable family and other societal systems. Agreeing to have courageous

conversations can carry different levels of discomfort based on one's racial (Singleton, 2020) and gender identity. For instance, white people are often afraid to talk about race because they believe that this can lead to divisiveness, hatred, and violence whereas People of Color may believe that talking about racial problems will create more societal pressure to deal with them (Pine & Hilliard, 1990). Singleton (2002) explains that courageous conversations are required in order to talk about race, and it is important for the parties involved to develop racial consciousness. Similarly, in this study, in addition to communication about race, I will encourage my own family and other interracial families to talk about how gender impacts how they navigate the world and their worldview. Courageous conversations allow for oppressors to interrogate the power they have in intersectional relationships without giving into defensive feelings. As a result, these conversations may allow Oppressed people to work through the anger that comes with being constantly confronted with the dominant narrative, oppression, and violence that comes with the white racial and sexist frame. These dynamics exist everywhere: within our family, educational, and societal systems.

The four agreements of courageous conversations utilized by Singleton (2022) enhance the teaching and understanding of intercultural humility and resilience for intersectional healing and reconciliation allowing for intentionality and commitment during cross-cultural dialogue: stay engaged, speak your truth, experience discomfort, expect and accept non-disclosure. Even though Singleton (2020) has grounded his theory of courageous conversations in racial dynamics, for the purpose of this study, these same principles will be used as a framework to navigate sexism and misogyny in cross-racial relationships as well.

These agreements will be explored during the interracial couple/family's interviews to support the process of experiential learning involved in the development of peacebuilding,

intercultural humility and resilience. Staying engaged involves a certain type of emotional regulation to stay at the proverbial table emotionally, cognitively, intellectually, and ethically. This is not an easy task when white people and men have been socially conditioned to disconnect from topics about race and gender whereas People of Color and women may discuss how they are impacted by racialization daily (Singleton, 2020). Speaking your truth requires the importance of navigating and embracing discomfort for growth. For instance, many white people are afraid to offend People of Color when engaging in conversations about race. In turn, these conversations are avoided because white people do not want to feel uncomfortable. If we cannot be honest, we are preserving a false external perception of truth that will not contribute to acknowledging daily violence and working on a peacebuilding approach which encompasses tools for resilience. It is also important for individuals from dominant cultural groups to understand they hold a lot of power over what will be determined as truth and often have the power to deprecate or ameliorate the lived experiences of marginalized communities. It is important for oppressors arriving to courageous conversations to engage in critical reflexivity as they practice critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience to shift the power dynamic and decenter themselves. Experiencing the discomfort of interracial dialogue involves embracing that we are not all the same and that difference and inequity exists (Singleton, 2022) Finally, conversations about race and gender and developing a lens of racial and gender equity are ongoing. There is not a magic solution or a way to fix interracial conflict stemming from the deeply embedded, traumatic, and oppressive social construct of racism and gender-based violence. Instead, non-closure should be expected and accepted as part of the process of intersectional healing and reconciliation.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Standards of Humanities-Oriented Research

In Kim's (2016) chapter on *narrative research design*, she addresses engaging in aesthetic play which incorporates how the researcher frames the project, organizes ideas in a complimentary fashion, and purposes to have a consistent focus on narrative for the entire study. Kim (2016) urges researchers to think in a holistic fashion about their narrative research design while entering a playful relationship with the different ideas and meaning-making that takes place between the self and the world. On the other hand, Kim (2016) reminds the qualitative researcher that "we cannot just be playful without seriously knowing the standards for quality work" (p156) and illustrates the Council of American Educational Research's (AERA) *Seven Standards for Humanities-Oriented Research* (2009) by which researchers should write. Researchers focused on the humanities and narrative inquiry tend to focus on "troubling human conditions that are introduced in the stories of ordinary people" (Kim, 2016, p.165). Though there are various ways to identify and uphold the standards of qualitative research such as Tracy's (2010) Big Tent or creative analytical processes (CAP) ethnographies (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), I found it appropriately congruent with my study on peacebuilding and intercultural resilience that the Council of American Educational Research (2009) specifically focuses on advancing human well-being in humanities-focused research (Kim, 2016).

Kim (2016) addresses the seven standards for human-oriented research adapted from AERA (2009): *Significance of Research, Conceptualization, Research Design (Methodology and Methods), Substantiation, Coherence, Quality of Communication, and Ethics* (pp.88-89). Research conducted should have significance in the field and be conceptualized based on scholarly literature (Kim, 2016). First, *significance of research* refers to when developing a

research topic, it is important that the researcher addresses a gap within the pre-existing literature so that the research is scholarly significant and can create new opportunities within the field (AERA, 2009). Addressing the limits and scope is part of conceptualizing the inquiry and also more clearly explains the purpose. In this case, intercultural communication which once was purely positivistic has begun to expand its reach to address other approaches which include a more constructionist framework (Falkheimer & Heide, 2006). In addition, in the field of intercultural communication, listening is often overlooked, and research emphasis is typically placed on the speaker instead of on the listener (Fretheim, 2016). Addressing this gap and creating research in a meaningful way having critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience as the focus will support the development of the field of qualitative inquiry and is an important part of the research process.

Second, *conceptualization* refers to how the research is conducted based on the current literature and what the scope of the research design entails. For this study, the scope is based primarily on intersectionality regarding interracial couples/families navigating communication about race and gender. Even though other aspects of the participants and the research team's cultural identities may come up in the narratives, the focus is explicitly around race and gender. Dialogues did shift to disability awareness, religion, and other diversity dimensions which contributed to building rapport, trust, and connection between the researcher/participants and the research team. However, the research team sought out how these intersectional narratives still incorporated race and gender within the narrative framework of the researcher/participants' oppressor and Oppressed identities. For instance, one of the researcher/participants suffered from fertility challenges and was able to talk about her disability and how she felt as a woman with a

disability within the framework of the interracial family experience. As a result, the dialogue incorporated disability awareness but still centered in her gender-based experiences.

Third, the *research design* incorporates semi-structured interviews which use the framework of critical incidents. The open-ended structure of the questions allows for researcher/participants to fully examine how they have navigated race and gender within the context of their interracial family. Using participant-centered research methods, researcher/participants sat behind the driver's seat of the interviews and were given the freedom to share the cross-cultural stories that most impacted them and chose an artistic medium to represent these stories. The flexibility of the research design allowed the research team to support the creative narrative and artistic process of the researcher/participants while achieving the goals of the inquiry.

Fourth, *substantiation* refers to establishing "...knowledge claims, arguments, descriptions, and interpretations using evidence from...research data and other relevant scholarly literature" (Kim, 2016, p.88). As a researcher, I did not find conceptualizations of phenomenon like intercultural listening or intercultural humility in the literature, but I was able to support descriptions of interracial family communication by taking different concepts like intercultural listening (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022), critical empathy (Buzzanell, 2011), motivational interviewing (Hettema et al., 2005), narrative therapy (Morgan, 2000), courageous conversations (Singleton & Hays, 2008), and the Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett & Hammer, 2017) and create conceptual models within the literature review that could be explored during the interviews with interracial families. These conceptual models were substantiated by compartmentalized research with individual models that I put together to create a more cohesive

holistic way to communicate cross-culturally. In this way, my research claims were substantiated by current literature in the field.

Coherence is the fifth standard of humanities-oriented research which refers to an examination of whether the research is integrated into different parts of the manuscript (literature review, research design...etc...) as well as the "cultural, social, and political context" (Kim, 2016). The process to achieve coherence was ongoing through the research project and required a firm understanding of critical evocative autoethnography as an intersectional coinquiry regarding race and gender. Writing an evocative autoethnography about my experiences within my own interracial family felt mono-dimensional to me as I began the writing process. I wanted to explore interracial family communication while explaining my internal process with gender and race. Bringing in my research partner, my husband as a Thai American man, and the other interracial families created an academic ecosystem which allowed for cross-cultural storytelling to occur within the context of the day and time we are currently living in. Bringing in many different voices and narratives about daily violence, peace building, and tools for resilience made it easier to achieve coherence as a researcher. The quality of communication of the manuscript was difficult to achieve because of the tension between all the different forms of traditional and non-traditional academic writing that were presented. As the preface illustrated, there were times when it was necessary to provide interludes, poetic interpretations of gendered and racialized experiences, and other literary and visual narratives which went beyond traditional discourse and dialogue so finding ways to structure the text in a non-traditional format was challenging to accomplish with no other map to follow. It was helpful to have the feedback and thought diversity of my major professor who tends to write in a more traditional way. This helped me understand when my intentions and the reader's understanding may not be similar so I could

provide more context and a clearer guide to understanding certain social cultural experiences that occurred during the research.

Finally, *ethics in humanities-oriented research,* especially with researcher/participants that are known personally to the research team, were important to address early on and continue to come back to with researcher/participants during the study. I wanted to make sure that they understood that even though we had a personal connection, there would be no hard feelings if they chose to discontinue the research (Morgan, 2000). It was important that they knew that their names would remain anonymous. Even if they chose to talk about our collaborative research with others, I would not divulge any personally identifiable information. Finally, the research team emphasized how important it was to respect and honor their narrative process. As I formulated my methodology chapter, I kept in mind these seven above-mentioned standards as an overall guide as I worked within the framework of the narrative research design process.

General Methodology: Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of the study was to explore how I navigate daily violence, peacebuilding, and cultivating tools for intercultural humility and resilience within my gendered experience and interracial family as I interface and personally reflect upon the experiences of other interracial couples and families who have a connection to the field of education. Socha & Diggs (1999) assert that "problems with race begin at home" (p.224). Since the family is the primary education and influence when it comes to a child's ethnic socialization, family communication and values about race impact a child's racial identity (Socha & Diggs, 1999). More specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

1. In what ways do gender and racial communication manifest in my own interracial family experience? In others?

2. How does my intercultural experience with daily violence manifest in my own interracial family? In others?

3. How do I explore and implement peacebuilding and resilience strategies within myself and my interracial family? How do I make meaning of how other interracial couples and families explore and implement peacebuilding and resilience strategies?

Historically, issues of ethnic culture are often absent from family communication research (Socha et al., 1995). However, this study brings to light the importance of engaging in an autoethnographic process regarding personal values, preferences, cultural identity, and membership within interracial families (Chang, 2008). These invisible cultural values and beliefs can often lie underneath the surface of our immediate understanding however they can overtly influence societal conversations about family, race, gender, and communication about these socially constructed phenomena. How interracial families make meaning of gender and racial dynamics, how these topics are spoken or not spoken of within the family unit, and what is brought to the surface based on values, beliefs, and cultural identity will significantly shape the autoethnographic process as a gendered cross-racial coinquiry. Therefore, this study can yield many co-constructed potential opportunities to articulate how family communication, values, and beliefs about race and gender impact identity and the role we play in our family. It can also bring to light how racialization and misogyny are experienced in an interracial family and society at large. In this way, this dialogic co-constructed autoethnographic process may raise cultural self and Other awareness and combat racism and sexism through family communication education (Socha & Diggs, 1999).

It is difficult to talk about race authentically in an interracial family without discussing gender. This research is about intersectionality as the research team and researcher/participants

grapple with their own communication about their oppressor and Oppressed identities (race and gender) in the tension of an intersectional cross-cultural communicative exchange. Intersectionality was created from certain social conditions that involved the plight of human beings to emancipate themselves from domination (Esposito, 2022). Audre Lorde, a Black feminist, queer poet and mother urges qualitative researchers to be the change as we try to make sense of our lived intersectional experiences of difference, power, and oppression, by

> ...know[ing] that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we all can flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them our strengths. (1979, p.95)

As such, intersectionality is centered in this qualitative research as a methodological tool to dismantle dominant structures of oppression (Esposito, 2022) existing within the very power dynamics of the interracial couples and families in this study.

In this chapter, I will illustrate the framework of autoethnography as method, and more specifically critical evocative autoethnography as a cross-racial gendered coinquiry to support community-engaged scholarship. I will articulate the autoethnographic process in a manner that demonstrates how data was being collected and analyzed as well as how I employed critical reflexivity in a way that interacts with the data being collected from my researcher/participants. Finally, throughout this chapter, I interwove cross-racial and feminist narratives of my interracial gendered relationships and observations to exemplify my autoethnographic process and my ability to deepen my critical reflexivity. These dialogues provide a glimpse into the life of my interracial family and the role I played as a white-identifying mother, woman, practitioner

scholar, and spouse. The experiences coming from these narratives directly impacted my role as a white-identifying female researcher, the purpose of my study, my professional ethical framework, and the conceptualization of conducting research with interracial couples on interracial gendered dialogue and the healing process that can comes from collaboratively unpacking racialized and gendered violence.

Theory Constructionism: Methodological Framework

When identifying a theoretical framework to inform a study, it is important for it to be both useful and serve a function (Kim, 2016). I will be employing a social constructionist lens using the theoretical framework of critical and feminist studies (Bhattacharya, 2017; Crotty, 2015). Additionally, narrative inquiry, critical evocative autoethnography, head, heart, and gut analysis, arts-based research, arts-based narrative inquiry, and critical arts-based research are explored to create the methodological framework of critical embodied arts-based narrative inquiry to be implemented in the study (Barone and Eisner, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2017; Ellingson, 2017; Harris et al., 2015); Kim, 2016).

Introduction to Autoethnography as Method

Denzin and Lincoln (2017) discuss the historical underpinnings of qualitative inquiry as contemporary researchers make room for autoethnography as method. In the early part of the 20th century, qualitative researchers were concerned with reacting to positivism by offering valid and objective interpretations in their writings and there was a stark contrast between the researcher and the participant "other". The blurred genres of the 1970's and 1980's expanded the qualitative researcher's toolkit to a variety of paradigms, methods, and strategies as the boundaries between the social sciences and humanities had become more integrated. The late 80's and early 90's brought a crisis of representations as research began to take on a reflexive nature calling into

question issues related to race, gender, class, and other intersecting characteristics of diversity. With that, qualitative researchers sought new truths, methods, and representation as critical theory, feminist theory, and epistemologies of color were brought center stage. This sequence of historical events gave way to a triple crisis of representation, legitimation, and praxis in qualitative research as two assumptions of qualitative research became problematic.

First, qualitative researchers may no longer be able to claim that they capture lived experience (representation crisis) and the necessity to rethink terms such as validity, generalizability, and reliability which call into question how qualitative studies are to then be evaluated in the contemporary world (legitimation crisis). The third crisis (praxis crisis) is one of the researchers interrogating if change can be brought about in the world if only through text and the role that the practitioner must play in this discussion regarding qualitative inquiry. As a result, in what has been conceptualized as the postmodern period (1990-1995), researchers struggled to make sense of these crises and the notion of the researcher observer was abandoned; more participatory and activity-oriented research began to emerge with small-scale theories created to address specific problems and situations as well as different ways to write ethnography were experimented (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Ellis et al., 2011). Post experimental inquiry (1995-2000) explored experimental forms of qualitative writing including the expression of lived experience that ranged from literary, to poetic, to autobiographical, conversational, critical, to name a few as well as ethnographic alternatives which began to blur the boundaries between social sciences and humanities. The methodologically contested presented (2000-2004) a time of great conflict and tension in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Bocher (2013) describes a “narrative turn” (p.52) during which narrative became a form of inquiry that could best describe the relationship between researchers and participants. The

term autoethnography had first been used in the 1970's within the social sciences (Hayano, 1979) but its true genre of writing was not yet realized until the publications of several collections (Banks & Banks, 1998; Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Ellis & Bochner, 1996), research texts (Ellis, 2004, 2020), and handbook essays (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones, 2005).

Jones et al. (2016) explore four interrelated trends that developed what now established as autoethnographic methods: there was an acknowledgement that positivist approaches had their limitations and that qualitative research was growing in recognition and merit; a deeper concern arose to the ethical dilemmas associated with research; appreciation began to develop that encompassed narrative, emotional processes, and the embodiment of lived experiences, and finally, more attention was given to social identities, dimensions of diversity and identity politics (Jones et al, 2016).

Autoethnography serves many methodological purposes in qualitative inquiry. Ellis and Bochner (2000) make meaning of autoethnography as "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (p.742). One characteristic that connects all autoethnographic work is that it is grounded in the personal experience of the researcher/participant as they examine different cultural experiences (Jones et al., 2016). Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that is grounded in the utilization of ethnography to better understand the self in relation to others through cultural, interpretive, and autobiographical means (Chang, 2008). It is important to note that not all writing that is personal in nature is autoethnographic as there are specific elements of an autoethnographic process that must be present to distinguish it from other types of personal writing: committing to vulnerability, examining cultural practices intentionally, contributing to the field of qualitative

inquiry, and seeking a response and engagement from audiences as an ongoing part of the evolution of the autoethnographic process (Jones et al., 2016). Bochner and Ellis (2016) pilot evocative autoethnography as a methodology which connects the intellectual and the emotional from the point of view of the storyteller. The evocative autoethnographic process is a journey of mindfulness and self-discovery as researcher/participants react and reflect with all of their senses to more deeply connect to the embodiment of lived experiences.

To build upon this autoethnographic framework, I use evocative autoethnography as a research method. Evocative autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) as a methodology connects the intellectual and the emotional from the point of view of the storyteller (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). As a clinical marriage and family therapist trained in dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), I often use the embodiment of the five senses to take my clients through mindfulness practices which support them in acknowledging and then being able to better regulate their mind, body, and emotional spirit (Linehan, 2015). I find the evocative autoethnographic process a similar journey of mindfulness and self-discovery as researcher/participants react and reflect with all their senses to more deeply connect to the embodiment of lived experiences. To me, this falls within my theoretical orientation both as a clinician and evocative autoethnographer. This is a natural way of writing for me that grounds my mindful journey of intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective (Cabrera et al., 2017). Evocative autoethnographic work could be likened to what DBT therapists define as the “wise brain” which is both a mindfulness journey and a state of mind that intentionally connects the left and right brain drawing upon both logic and emotion in an appreciative co-construction to make meaning of the world around us (Linehan, 2015). Thus, the evocative autoethnographic process is both a journey of mindfulness and a process of self-discovery as researcher/participants react and reflect with all

their senses to embody their lived experiences more deeply while addressing racial and gender-based violence. Within this framework, I feel free to express my deepest experiences and emotions while supporting the lived emotional, cultural, and embodied experiences of the researcher/participants. This methodology supports a framework for me to speak in a transparent way about my own process of becoming an anti-racist, unpacking whiteness, and deepening my understanding of my own oppression as a woman while engaging other interracial couples and families to discuss and critically reflect upon their oppressor and Oppressed identities, their intersectionality, and how other systems play a part in this narrative.

Critical autoethnography is based on intersectionality, use of power, critical self-reflection, and social inequity: "Critical autoethnography allows for critical self-reflexivity and cultural commentary to examine embodied experiences, relational encounters, and intercultural conundrums" (Boylorn & Orbe, 2021, p.6). In employing this methodology, I aim to support dismantling systems of oppression through my actions, thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and work with other interracial families/couples to engage in this process with me. Through the deconstruction of these internal, familial, and societal systems together, I engage with critical hope that the process will enact methods for peacebuilding and resilience to occur if we address the sources of violence that we are all a part of or oppressed by.

To conclude this section, the following interlude reflects on the process of critical evocative autoethnography as a cross-racial gendered coinquiry and explores the inherent tension involved in communicating about race and gender while having both Oppressed and oppressor identities. My partner, a Thai man, unpacks his racialized experiences as a response to Asian violence in the United States in a commitment to interracial family awareness and healing. I respond as a white person by utilizing critical empathy, intercultural listening, intercultural

humility and resilience to explore my own positionality and white privilege and the importance of intercultural listening as a tool for resilience in interracial family communication. Additionally, I write of my position as a woman in my interracial family and larger societal systems, my seemingly invisible gendered experience, and the daily violence I encounter with males. I share my thoughts with my male partner to engage in a healing process together. As we share, we commit to intersectional dialogue about race and gender, we engage with critical hope. This cross-racial gendered coinquiry manifests as the everyday experience of the interracial family as existing on the outskirts of society navigating oppressor and Oppressed within the same nuclear family system. The reader is encouraged to make their own reflections of this poem and explore their own intersectional identities.

Maybe This Time It's Gonna Be You and Me

I wanted to post my thoughts

But I thought it might draw too much attention to me

So I let my feelings build up

My rage

My sadness

Of a lifetime of being treated

Like the perpetual foreigner

Where are you from?

They always ask me

Didn't you know I'm just as American as you are?

My whiteness lets me get away with a lot: I get impatient.

When the white folks keep asking you where you're from

Every. Single. Time. We meet someone new.

I internally roll my eyes and somehow think I'm further along

I get to be impatient (That's my white privilege)

But you're calculated every time.

The thing is – your interrogator and I

We both profit from the same system that

Oppresses You

I told you that you were just as American as I am

But in doing that I dismissed your lived experience

Cultural marginality

I need to listen more.

***

I'm Invisible.

Violence is most violent when you don't even know the violence you hold

In your speech

Taking up space

In your nonverbal body language

Putting your hand on my back

With your interruptions

When I am talking you talk over me

When you steal my ideas

They were mine dammit but they're going to listen to you

The male in the room

When you minimize the power you have in our relationship

When you deny the power you hold

When you are blind to the violence engrained in you

You dismiss me

My concerns

My voice

And love and violence are intertwined

It's the closest relationship and it's also very volatile

It's like the scorpion and the frog [9]

It's in my DNA.

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[9] The scorpion and the frog is a well-known children's fable that explores the inevitability of our true nature. The scorpion wants to cross the river but is afraid he will drown so he asks the frog to carry him. The frog agrees but makes the scorpion promise not to sting him. Halfway across the river, the scorpion stings the frog thus drowning them both. "Why did you sting me?," the frog cries. "I am sorry, I am a scorpion," replied the scorpion.

Bull shit! You were socially conditioned to oppress me.

THAT position is second nature to you

You wear it and I feel it deeply

But you don't know yourself

You don't understand

Your blind spot is killing the healing process

The relationship doesn't protect us at all

It actually amplifies the powerlessness I have felt throughout my life

With all my close male relationships

Your dismissal of this

When you only focus on race

Is deeply felt

As I take my power back

I rock the very foundation of our family

Because you are comfortable with this gendered experience

The status quo: the violent quotient.

As were our fathers before us.

How can I be both invisible and a target at the same time?

It takes one person to change a family system.

Maybe this time, it's gonna be you and me.

Through the methodology of critical evocative autoethnography, the research team explored their personal reactions to societal violence against Asian Americans, gender-based violence and oppression within their interracial family and societal system, and their own cross-cultural struggles as an interracial family as they respond to their roles as Oppressed and oppressor within the same relationship, family system, and society. The end expresses a critical hope that healing transformation may happen through intentional and intersectional work within the family system.

Arts-Based Research and Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry

Arts-based inquiry methods are currently changing the way qualitative research is conducted and are on the cutting edge of exploration and discovery. Visual methods allow for innovative ways to approach social justice and diversity issues as well as increase empathy and reduce feelings of anxiety (Kortegast et al., 2019; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Geertz (1980) discusses how art and research can be combined to create a dynamic research landscape that involves "genre blurring" (p.165). The very foundation of arts-based research is grounded in the awakening of social scientists to the idea that they did not need to emulate positivist research methods to develop social theories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The aim here lies in the interest of understanding human and social phenomena through blurred genres in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Many fields have already begun to expand and embrace arts-based research such as anthropology, journalism, sociology, and education just to name a few. Barone & Eisner (2012) explain that arts-based research is the "process that uses the expressive qualities of form to convey meaning" (p. xii).

When narrative inquiry utilizes arts-based approaches such as poetry, fiction, drama, photography, video, drawing, and other arts mediums, arts-based narrative inquiry is born (Kim,

2016). There are two types of art-based narrative inquiry: literary-based and visual-based as social scientists begin to incorporate both genres into their research (Kim, 2016). Both mediums were employed for this study to illustrate the stories that are told and retold by the participants in both a literary and visual manner. When art is created for the process of creating narrative inquiry, it is important to be attune to the artist's inspiration and the viewer's understanding (Bochner & Ellis, 2003). For this cross-racial gendered coinquiry, discussing collaboratively the meanings and intentions behind the art and the stories that emerge are of critical importance. Empathy is another important aspect of the arts-based narrative storytelling process as it opens a window to the lived experiences of culturally different Others and allows for a tacit connection across difference with the goal of furthering the stories that are being told as legitimate and of value (Kim, 2016). Barone and Eisner (1997) discuss the seven tenants of arts-based research and specifically, literary-grounded narrative inquiry: the development of another reality, utilization of expressive language, utilizing contextualized and vernacular language, support of empathy-based experiences, personalized artistic expression of the researcher/participant, and a call for the importance of aesthetics.

Critical Arts-Based Research and Critical Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry

Critical arts-based research is a way to appreciate various and diverse ways of doing research and knowledge in general (Harris & al., 2015). This critical arts-based methodology is informed by the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2022), a primary scholar who operationalized critical race theory (CRT) founded by Derrick Bell to include intersections of race, gender, and class in the field of education. The theoretical framework of CRT draws attention to systems of oppression, interrogates and dismantles structures that encourage oppression, and intentionally examines and elaborates upon pre-existing systems that promote oppressive ideologies (Ladson -

Billings, 1998). Since I identify as white Euro American, I will not call myself a critical race theorist, but I will utilize CRT as a framework to connect underlining systems of oppression such as racism and how the eradication of racism is not a universal experience.

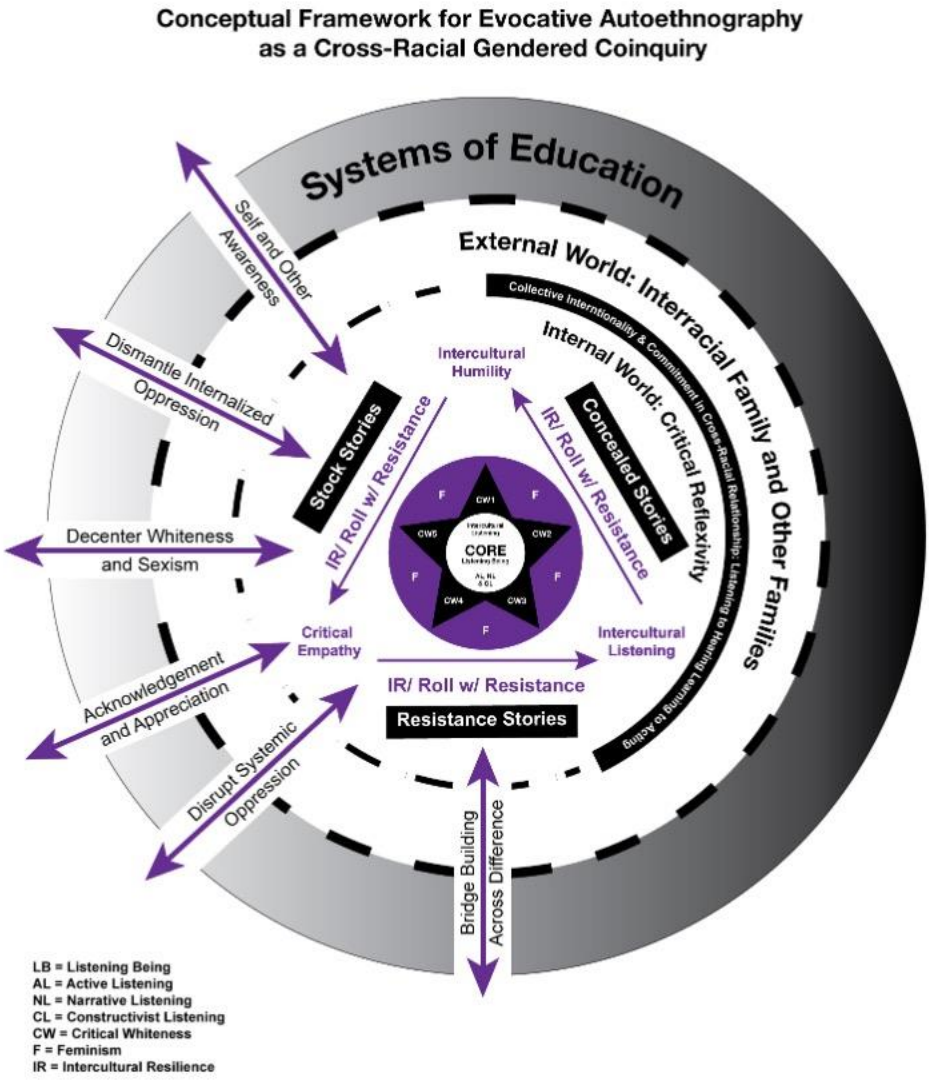
Arts-based learning is utilized in the storytelling process for participants to work through their own social location and expand their worldview. This process allows for the stories to act heightening awareness about the self and others and the impact of social awareness as community members explore political, social, cultural and structural issues in their understanding and connection to the social world (Fook & Askeland, 2007). In this study, both literary and visual art-based narrative inquiry may be employed. In this way, I will work alongside interracial families as we explore communication about race and gender, daily violence and peacebuilding approaches and implement resilience strategies through critical arts-based narrative inquiry. The unfolding of this storytelling process and the co-creation of literary-based art connects to all three research questions of my dissertation. As I conducted the interviews, analyze the data, and supported the creation of a critical art-based narrative piece for the families, I continually reflected on my own lived interracial family experiences within and outside the interracial family interviews to engage in critical reflexivity.

Conceptual Framework for Critical Evocative Autoethnography as a Cross-Racial Gendered Coinquiry

In response to RQ1, the autoethnographic mapping presented in Figure 3 is a culmination of my experiences within my interracial family and other interracial families as we communicate about race and gender and our intersectional identities. This critical arts-based narrative tour illustrates how I conceptualize and unpack my internal process of developing interracial family communication about race and gender as daily violence is experienced and peacebuilding and

tools for resilience are cultivated, which reflect both theory and practice and situate my values and priorities as a researcher.

Figure 4. *Critical Evocative Autoethnographic Mapping of Cross-Racial Gendered Coinquiry*



This narrative tour is made up of three different major spheres of influence that are interconnected and synergistic as I explore daily communication about race, gender, and interracial family dynamics within my internal and external worlds as an autoethnographer. These three spheres (internal world, external world, and systems of education) are centered in

and directly impacted by my internal experience as a critical evocative ethnographer as I experience my intersectionality and the stories that make me the cultural being that I am and influence how I navigate the world. For the purpose of this study, though exploring the mechanisms of oppression that make up systems of education are important, I have chosen to focus more on my internal and external worlds as it relates to working with interracial families as a catalyst for transformation, healing, and growth. The internal world is the embodiment of my critical evocative autoethnographic experience at its core (inner most central sphere with a star shape), the external world is represented as both my interracial family and other interracial families (middle sphere) and finally, the outer sphere represents systems of education as a representation of society at large and the systems of power, privilege, and oppression that exist (Mustaffa, J. B., 2017; Tisdell, 1993). As a listening practitioner, as I move outward to interact and respond to the external word, I am still navigating and applying both the core and the internal world to my practice and theory. It is to be noted that both the internal and external worlds are drawn with a dotted line that indicates that the movement to and from these spheres is permeable and impacts the researcher/participant, interracial families, and society in a continuous intercultural exchange.

This autoethnographic mapping is an art piece that explores communication about race and gender (RQ1), daily violence (RQ2), as well as peacebuilding and cultivating tools for resilience (RQ3). I respond methodologically to my autoethnographic research as I explore daily violence, peacebuilding and tools for resilience from the inside out: my internal communication with myself as I listen to my inner voice and emotionally regulate before I respond about race and gender, interacting with my family and interracial families as we have courageous conversations about race and gender, and then how this could positively impact society at large

and dismantling systems of oppression. Exploring communication about race and gender in my own interracial family and in other interracial families begins by me making sense of my own communication with myself as I engage with listening being, practice intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective with my own family and support the stories about race and gender that interracial families share during the interview process.

In response to RQ2 and RQ3, the methodology represented illustrates that understanding intersectional violence, peacebuilding and tools for resilience starts at home first, within my own self as oppressor and Oppressed as I work to find inner peace. Then, navigation extends to the interracial family to achieve peace between, and then to society at large to attain peace among. In response to RQ3, one peacebuilding and resilience tool is the conceptual framework for intercultural listening. The core in the center of a five-pointed start, involves four types of listening articulated by Lipari (2010) and Hyater-Adams (2010) which I have collectively referred to as intercultural listening: (a) listening being (b) active listening, (c) constructivist listening, and (d) narrative listening. As I explore daily violence (RQ2). I will implement these four different types of listening as I engage first with myself as I interrogate my own internalized oppression and stock stories I have learned as a woman. I will also use intercultural listening from a critical whiteness perspective to explore how I show up as an oppressor in my interracial family as a white wife, mother, and practitioner scholar. Listening being, another peacebuilding tool that is part of the conceptual framework for intercultural listening (RQ3), is positioned at the very center of the autoethnographic diagram indicating the ultimate point of critical reflexivity as I listen to intersectional identities of my inner voice.

In response to both RQ2 and RQ3, the five points of the star represent how critical whiteness (Frankenberg, 1997) informs the ways in which I, a white researcher, practice and

conceptualize critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience and what action steps I would take as a result of this exploration to support the decentering of whiteness and sexism within the different systems which have been identified. Equally important, is the lens of feminist conceptualizations of violence (RQ2) that lie in between the five points of the star as I look through a lens of both race and gender to understand navigating interracial family dynamics in which family members hold both Oppressed and oppressor identities. As I practice intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective, I am constantly engaging in my own critical reflexivity by specifically exploring feminist conceptualizations of violence and the five tenants of whiteness as colorblindness, an epistemology of ignorance, ontological expansiveness, property, and assumed racial comfort (Cabrera, 2017).

In response to RQ3, the diagram of the moving triangle represents (critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility) a dialogic mechanism to generate the development of interracial family communication as an engaged consciousness of intercultural humility incorporating the use of critical empathy and intercultural listening as interracial families roll with resistance and develop collective intercultural resilience. Interracial families and couples in this study are identified as being in a committed and intentional relationship which sets a foundation of heightened cultural awareness and peacebuilding approaches. Moving outward from the core to the middle sphere representing my immediate interactions with the external world through daily interactions with my own interracial family and other interracial families, I explore conceptual frameworks that have the potential to generate intercultural humility and resilience within the interracial family. I use the building blocks of collective

intentionality and commitment to the cross-racial relationship to identify and explore daily violence, peacebuilding, and tools for resilience (RQ2 and RQ3).

As we expect to navigate individual and collective resistance and resilience as interracial families, we take note of stock stories, concealed stories, resistance, and emerging freedom stories as a collective. I do this by first interrogating these oppressive systems within myself and how I am subjected to or part of perpetuating these systems (RQ2). Then I model my understanding of awareness to my family and other interracial families for the purpose of this study. This moving triangle (critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility) has the potential to be a dialogic mechanism to generate the development of interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation as interracial families roll with resistance and develop individual and collective intercultural resilience (RQ3).

Interracial families and couples in this study are identified as being in a committed and intentional relationship which sets a foundation of heightened cultural awareness and peacebuilding approaches. When interracial families develop intercultural humility and resilience, they are on a trajectory to acknowledging that daily violence (RQ2) can occur within the systemic microcosm of the family and lean with curiosity into working through the fallacy of the stock story to better appreciate and understand the oppressor/Oppressed identities which exist within their family system (RQ3). In this way, concealed stories that speak to oppression and marginalization can be more deeply acknowledged and heard and can make way for resistance stories to emerge (Bell, 2020) which furthers peacebuilding (RQ3).

In response to RQ3, the double-sided arrows pointing outward from my internal world to the external world to systems of education and beyond represent an interconnected platform for interracial families' stories to be shared, as the research team mutually collaborates with them in

the development of more inclusive spaces, a feeling of belonging, and peacebuilding approaches to develop greater resilience in the face of oppression regardless of the system. The double-sided arrows indicate a collaborative exchange between interracial families and me with potential outcomes for both micro (family) and macro (education) systems which involve but are not limited to: (1) dismantling my own internalized oppression and responding to the violence I experience daily within my interracial family and society and the violence I have subjected my family and other People of Color to (2) dismantling and disrupting systemic oppression (3), increasing of cultural self and other awareness, (4), decentering whiteness and sexism in family and educational systems, (5) acknowledging and appreciating differences, (6) building bridges across difference to create more equitable family and educational systems and foster a feeling of belonging for interracial families.

Research Design

This critical evocative autoethnographic study was conducted and aligned with three semi-structured interviews with four interracial couples over 6 months (June-November 2022) as I engaged in critical reflexivity and specifically the head, heart, and gut method (Ellingson, 2017) before, during, and after the interviews with interracial families. At least one family member in the interracial families invited to participate in the interviews was connected to a K-12 or higher education system as a faculty, staff, administrator, student, or parent of children in the school system. This context allowed for researcher/participants to reflect on various micro and macro level systems that reflect on racialized and gender-based oppression as well as opportunities for peacebuilding and tools for resilience. As a white academic, woman, and listening practitioner, I utilized the head, heart, and gut analysis which is a method of embodying the raw data with all senses to develop researcher insight (Ellingson, 2017), critical

empathy, and intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective to interview the interracial couple or family member about a critical incident or critical incident(s) related to racialization and gendered violence in their personal relationships, nuclear or extended family, and community system including the systems of education which they navigate individually and/or as a family (Crotty, 2015).

This study draws from participatory frameworks (Morales, 2016) which supports co-constructed research design with participants while adaptively addressing systemic inequities, oppression, and marginalization (Carragee & Frey, 2016). As such, the research questions and interview protocol may be modified or adapted once the research process begins based on interactions with participants and researcher/participant feedback. For the interview component of this study, I used the critical incident technique (Kain, 2014) to unpack how interracial families make meaning of daily violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience strategies (See Table 1). While there was a pre-determined interview protocol, the semi-structured interview process was designed to be more fluid, inviting participants to steer the conversation as they saw fit. Additionally, interracial families were invited to co-construct the critical incident or incidents unpacked in their interview.

Table 1. *Research Timeline*

Week	**Interracial Families**	**Research Journal & Critical Reflexivity**
MAY 2022 **Week 1**	Interracial families are contacted by email or phone to gauge interest in the coinquiry. (Note: These are interracial families/couples with whom the research team	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.

	already has an established ongoing and close relationship so initial rapport building is not related to getting to know the participants but is more on going.) Meet with my interracial family/research team. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity outside of interviews as part of the peacebuilding process.	
Week 2	Interracial families are provided with information about critical evocative autoethnography as a cross-racial gendered coinquiry. Interracial families/couples provide feedback about the role they would like to engage in for the study and how they envision their participation. Benefits and drawbacks to participating in the study are explored. Meet with interracial families to connect and sign consent, question-asking, and feedback and solidifying of	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.

	research schedule/information. Meet with my interracial family/research team. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity outside of interviews as part of the peacebuilding process.	
Week 3 & 4	First round of interview questions and research design are finalized, and IRB is submitted for review with informed consent.	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.
JUNE & JULY 2022 **Week 5-7**	First round of interviews (recorded and transcribed). Please note: Interview type (semi-structured, open ended…etc…) will be based on collaboration with research/participants and participants. Sample interview questions: Tell us about a time when you were navigating cross-culturally and there was a conflict and the situation was a) not resolved and/or b)	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.

	resolved. What happened? What meaning were you making? What meaning was your partner making? Would you have done anything differently?	
	Meet with my interracial family/research team. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity outside of interviews as part of the peacebuilding process.	Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content. Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics.
Week 8-10	Second round of interviews Sample interview questions: What was it like sharing your story with us? Is there anything that you wanted to share last time that we didn't get to that you'd like to share now? What happened between the first interview and now? What came up for you? Did you discuss it as a couple or reflect on it? Were there times when you felt heard or not heard in your lived experience during interview 1?	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content

	Meet with my interracial family. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity outside of interviews as part of the peacebuilding process. Design/refine questions for third interview collaboratively.	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.
SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2022 **Week 11-18**	Use Zoom Transcription software and edit transcriptions. Use Affective coding methods and make use of coding for verbal and non-verbal communication. Contact interracial family/couple and provide them with coding, summary of coding, and video summary. Meet with my interracial family. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity outside of interviews as part of the peacebuilding process. Design/refine questions for third interview collaboratively.	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.

OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2022 Week 20-24	Interracial families create art pieces under the support of the research team using coaching methods.	Utilize recording equipment. Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.
	Conduct third/final round of interviews/follow up based on themes that emerged from original interviews. Collectively explore art pieces that have been created. During the third, interview, we will reflect on the process together and themes and patterns that emerged. Sample Interview Questions: Any questions or feedback About the summaries and Coding process? How did you use the research data? What was that like? How was the piece created? How did you go through the process of working on it together? Tell us about your stylist choices. How did you	Make notes in digital research journal of observations and logistics. Engage in critical reflexivity by writing analytic memos and critical evocative autoethnographic content.

negotiate or communicate
about race and gender?

What story is it telling?

Why was it important to do
this art piece together?

Did you feel heard in your
lived experience through your
storytelling process? Why or
why not? What made you feel
listened to/heard?

What kinds of sensations
happened in your body as you
wrote this art piece – your
individual process and
together? Can you describe
the embodiment of this
process as you wrote and as
you listened?

Do you agree or disagree with
the overall theme presented
and what is your feedback to
the research team?

What is it like for us to listen
to this collective story?

Have we answered all the research questions?

What is your now what?

Meet with my interracial family/research team. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity outside of interviews as part of the peacebuilding process. Conduct a secondary data analysis to explore and clarify emergent themes.

The semi-structured interview process was adapted from Vande Berg's (2017) 5-Step Critical Incident Process originally conceived as a linear process employed specifically in intercultural contexts with questions being posed from interviewer to interviewee for the purpose of supporting the interviewee in building critical reflexivity. For this study, the dialogic flow of the critical incidents with interracial couples took place in a more organic non-linear and co-constructed manner in which couples/families shared critical incidents about race and gender and interviewed the research team to attain collective consciousness regarding communication about race and gender, daily violence, peacebuilding and tools for resilience. The research team explained to the researcher/participants at the beginning of the first interview that creating opportunities for shared storytelling could potentially lower the power dynamics and more fully engage the interracial couples/families in the study. This level of engagement created feelings of connection and belonging and furthered opportunities for collective meaning

making regarding how to enact peacebuilding and resilience within, between, and among as a reflection of the stories that were told. in creating their own artistic process to enact peacebuilding.

Together, the researcher/participants and research team (1) described critical incidents related to their racialization and gendered experiences, (2) what they did, (3) what meaning they were making within that cultural context, (4) described how other people were making meaning, and (5) the consequences/impact involved resulting from the critical incident. In the second interview, the interracial couple and the research team continued to engage in storytelling utilizing the critical incident process while intentionally reflecting on gendered and racialized experiences that were similar and different from each other which intentionally built trust, connection, and belonging. As a family communication facilitator, I employed critical empathy, intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective throughout the interviewing process and implemented foundational psychoeducational techniques to foster intercultural humility and resilience such as motivational interviewing, narrative therapy techniques, and supporting courageous conversations about race and gender. Opportunities to explore the interracial couples/families' natural utilization of critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience in the narrative process was observed by the research team and discussed with the researcher/participants. Additionally, stock, concealed, resistance and freedom stories were discussed which aligned with the interracial groups experiences with communicating about race and gender, daily violence, as well as peacebuilding and tools for resilience.

At the end of the second interview, families/couples chose how they wanted to construct a literary and/or visual art piece to represent the findings that had occurred in the first two

interviews. It is important to note that these findings represented a response to the research questions posed. After the coding and data analysis of the first two interviews had been completed and submitted, the interracial families had different ways they chose to work with the data to create their individual art pieces:

1. Choose for the research team to write a poem or story about their lived experiences with race and gender and provide feedback and edits. Develop a visual art piece to respond to what had been written.
2. Elect to write a literary art piece themselves in the form of a story or poem.
3. Co-write the art piece with the researcher team.

The arts-based narrative methods the interracial family/couple chose was based on how they wanted to uniquely share their story of how they communicate about race and gender, explore daily violence, peacebuilding, and tools for resilience. The goal of the research team was to support the research participants in telling their story artistically in whatever way most resonated with them and is the most authentic expression of their lived experience.

After the second interview, as I continued to employ the head, heart, and gut analysis (Ellingson, 2017) as the foundational data analysis, I transcribed the interviews, coded, and shared a written summary of the findings with the families/couples. To simplify the data analysis, I provided the families/couples with a brief video summary. While the families/couples worked on their art piece, I coached them to focus on the stories that were most impactful during their interviews and respond to the research questions through arts-based narrative means.

To employ the head, heard, and gut analysis (Ellingson, 2017) effectively, it was important that I had sat with the data, read, and re-read the transcriptions and arrived on a place

of full narrative embodiment of the internal and external processes of the ebb and flow of the storytelling experiences within the interview process. This deeply embodied experience required that I manually code the transcriptions and I did not use any type of software. In between interviews 2 and 3, I had points of contact throughout the artistic process with the member of the family/couple that I knew well through texts, email, phone, video, and Facebook messenger to support their arts-based narrative experience. When requested, I also provided chapters 1-3 of my dissertation, other literature, and art pieces that my husband and I had co-created together so that participants could understand where their story would be situated within my writing. These debriefs consisted of coaching the participants to have the foundational information needed to tell the stories they wanted to tell while answering the research questions founded in exploring communication about race and gender, daily violence, peacebuilding, and tools for resilience. As a result, the art piece was purposed to reflect and answer all three research questions as it reflects the intercultural and interpersonal dynamics originating from the data analysis of interviews one and two.

The interviews consisted, by design, of white women and Men of Color to represent a similar yet different lived experience of my interracial couple's experience. My husband and I debriefed after every interview and discussed how the interracial experience impacted us individually and as a collective unit. My husband, being a Man of Color, intentionally connected and engaged the Men of Color during the interview, and expressed what it was like to be in interviews with two white women. Similarly, as a white woman, I expressed my internal process navigating race and gender. I kept track of my own analytic memos that normally took the form of poetry during the interracial interviews and logged my husband's subjectivity statements as well.

During the third and final interview, the interracial couple and the research team, based on the original understanding of how the art piece would be conceptualized, unpacked, and finalized the art piece so that it accurately represented the families'/couples' lived experiences. The research team used open-ended questions to support the interracial couple/family in describing the art piece they had created and asked the couple to describe their embodied experiences during the making of the art piece. In this way, I engaged them in the ongoing process of the head, heart, and gut method (Ellingson, 2017). During interview 3, the research team checked in about pattern coding to get input from the researcher/participants: All researcher/participants felt that the act of storytelling was indeed an act of peacebuilding which allowed them to find their own tools for resilience to implement within themselves, their families, and other societal systems. After the research team explored, unpacked, and responded to the interracial family/couple's art piece, they created a responding literary art piece representing their critical reflections of the process and the relational experience of working with the interracial family. At the conclusion of interview 3, the interracial couples/families collectively addressed the question: Now what? Where do we go from here based on what we know now?

Autoethnographic Research Site of Data Collection

Data was collected in two ways through the process of writing as both a method and a site and through interracial family interviews via zoom. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) refer to writing not just as a method but also as a research site. Bhattacharya (2017) presents a diagram of intersecting continua which is related to different sites of inquiry: (1) research site is fixed in time thus there is limited access to the researcher, (2) the research site is fluid and there is unlimited access to the researchers, (3) deliberate sites of research, and finally (4) unintentional

sites of research. These two intersections create four sites of research from which I collected autoethnographic data.

1. I explored my work as a graduate student as I gathered information about the multiplicity of identities that make me who I am today. I drew from my coursework and notes I had taken over the course of three years. I reviewed my digital storage, application to the program, and different iterations of chapters 1-3 I had written through my qualitative inquiry certification, self-reflections, and all the drafts of the chapters I had written. I reviewed journal articles and book chapters I had been first author or co-author on that involved graduate students and Colleagues of Color. This included emails and teams meeting notes I had kept regarding my coursework, publications, and mentor/mentee experiences over my PhD program.
2. I reviewed artwork that my son had made about himself and his own self-image and the things that he would randomly say about his understanding of his own race or the races that he perceived himself to be or was perceived to be by others. I made note of the racial comments he made about other people in his life specifically related to immediate and extended family and caretakers and how he spoke of his neighborhood and school interactions involving race and gender as well.
3. I reviewed my counseling notes and processes involved in my own gendered experiences and how they had shaped me and how my awareness continued to shift, and change based on my understanding of my own oppression. I documented and wrote about my experiences moving from victim of violence to survivor.
4. I drew from my memories, lived familial and societal experiences, my experiences of life as a white woman in an interracial family composed of only Males of Color. I

documented my desire to raise my children to feel comfortable and loved in their own skin while navigating the tension of co-parenting.

5. I documented my lived experiences and reflections intersecting with all these topics from proposal to dissertation completion.

My analytic memos related to the interviews the research team and I had with the interracial couples and how we co-constructed and made meaning together. When I experienced feelings of connection, belonging, and interracial family identity, I wrote about them. In this way, this critical evocative autoethnography came alive on the page so I could make meaning of my lived experiences and legitimize them even though this was not a traditional way to do a dissertation. More specifically, I relied on my analytic memos about the items mentioned above and the recordings of the interviews with interracial families to go through a coding process and co-construct literary arts-based narratives about the gendered interracial family experience of violence, peacebuilding, and resilience.

Data Collection

Researcher/participants

In this section, I will explain how participants were recruited to the study and the sampling strategy I used, how many people we interviewed, and background of the research participants. I discussed different interracial couples/families with my research team and the different experiences we had had with them over our time knowing them. One criterion that was important for this study was for at least one person in the interracial couple/family to have already built a relationship of trust with one or both people on the research team. I discussed different interracial couples/families with my husband that we knew and started a short list of people we thought would be open to being interviewed. We also considered our own

vulnerability in sharing more personal experiences about our family and who we both felt we could trust in this mutual storytelling experience. We started off with five families: one white male and Japanese American female who were married with two grown biracial children; one white female and one Vietnamese American male in their early 20's recently married right out of college; one white female with four biracial children (African American and white); one white female and one African American male with one biracial child in their early 40's; one multi-ethnic light skinned Muslim female and one African American male in a long-term committed relationship in their early 20's recently graduating with their bachelor's degrees (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Research Participant Demographic Information*

Pseudonyms & (*Relationship Status*)	**Approximate Age**	**Ethnic/Racial Background**	**Educational Level**	**Children**
Aliah and Don (*Married*)	Early 40's	White Euro American/Thai	PhD Candidate/Bachelor of Fine Arts	Two biracial children
Jeremiya and Mariya (*Long term committed relationship*)	Early 20's	African American/Light skinned multiethnic Muslim American	Bachelors/Bachelors & pursuing master's degree	No children yet
Houston and Heidi (*Married*)	Early 20's	Vietnamese American/White Euro American	Bachelors/Bachelors & pursuing masters	Currently trying to conceive

Jeff and Brittany *(Married)*	Early 40's	African American/White Euro American	Bachelor's Degrees	One biracial child
Tess	Early 40's	White Euro American	Bachelor's Degree Associate's Degree	Four biracial children

All interracial couples/families went through the informed consent process which was recorded. One couple (white male and Japanese female) had significant reservations about the confidentiality of the study based on our relationship with them and the psychological/emotional investment of the study. As a result, they opted out of the study due to these personal reasons. It was important for the research team to interview non-traditional interracial families that had similarities to our own family structure and/or the individual experiences of our couple. As a result, we also chose to interview a white woman with four biracial children who had a story of traumatic experiences that echoed my own experiences with childhood sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence. Additionally, Don had experienced childhood abuse and trauma and interviewing couples/families who were open to talking about how that impacted their daily life, how they parented, and coped with and communicated about these traumas in an interracial family was of great interest to the research team. Next, the interracial couples/families, the research team (my husband and I) worked with, interviewed, and supported in the making of their art piece will be introduced. All couples and families were given pseudonyms.

Jeremiya and Mariya were an interracial couple in their early twenties in a long-term committed partnership. They had both recently finished their bachelor's degree. Jeremiya identified as Black and Mariya identified as white, Muslim, and multiethnic. With this couple, Don and I were able to explore personal examples of gender and race and how it impacted their

daily communication. More importantly, we unpacked the differences in their value and belief systems related to gendered communication and provided feedback about critical intercultural communication and conflict resolution.

Houston and Heidi were newly married and had recently graduated from college. They were also in their early twenties. Houston identified as Vietnamese American, and Heidi identified as white Euro American. They had struggled with cross cultural communication as their communication styles differed significantly due to their Eastern and Western cultural viewpoints. Additionally, it was the first time we had ever been able to talk to another interracial couple composed of a white Midwestern woman and Southeastern Asian American man in depth about their cross-cultural experiences. Don and I felt very close to the experiences this couple had due to the cultural value systems and struggles shared among the four of us which resulted in a feeling of deep understanding and emotional proximity. We mutually found a lot of comfort in our shared experiences and found a sense of belonging as we shared our stories together. We also all noticed a positive shift in our cross-cultural communication with our partners through this lived experience together.

Jeff and Brittany were an interracial couple having been married for over 10 years with a young biracial child a few years older than our child. They were similar in age to the research team. Jeff was African American and Brittany was white Euro American. We were able to share a lot of co-parenting experiences together about how to come to decisions with different communication and conflict styles. We also talked about raising biracial children when none of us identify as biracial. Don and Jeff connected around the subject of having experienced verbal, emotional, and physical abuse as children. They made a commitment as fathers to not continue the cycle of violence with their own children. Both shared that part of their healing journey was

to go to individual therapy. Brittany and Aliah connected as white mothers of biracial children and how important it was for interracial couples to get the help and resources they need, including couple's and individual therapy. Both admitted that it would have been very hard without an outside third party to help them navigate their family struggles and how their whiteness impacts their other family members.

Finally, Tess was a white mother of four biracial (African American and white) children. Tess was a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, rape when she attended college, and domestic violence in adulthood. Even though I had known Tess a long time, I did not know that our stories mirrored each other in this way. As such, Tess invited me to write the literary art piece with her to which Don responded. This experience was deeply healing in ways I could never have imagined as I had never shared my story of gender-based violence with another woman who could understand my circumstances. For the first time in my life, I had a man who was part of my family ready to be accountable for gender-based violence and wanted to be a safe space for Tess and me to share our survivor stories.

All these couples/families participated as researcher/participants and at their request, created their own art pieces in collaboration with the research team. After the first two interviews, I coached and supported them through the creative artistic process. Then, we met to unpack and understand what had been created during the third and final interview. All couples/families were provided with the three research questions and a video and written summary of the coding from the first two interviews. Additionally, they were invited to review the coding and ask questions and/or provide feedback. As a result, the story behind the art piece each couple/family created answered all three research questions. The art piece reflected our time together, how we listened to each other cross-culturally, and the critical hope for a future which

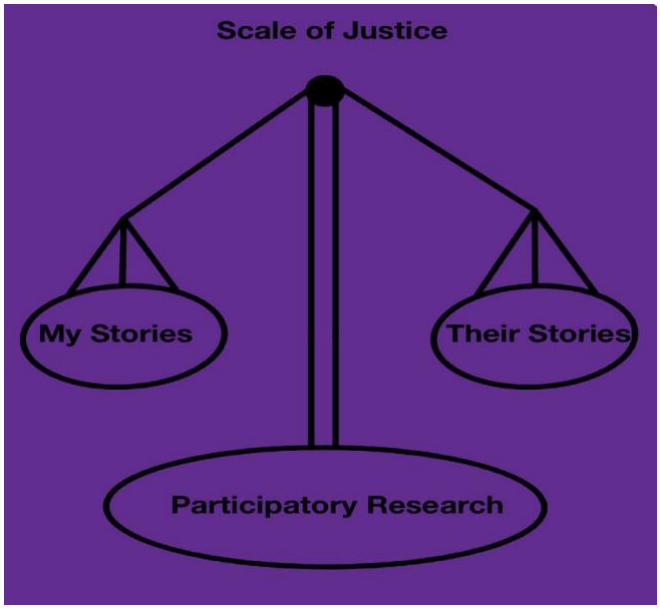
allowed for continual peace building and resilience to occur in our own couples and families but also within larger systems like our local communities, school system, and society at large. I think it is fair to say that everyone who participated in this study held a certain degree of critical hope that we could create and widen our horizons and identify and create cross-cultural tools of peacebuilding and resilience that had never been built before from which our children and our children's children could benefit. Despite our traumatic experiences with racism, sexism, misogyny, and everyday violence, we believed that things could get better, and that intersectional healing was possible.

Instruments and Materials

For the interview portion of the research, data collection came from my research journal, analytic memos, formalized meetings with my interracial family, and transcriptions of recorded video interviews with interracial families and the overall embodied process I had gleaned from the head, heart, and gut method (Ellingson, 2017). Data was collected in a variety of ways through electronic, hard copy, videos, and other methods. The data was stored within different private Kansas State Microsoft Teams accounts (one team per interracial family) established for this research project. Files within each account were only accessed by the researcher/participants with whom the interview was conducted. Data will be kept for 3 years from the end of the project to allow time for ongoing analysis and writing towards publication; upon completion, all electronic data files will be removed/erased and hard copies of transcripts or artifacts will be shredded. Internal communication related to the project happened through the teams account, email, phone, and Facebook messenger which was easier for some couples/families to access. The interracial families had access to all the data relevant to their participation. The files of the actual transcripts of the audio data had pseudonyms.

Kim (2016) outlines strategies for the observation phase with participants. I was intentional throughout the research process and specifically focused my observations as a time for critical reflexivity to unfold. Mapping out the environment I would be observing and taking note of the people in the space to build my own researcher awareness including noting "hunches, emotional reactions, and any subjectivities" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p.141). I noted the time and started with general observations that continued to become more and more focused as time went on. Additionally, keeping field notes and noting what was happening chronologically was a helpful way to organize notes.

Figure 5. *Scale of Social Justice*



This image represents how I collected data and the philosophy behind the data collection and analysis that drives my study. First, the purple backdrop represents the ongoing process I partook in as a researcher during the entire research process that involves employing critical reflexivity, critical empathy, intercultural listening, intercultural humility and resilience as well

as the head, heart, and gut method. The scale represents social justice, peace/harmony and social equity if these research mechanisms are used in a way that dismantles oppression and rebuilds a more just society. Additionally, scales on a fish metaphorically represent protection against violence. The scale is rooted in participatory research during which the research team engaged participants in member checking throughout the research process as we balanced the stories within our interracial family and the stories of other interracial families. This balance of stories represented racialized and gender-based violence, peacebuilding, and resilience which creates the coinquiry of the study. The continual delicate balance of these narratives occurred during the cycle of three interviews and as the research team checked in with the researcher/participants, we also checked in with each other, and within our own selves to engage in critical reflexivity. The outcome is bringing together these art-based narratives that are a product of this balance that represents a response to violence.

Qualitative Data Management & Analysis

Data management requires that the researcher organizes and makes meaning of a large amount of data and as a result, themes, patterns, and deeper awareness of the study emerge (Bhattacharya, 2017). Bhattacharya (2017) refers to the process of "working up from the data" (p.150). In other words, the researcher does not have any preconceived hypothesis that informs how the qualitative data is being analyzed. Further, Kim (2016) explores the notion of flirting with data to embrace curiosity and the unexpected in the research analysis and interpretation process to allow for the data to have untapped potential that can come as a surprise to the researcher. I began the process of inductive analysis by familiarizing myself with the raw data while keeping an open mind. I started by listening to, writing, and reading the transcripts of the interviews with interracial couples multiple times. I read through the

internal data I generated from an autoethnographic perspective (Chang, 2008) and the external data from the interviews multiple times to familiarize myself with the data (Saldaña, 2021). Based on my preliminary findings, I discussed what came to the surface with the researcher/participants in a collaborative process of meaning-making (Bhattacharya, 2017).

For this autoethnographic coinquiry, data collection came from various sources such as my critical reflexivity journal, transcriptions of recorded video interviews, and the final critical literary arts-based narrative co-constructed by the interracial couple and the research team. I kept a researcher journal throughout and note any hunches, reactions, and reflexive moments that occur. I intended the data representation process to be co-created with the researcher/participants and not follow a traditional format. As I aimed to represent the data and show instead of telling (Kim, 2016), I chose significant events, turning points in the narrative, ah-ha! moments, as well as points of tension to be showcased within various forms of written and visual representation. Of equal importance, I represented my researcher journal/analytic memos and brought to light hunches, deepened awareness, and critical insights (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Collecting Personal Memory Data, Self-Observational Data, and Self-Reflective Data

One way to collect autoethnographic data is to turn inward. Chang (2008) describes the importance of collecting data from personal memory in autoethnographic work and these memories are primary data sources in the research. Even though memories can fade with age, some remain vivid and stand the test of time and others can evoke deep emotional resources when tapped into. “Personal memory taps into the wealth of information on self” (Chang, 2008, p. 72). Chang (2008) describes different ways to collect personal memory data by chronicling the past, inventorying self, and visualizing self. For instance, using an

autobiographical timeline can help manage an overwhelming amount of data that shows growth and development throughout the autoethnographers' lifetime. Another approach is documenting life routines and daily mundane tasks that bring light to the everyday experience of the autoethnographer. Inventorying self allows for time to not only collect but also organize and evaluate data to determine whether it is worthy of keeping for data analysis. Chang (2008) suggests exploring proverbs, ceremonies and rituals, cultural artifacts, and mentors. Finally, visualizing self through activities such as kinship diagrams or free drawings allows for reduction and synthesizing of personal data (Chang, 2008). All these techniques allow for the autoethnographer to explore their inner world and develop critical reflexivity.

Another way to collect personal data is through self-observational and self-reflective data as thoughts, behaviors, and feelings are occurring as part of the fieldwork experience of data collection (Chang, 2008). "Self-observation can be tied to specific issues in your life. Considering your research purpose, you can identify a certain focus for your self-observation (Chang, 2008, p.91). For example, as part of my critical reflexivity, I collected data not only during the interviews with interracial couples but also in my daily lived experiences in my interracial family and with my monoracial nuclear family and my in-laws. Many of my in-laws come from interracial families as well so being able to engage with them is what Chang (2008) refers to as an "interactive self-observation as a collaborative strategy" (p.90). It is also possible to engage in self-observation during daily seemingly mundane experiences with discipline and intentionality regarding the research focus of interracial family communication dynamics, navigating violence, and intersectional healing and reconciliation. Chang (2008) suggests recording different thoughts feelings and behaviors at certain intervals throughout the daily grind: a self-observation schedule of sorts which could

lead to patterns of cognitive and emotional responses as well as behaviors and interactions with others. Additionally, self-observation can take the form of a narrative that can often be easier to record because of its free-standing format. Furthermore, through interviews with interracial couples/families, interactive self-observation can occur in which self-awareness is heightened from interactions with others (Chang, 2008). In this case, interracial couples may have shared similar or different experiences than I did with my interracial children and family and this similarity or contrast provided opportunities for self-observation and reflection.

Self-reflective data is a result of deep soul searching, introspection, and self- analysis (Chang, 2008). Chang (2008) suggests different writing activities that widen the autoethnographers worldview related to their own values, beliefs, identity, and relationships with others. One way to engage in deep self-reflexivity is through keeping a field journal to record personal thoughts and feelings that come to the surface when interacting with the research focus. Sometimes, on issues of race, I find that because of my predisposition to shy away from issues related to my own whiteness, I sometimes have to write it down to externalize it from what I've been socialized to keep hidden (Applebaum, 2017). A reflexivity journal is an effective way to document sensitive and subjective information that informs thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Chang, 2008).

Analytic memo writing is a multipurpose technique that allows the researcher to organize their thoughts, hunches, observations, and awareness of their own positionality. This process can in turn reflect emerging codes and themes which can result in theory development (Saldaña, 2021). It is important to have a strategic method for analytic memo writing because research phenomena can be better understood and analyzed through the process and framing of a coding system. Analytic memos can take on many different, creative, and strategic forms.

I typically kept notes on my phone so I could begin to dictate at any time, and I then transferred these reflections over to a computer file. I engaged in critical reflexivity in the form of analytic memo writing several times a week and sometimes every other day particularly after I had had contact with the members of the interracial couple involved in the research project. I also used my own arts-based narrative analytic memo writing through individual journaling, poetry, storytelling, and even reflecting on the lyrics of songs and other art forms which are discussed during the interviews to engage in critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility more deeply. I became accustomed to taking shorthand notes with paper and pen during cross-cultural dialogue and interviews and then dictating my reflections onto my phone afterwards which was the quickest and easiest way to document the process as soon as possible after the event. In addition, I wrote analytic memos the same day that the interaction occurred and at the latest, the day after (Saldaña, 2021).

Collecting External Data: Interracial Family Interviews

Chang (2008) discusses that one way to collect external autoethnographic data is through interviews. Kim (2016) outlines strategies for the observation phase with participants. I was intentional throughout the research process and specifically focused my observations as a time for critical reflexivity to unfold. Mapping out the environment, I observed and took note of the people in the space building my own researcher awareness including noting "hunches, emotional reactions, and any subjectivities" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p.141). It was also important to note the time and start with general observations that continued to become more and more focused as time went on. Keeping field notes and noting what is happening chronologically was a helpful way to organize notes. The data from the interactive interviews with interracial couples/families were another source of data like journaling and analytic memo writing and were organized and

coded as data that were part of the overall autoethnographic narrative as a cross-racial gendered co-inquiry. Since this was an ongoing process, the data collected could inform future collective meaning making and individual and collective critical reflexivity.

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

It is important to note that data collection, management, and analysis is a non-linear process of discovery (Chang, 2008). Collecting, managing, and analyzing data can happen simultaneously. That is one reason why it is very important to manage and classify data well so that it is easier to analyze and reduce to manageable pieces. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explain that "the process of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation are neither terminal nor mechanical. They are always emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished" (p.479). Autoethnographic analysis involves finding cultural meaning making and making the strategic shift between self and others and back again (Chang, 2008). Interpretation "involves making sense of the data" (Creswell, 1998, p.144). Chang (2008) offers ten different strategies for data analysis and interpretation: be on the lookout for reoccurring themes and patterns, intentionally look for cultural themes, analyze what is included and omitted, make the connection to the past from the present, analyze relationships, make comparisons, explore social science ideas, and make broad contextual meanings while framing autoethnographic research with theoretical foundations.

Head, Heart, and Gut Analysis. The body holds gut knowledge and memories that go beyond discourse and dialogue to allow for a more holistic data analysis process before any traditional coding methods occur. Bodies hold knowledge that goes beyond the knowing that is held in our minds (Ellingson, 2017). Gut feelings, bodily sensations, how we spontaneously tense or relax our muscles, and how our body holds memory of trauma (Van Der Kolk, 2014) are all data to consider as analysis takes place. Ellingson (2017) writes:

> If we consider data analysis a manifestation of critical thinking, it follows that researchers must employ our guts as consciously as possible and consider those of our participants, as we seek to sort through, discern patterns, construct coherent categories, typologies, theoretical readings of 'hot spots' and others (re) assemble data into new forms. (p.157)

This analysis goes to the very core of cross-cultural communication because it addresses the ambiguity and disorientation that occurs in cross-cultural exchanges which is grounded in critical intercultural communication. Racial and gender-based violence are responsible for trauma. In the book *The Body Keeps the Score*, Dr. Van Der Kolk (2014) explains that in the healing process, it is important for trauma survivors to "engage the entire organism, body, mind, and brain" (pp. 53). Since this study is about daily violence, peacebuilding, and resilience, this method encompasses all three of these phenomena within this embodiment of lived experience with the body as a primary source of knowledge.

As I employed the head, heart, and gut method in my data analysis, I sought to engage not just my bodily sensations but that of my participants urging them to tell me what they were experiencing in their bodies at different times during the arts-based narrative process. As such, I sat with the data and experienced it as both a lived and felt knowing and a process of discovery. I stayed attuned to what my body was telling me as I first analyzed the data through the head, heart, and gut method (Ellingson, 2017). This method allowed for both the rational and emotional to be integrated into the data analysis from the very beginning. I employed this method as I used critical empathy and intercultural listening techniques during the interviews, as I transcribed, as I read and re-read the final transcriptions. Before the traditional coding process occurred, my body had already analyzed the data. Furthermore, this method continued to take

place throughout the data analysis process as an overlay and primary source of information during traditional coding methods.

First Cycle Coding Approach. During first cycle coding for the first two interviews, I utilized my analytic memos, researcher journal, and the recorded interview transcripts, to experiment with initial exploratory coding. By employing a hybrid combination of in vivo and different aspects of affective coding methods, I was able to venture further into the coding process (Saldaña, 2021). The reasons I think it was important to experiment with this initial hybrid exploratory coding methods are outlined below. In vivo coding focuses on the actual language taken from the participants and preserves the unique language used. One of the main reasons I chose to use in vivo coding was to uphold and show respect towards the unique voices of the interracial couple/family. Oftentimes, interracial couples and families develop their own vocabulary to explain their interracial experiences of being part of a marginalized community (Socha & Diggs, 1999) and this type of coding can capture the couple's/family's authentic voice. Affective coding explores the subjectivity of humanity with the acknowledgement of emotions, values, and power (Saldaña, 2021). I created a hybrid coding approach incorporating in vivo and affective (emotion, value, and versus) coding methods to explore the interracial couple's affective experiences related to daily violence, peacebuilding and tools for resilience. The following examples show utilizing this hybrid coding of the verbatim dialogue of participants as we navigated their value systems (light blue), emotional experiences (yellow), and understanding of power differentials (hot pink). First, this in vivo values coding excerpt explores the origins of Heidi's religious value system and how her parents socialized her to be a devote Christian. Later in the dialogue Heidi discusses how her religious framework for

herself has changed since being in an interracial marriage with Houston who was raised Buddhist and identifies as Atheist.

Heidi: My mom grew up not religious at all...And she was she just had she like a crazy life just absolutely bonkers and then she started like going to church in her like 30's. And she met my dad in church and she has multiple times said that, like my dad saved her. And so my mom has taken on my dad's religious identity very strongly like even stronger than he is about it sometimes just because of the whole like women fall back and the man leads. So like that, so my parents are very, very strict Christian: have some Baptist ties still but they don't go to a Baptist church and that's how I was raised...I no longer go to church.

Second, in this example of in vivo emotion coding, Houston expresses his feelings of significant guilt for Heidi no longer communicating with her best childhood friend since her friend refused to come to the couple's wedding because Houston was not Christian.

Houston: And for me it's like it' almost like feels like a lot of guilt on my end because it's like. If we had never met that probably wouldn't have ever you know happened and so like I feel like a big part of it is you know me and I feel a lot of guilt about it, but you know there's nothing I can really do about it.

Finally, Aliah discusses her waking up to her own oppression and the power differentials and violence she has been impacted by over the course of her lifetime as an example of in vivo and versus coding.

Aliah: I've really learned that as a woman I'm really not and as a in my family, I was told you know you can do anything if you put your mind to it, but all of the indirect messages were the opposite of that. And so that has been a really hard one to swallow for me that this late in my life I realized how oppressed i've been as a woman. In my family it during my upbringing at my job,

like it's just it's just really weird to revisit these situations and realize how oppressed, I have been and continue to be, and that really came about by listening to the stories of people of color and how authentic they have been with me and then realizing that I really wasn't being that authentic with myself. So that has been a really long journey it's taken me a long time to recognize that as well.

My ability to understand nonverbal communication, make inferences, and to practice empathy with my participants is a significant part of effective emotion coding (Saldaña, 2021). Another affective coding method employed was value coding which is reflective of the participants' values, beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions that encompass their worldview (Saldaña, 2021). Since this study revolves around intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective, and the co-constructed process of racial reconciliation and healing, value coding allowed me to explore the participants' cultural identities, values, and experiences within a critical scope and lens. Finally, due to the critical studies framework of this research methodology which is focused on both racial and gender dynamics that occur in cross-cultural family communication, versus coding was employed to focus on finding themes and patterns that bring injustice to the surface of our understanding (Saldaña, 2021). I concluded my data management and inductive analysis by mapping out the emergent categories, patterns, and themes (Bhattacharya (2017). Utilizing this hybrid approach allowed me to implement a multi-dimensional first run of the data before regrouping with code mapping, reorganization of the data, and analytic memoing before second cycle coding.

Second Cycle Coding Approach. After completing first cycle coding of interviews one and two, I continued to work with in vivo and affective coding methods to analyze interview three as well as pattern coding to find similarities amongst the different interviews with

interracial couples/families for second cycle coding methods once the art pieces had been created and interview three had been conducted (Saldaña, 2021). The reason why I chose pattern coding is because I wanted to focus on the shared experiences of interracial couples/families as they described the experience of their racialization and gender-based violence as well as their individual and collective peacebuilding approaches and tools for resilience. Each family/couple agreed to be a part of this study because they had stories to share related to daily violence, peacebuilding, and tools for resilience. Having this data organized with a focus on similarities across interviews allowed me to build upon future interviews and analysis as the process of this unique social context and experience. During this process, I member checked my interpretations of coding organization with the researcher/participants before moving into emerging themes. These different mediums to process the data allowed me to feel and listen to the data in different ways that were practical, useful, and helpful and deepen my critical reflexivity. The analysis of the results and the emerging categories and themes were co-constructed and framed with the interracial couple/family and went through a process of member checking from start to finish.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Membership Role

Dewalt & Dewalt (2002) identify different roles that a researcher can play when working with a cultural community: peripheral, active, and full membership. As a white native-born English-speaking American, I identified with being in a full membership role within the interracial couple and family experience. Also, another white woman and I both had similar disabilities related to infertility while another white woman and I were both survivors of childhood sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence. Some of the compositions of interracial families varied significantly from my family's lived experience from a sociohistorical and cultural perspective since three of the four interracial families were not Asian/white. Since I am a

woman raising biracial children with my spouse of Color, there was sometimes a sense of solidarity that happened between the other white women and me. In addition, two of the four families/couples came from the same generation as the research team. In all, my spouse, being a Man of Color, and I being a white woman, carry full membership roles as we navigate cross-cultural storytelling with other interracial couples/families.

Kim (2016) discusses how the researcher's relationship with the participants can shift from feeling somewhat like a spy to that of a cherished friend. Based on my history, close relationship, and shared cultural experiences with at least one family member within the interracial couple/family, it seemed like it had been years since the relationship had shifted in this way yet we learned more about each other in the three interviews than we had even known because we were intentional and committed to answering the research questions and as a result, felt transformed by the communication that had taken place. There was a mutual caring and vulnerability that came with these interactions that allowed me to have a window into the daily lives of the interracial families/couples that intersected with my family, and in my life. It seemed that the pre-established relational nature of our interactions lessened the chance that the participants could feel like an object of research (Kim, 2016). Mahoney (2007) suggests that there are several ways to support the participants as storytellers and collaborators which involves the researcher keeping a journal with critical reflexivity as the focus, bringing both the voice of the researcher and researcher/participants into view concurrently in the narrative process, and sharing the methodology involved with the participants so they can understand the focus and scope. In this way, I was intentional about co-constructing meaning and authentically collaborating with the participants in the research process. The research team also intentionally expressed at the beginning during the informed consent and throughout the interview process

that even though a power differential existed between the research team and the researcher/participants that the researcher/participants were able to contribute to the research process in such a way that they could be part of the research design, questions, and the goal was for all of us to be researcher/participants in a collaborative process of discovery.

What follows is an interlude that artistically expresses having full membership in this research study but still feeling like an outsider in society.

There's No One that Looks Like Us

I was one of them but most of the time I wasn't one of them either. Of the three Asian/white couples selected for the study, only one interracial couple was an Asian male and white female and they didn't have any children. At a farmer's market being stared at like we shouldn't be here.

There's no one that looks like us.

I knew that these interracial families were drawn to my family because we had this shared experience and a need for belonging. This time, I was in a membership role where I belonged to something greater. I could see all their joys and fears and daily challenges echoing in my lived experience. #biracialchildren #monoracial parents

But there aren't any kids and families that look like us in books, on tv…

Ethical Considerations and Backyard Research. It is important to explore the temptation and potential ethical considerations involved with *backyard research* (Kim, 2016). This type of qualitative research involves conducting research in "your own backyard" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1991, p. 21). Whether it is a local school, university, or neighborhood, conducting research so close to home makes it a part of your everyday life (Kim, 2016). In this way, it can make doing research much easier because rapport has already been established with the community and/or potential research participants. However, Kim (2016) urges researchers to consider dual or multiple relationships that could make the research relationship more difficult and convoluted and as a result, it is important to exercise caution when conducting research in this way. Research so close to home can also involve acquiring dangerous knowledge that can lead to different types of ethical dilemmas or produce high political or social risks for the researcher and/or researcher/participant (Glesne & Peshkin, 1991; Kim, 2016). Kim (2016) suggests we use backyard research to access multiple perspectives, voices, subjectivities, and stories of the same local socially-based phenomenon, seeing research through a kaleidoscope, so that the results are ethically fruitful and demonstrate solid qualitative studies instead of being self-serving.

These participants were selected because my husband or I already had established a certain level of trust over an extended period (either or a lifetime or over the course of a semester) which I believe could allow for more authentic interviews and the ability to do research with the participants supporting the co-construction of meaning. With this type of community dynamic and established trust, my hope was that together, we would be able to reach a deeper level of understanding of inner dynamics of daily violence, peacebuilding, and tools for

resilience with interracial families as a collaborative and co-constructed literary or visually based art project.

Communication must reflect clarity of structure to support the reader's ability to understand the research while adhering to strict ethical guidelines which involve Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Other ethical frameworks include researcher bias, conflicts of interest, and upholding and respecting the voice of participants. Working with human subjects requires well-developed ethical guidelines, especially in qualitative research and the researcher's commitment to engage in critical reflexivity (Dubnewick et al., 2017). As I engaged with my participants and supported the development of their narratives, I used my own critical reflexivity regarding the depth and scope of my intercultural listening framework paired with my understanding of my own whiteness and gendered experiences to support the ethical frameworks mentioned above. I also checked in strategically and consistently with my research partner, my husband who provided other ways of understanding the interviews as a Man of Color.

Reconciliation and peacebuilding work necessitates a mindful collaborative listening practitioner scholar (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022). As such, it is important for there to be a strong association between professional ethics and reflexivity (Warin, 2011) in the autoethnographic process that is, in this case, both individual and collaborative. Ellingson (2013) notes that scholars' practice of reflexivity helps to center themselves in their research: "How does my identity relate to my work? How do my age, gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, abilities and disabilities, special talent, formative experiences, etc. shape how I understand my participants?" (p. 424). Thus, in my journey towards anti-racism and embodying feminist perspectives in research, this autoethnographic work demands intense self-reflection and action (Singleton, 2022).

As a white-identifying community engaged practitioner scholar, it was important for me to develop critical empathy when working with interracial couples/families to understand family communication about race and gender and how family racial identity was shaped by the communication based on lived experiences (Socha & Diggs, 1999). Critical empathy is the antecedent to intercultural listening and part of employing critical empathy involves the listening practitioner to engage in ongoing critical reflexivity and decentering work (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022). As such, critical empathy supports the listening practitioner in focusing on the cultural differences that exist and not taking the stories of the culturally diverse person as one's own. "Critical empathy is an ongoing journey and process of self and other discovery. Critical reflexivity and decentering self both contribute to an interrelated and iterative process of deepening, expanding, and transforming our understanding of ourselves, of others, and 2022, pp.159). Focusing on these inherent differences can allow for a better understanding of systems of oppression and how to dismantle them (Buzzanell, 2011).

As I engaged with autoethnographic work with interracial couples/families, I realized that I was constantly learning to understand myself and others. As I developed the capacity for critical empathy, I constantly engaged in individual and collective critical reflexivity to widen and transform my understanding of the world. Etherington (2004) described reflexivity as:

> an ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings. To be reflexive we need to be *aware* of our personal responses and to be able to make choices about how to use them. We also need to be aware of the personal, social and cultural

> contexts in which we and others live and work and to understand how this impacts the ways we interpret our world. (p. 19)

Critical reflexivity is a commitment to learn more about my own positionality, my blind spots, and how I contribute consciously and unconsciously to upholding or dismantling oppressive systems that impact my own marginalization and the marginalization of others (Etherington, 2017).

Decentering the self individually and at a systems level is part of the process of responding with critical empathy as a white-identifying listening practitioner and it also involves engaging with critical reflexivity (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022). “Where critical reflexivity involves critically interrogating our social location within oppressive systems of power, decentering the self involves specifically decentering those deeply ingrained and often unacknowledged perspectives of internalized dominance that accompany privileged identities” (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p.160). Critical reflexivity is ongoing and never static and is a daily commitment to deepen my appreciation and understanding of myself when I am confronted with difference and how I contribute consciously and/or unconsciously to dominant harmful narratives about race, gender, and the social systems and structures that uphold these isms (Singleton, 2022). “To engage in critical reflexivity, we must examine the ways that inequitable systems work to include certain community members while excluding others and the role that we play in perpetuating or disrupting these systems” (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022, p.160). In addition to deepening ethical frameworks, developing critical reflexivity and decentering skills furthers critical empathy skills that support the process of intercultural listening for racial healing and reconciliation (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022).

Chapter 4 - Results

4 A: Storytelling as an Act of Peacebuilding and Resilience

Everything is telling me that our communication is terrible, and I would just spiral...But like having these conversations...I'm like, no, we're not. We're just different and that communication style works great for some cultural relationships, for some different cultures. That's not the mix we have here and so that's not the approach we need. And because we don't fit the mold doesn't mean we're necessarily doomed. It just means we need a different mold.

-Heidi

Yeah, I completely understand what you're talking about. Like most of what we're gonna learn is from a Eurocentric perspective which then makes us think that what we're doing or what we have is wrong...and there's nothing wrong.

-Aliah

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to identify how I explore gender and racial communication, daily violence, peacebuilding approaches and cultivate tools for resilience within my gendered experience and interracial family as I interface and personally reflect upon the experiences of other interracial couples and families who have a connection to the field of education. Chapter 4 is explored in two different yet interrelated sections. Chapter 4A privileges the research team and follows a more traditional qualitative approach to coding narrative inquiry dialogically (Saldaña, 2021) whereas Chapter 4B creates an opportunity to lean more into the boundary-pushing dynamics of interracial family communication supporting a platform for our individual and collective voices to be heard utilizing visual and literary art-based approaches as an emancipatory process of peacebuilding.

More specifically, Chapter 4A and 4B will address the results of the following research questions:

1. In what ways do gender and racial communication manifest in my own interracial family experience? In others?
2. How does my intercultural experience with daily violence manifest in my own interracial family? In others?
3. How do I explore and implement peacebuilding and resilience strategies within myself and my interracial family? How do I make meaning of how other interracial couples and families explore and implement peacebuilding and resilience strategies?

In chapter 4A and B, I analyzed the intersecting and collective nature of storytelling through results from semi-structured interviews as well as literary and visual arts-based narratives. I will be sharing the results in a way that builds the narrative framework of this manuscript creating an overarching narrative thread that integrates all the research questions.

The collective story begins with themes from which cross-cultural conflict and disorientation are unearthed: the research team and researcher/participants acknowledged that we cannot escape the white racial frame which responds to RQ1. With this theme comes the acknowledgement of our intersectionality: our oppressor and Oppressed identities and the exploration of how this impacts our partner and family. In other words, exploring communication about race and racism was a gateway for conversations about gender and gender-based violence to emerge. For most researcher/participants, this was the first time that race and gender had been discussed at length in their communication with each other. For others, this interview space was a neutral space for there to be more intentionality about communication

regarding race and gender. Cross-cultural tensions that existed inside us, between us, and through our societal experiences impacting our interracial couple/family unit were explored.

To answer RQ2, the first thing the research team did in the first interview was ask the participants to define violence individually and together so we could gauge how their dialogic framing and intersectional identities as both oppressor and Oppressed interacted with their definition. Through the narrative themes of the researcher/participants' personal experience with violence, we explored the spectrum of violence from daily microaggressions to childhood abuse, rape, and domestic violence concluding that violence is a ubiquitous phenomenon. Since violence is indeed everywhere, in our daily lived experiences and we are both the target and the source of violence, we collectively shared cross-cultural tools that would allow us to create opportunities for intentional peacebuilding and resilience.

The answer to RQ3 serves as a response to how each couple/family and the research team defined violence during our collective storytelling experience. As we told cross-cultural stories to each other, we witnessed the emergence of psychosocial cross-cultural communication tools (i.e., peacebuilding and resilience) such as critical empathy, intercultural listening, intercultural humility and resilience, the couple's debrief, cross-culturally congruent listening, and the cultural hybrid. Sharing cross-cultural experiences and employing these communication tools allowed for our connection with each other to deepen. Trust, connection, and belonging were built so that we could identify stock, concealed, and resistance stories from the narratives we created. Our findings indicated two major thematic trends. First, we collectively spoke of the critical hope we had for our interracial families/couples and specifically our children which resulted in a desire to harness intentionality and commitment regarding parenting biracial children. Second, the very act of storytelling created feelings of connection and belonging and as

a result, engagement with cross-culturally congruent listening. As such, storytelling is defined as an act of peacebuilding that fosters the development of tools for resilience. In the way the stories were told, peacebuilding and resilience were understood as synergistic phenomena that could not be separated from each other. In other words, storytelling is a healing tool fostering resilience that supports the tension, upheaval, and disorientation of cross-cultural communication in interracial families.

This chapter will provide information about the results in the form of affective and in Vivo coding, the embodied research process, and narrative examples of the stories told during the interview process which answer the three research questions. Even though pattern coding was used as an exploratory second cycle coding method and the research team found this helpful in the data analysis, the narrative examples chosen by the research team provided the most salience for them as an interracial family as opposed to trying to always find dialogic similarities and patterns across all interviews for the story excerpts in this chapter.

Additionally, through this storytelling process, many gendered and racialized experiences resonated with me and my own interracial family and will be illustrated throughout Chapter 4B. Chapter 4B will provide the background of each art piece and showcase the art pieces as a part of the storytelling process which also answers all three research questions. Additionally, each art piece has a response from the research team to the interracial couple/family regarding our thoughts and feelings about the art piece, our time with the couple/family and how their stories impacted us as an interracial family. It is a way to acknowledge the time spent and the vulnerability we shared to create transformative change and healing. The foundational aspects of our couple's response also went through a coding and analysis process before we formulated our response. The narratives of the interracial couples/families we worked with provided the research

team with a sounding board and many times a mirrored experience that created feelings of connection and belonging fostering peacebuilding and resilience strategies which we had not been exposed to before. I found my own reactions to racialized and gendered communication changed throughout the research in a positive way in which my interactions with myself and my family improved when I realized we were not alone as other interracial families shared similar questions and struggles as they navigated the world.

Table 3. *(RQ1) Communication about Race and Gender in Interracial Families*

Theme	**Description**	**Codes/Examples/Embodied Process**
Not Escaping the White Racial Frame	All interviews had white women and Men of Color. The white racial frame was deeply felt by the Man of Color on research team. White women took up a lot of the dialogic space during the interviews.	Perpetuating harm Discomfort about interracial conversations Racialized anxiety Intent vs. Impact Intercultural Humility Dialogic Transformation
First Time Talking Intentionally about Race and Gender	For many families/couples, it was the first time they had dedicated time to unpack gender and race in their relationship in an intentional way. Even though it was tough, they	We've never done this before If we hadn't had these interviews, we wouldn't have talked about it Positive experience Therapeutic Transformative

	acknowledged the benefits of critical intercultural communication. This was also the first time the research team had had the chance to ever dive deep into conversations about race and gender with other interracial families/couples.	

RQ 1 will be intentionally presented as two metaphorical bookends, at the beginning and the end, of the same narrative thread within Chapter 4A. The first part of RQ1 addresses the preliminary ways in which the research team grappled with how gender and racial communication manifested in our own family and in other interracial families namely the acknowledgment that (1) we could not escape the white racial frame and (2) the critical importance of many couples/families intentionally talking about race and gender for the first time which ignited the storytelling experience. We will revisit RQ1at the end of section 4A to integrate the diverse ways of being and knowing that emerged from all three research questions as the research team worked with interracial families/couples in communicating intentionally about race and gender despite the inherent tension experienced by these communicative dynamics. Through our intentional communication about race and gender which included addressing daily violence and exploring peacebuilding and tools for resilience, the emergence of stock and concealed stories, co-parenting biracial children, and storytelling as a form of narrative resilience took form. At the

end of this section, RQ1 showcases the narrative thread in a climatical moment that demonstrates the interconnected, interdependent, and entangled nature of all three research questions which were fundamentally based upon intentional and committed communication about race and gender.

The Story Begins: Not Escaping the White Racial Frame

In response to RQ1, my husband Don brought the theme of not escaping the white racial frame to our research team discussion as one of the only points of additional input beyond what I had shared with him regarding the coding analysis of interviews one and two. The white racial frame refers a socialization of whiteness that includes racism, discrimination, stereotyping and an overall implicit worldview that deeply ingrained into American consciousness and institutions (Feagin, 2020). The white racial frame is often oblivious to white people who benefit from systems of oppression and do not have to question them. As such, the white racial frame is intricately a part of American culture and is present in discriminatory perceptions, interpretations, and behaviors towards People of Color. Sounds, accented language, implicit biases, and an inclination to discriminate all make up the white racial frame (Feagin, 2020). As a result, to counteract the inherent harm whiteness creates, it is important for counter storytelling to occur. Don sharing his perceptions of not being able to escape the white racial frame allowed the research team to support counternarratives and engage the other interracial couples/families in not only acknowledging the harm the white racial frame causes but also to supporting concealed, resistance, and freedom stories to be told and retold.

During our research team debriefs, my husband expressed that the white racial frame was deeply felt and asked that this be shared with the other interracial couples/families in the written and video summary before the art pieces were created. He explained that “white women still took

over the conversation" apart from the single parent who was sharing her story of domestic violence. In this case, Don felt that as a man, his role was to listen and be a holding space for communication about gender-based violence to support the healing process. Additionally, Don felt that the Men of Color needed more space to share during the interviews and the white women, "added onto the conversation when the men are talking". In section 4A, the reader will be exposed to instances in the dialogue in which white women dominated the conversation of the interracial family experience.

As I engaged with critical reflexivity, I realized it was difficult for me to listen to and truly hear Don in the moment he brought up the research team not being able to escape the white racial frame. As a result, it took me awhile to accept that I had created research with interracial couples/families in mind and this framing was still perpetuating the harmful experiences associated with whiteness: white women took up a lot of the dialogic space during the interviews; white women felt the need to embellish and be a part of their partner's interpretation of their racialized experiences. I was one of those white women and my emotional proximity to my research partner often created a blind spot that minimized his voice and story as I had been socialized to take up space as a white person (whiteness as expansiveness) and treat People of Color and our collective and shared environment as my property (whiteness as property) (Frankenberg, 1997).

In these moments of emotional dysregulation, I moved back to the intrapsychic place of listening being, grounding myself at the very core of intercultural listening during which I re-centered myself as a critical evocative autoethnographer in understanding critical whiteness and how that impacted my capabilities as a listening practitioner. These moments of internal reflection reminded me of my own limitations as a white person in a study about cross-racial

experiences and the intrinsic, experiential, and valuable skillset my research partner brought to this study. I moved to an emotional space of gratitude and asked my fellow research team member to share more about what this meant to him: How did he experience this frame of white racially dominated communication as a Man of Color and his lifelong relational experiences with white people, including being married to one?

Following my cross-cultural emotional regulation, I revisited the data in support of Don's experience of white women taking up more dialogic space and proceeded to analysis of interview one since it was the rawest and the least influenced data set of how interracial couples/families approached talking about race and gender before communicative transformation occurred. I explored the number of times white women and Men of Color spoke and interjected in our first interracial dialogue together and found that white women spoke about twice as much as Men of Color (see Appendix C). Upon reviewing the results, Don shared the following cultural knowledge, “Even though you were the facilitator and talked more, Men of Color talked slower and were processing differently. The communication styles are different. The silence is ok.”

Don also brought up that based on his lifelong experience of racialization, white people dominating the conversation could come from a feeling of protectiveness from the white woman/partner that was not something that was needed or wanted from the Men of Color, finding a way to deal with the discomfort of having interracial conversations, as well as coping with racialized anxiety and as a result, a way to keep the conversation going. In the following excerpt, Heidi discusses her feelings of discomfort with her family’s reactions to Houston as a Vietnamese American male and her concern about her future children’s biracial identity and how they will be treated. Additionally, Houston’s voices his discomfort with his wife’s protectiveness.

Heidi: I am kind of protective of my relationship when it concerns my family like I've set some boundaries. I've set some boundaries...and the things people can and can't say about Houston and things like that and so what I've found kind of interesting...like I don't know, my parents will make jokes or say things that they think are innocent or whatnot. Like I specifically remember one time, like I arguable do not, I don't know much about the Vietnam War... I don't know there's some movie where it's about the Vietnam War and my dad was like referencing a piece of it like some sort of joke, and like I don't know much about it, so I don't know if it was insensitive or not, but I was like "Hey dad, let's just not talk about it." And like there's immediate pushback. He's like "It's not racist". Because I didn't know much about it, it's like hard for me to refute and I was like "It's just not a comfortable topic: it's like murky waters here. Let's not go there." And so, I'm kind of hoping that, like that protective side of me will come out hopefully more with my children as I have them because I'm just like already with Houston...I have boundaries. There, that is what it is and if you don't like them that's on you. It's not on me to make you comfortable with my boundaries. They are my boundaries. Like when my dad made comments like that, I was like I don't care what you think. It's not something we are going to talk about. Previous to Houston, I would have never said anything like that to my dad. I would have just like let him keep on saying whatever he wanted to say. I would have been terrified and so I'm hoping that as I have kids, I'll be able to set even more boundaries and be like yeah no you can't say things like that. And if you do, you get to spend less time with my child...

Don: So, Houston has it been hard like when you're around her family, or is it more like...

Houston: Sometimes I feel like I am like the land mine almost where it's like "Oh well, now people can't say certain things, or like bring up, you know, they have to be different around me."

Don was familiar with all these internalized strategies white people utilize whether conscious or unconscious to navigate their discomfort with race. Additionally, in most of the dialogic interactions, the Males of Color had longer pauses in their speech and spoke more slowly than the white women. From time-to-time, the white women, including myself, would ask their

partner if they had anything they wanted to add or say but since the space was communicatively, white dominated, the Males of Color entered the white-dominated space when they spoke as it wasn't really a dialogic space created for them so oftentimes, they said "no" and the white women resumed talking.

One way Don and I began to work through this cross-communication struggle to afford Men of Color more dialogic space was by Don intentionally and actively engaging the Men of Color in the dialogue and storytelling process. Don engaged with the Men of Color by using silence as an intercultural listening technique and engaging in storytelling with the Men of Color to show his own emotional vulnerability and healing process. In the follow excerpt, after a period in which both white women had spoken about their individual definitions of violence, Don welcomed Jeff into the conversation to share his definition and lived experiences.

Don: So, what are your thoughts, Jeff?

Jeff: On violence what it means to me.

Don: Uh-huh.

Jeff: Violence to me is…I don't know…harming another person physically and emotionally. I grew up around a lot of violence in my household and… (long pause)...so I don't know if it's just to me...it was always portrayed as it's going to get better. The violence or whatever, but it never did, and you get older and realize that things that you, you saw and experienced growing up – they make you better. And I don't know it just, it's tough. I still like see a therapist today about my childhood. Stuff that goes on that happened anyways and to me, violence was just emotionally and physically hurting of another person.

Don: Yeah, definitely. So, my definition of violence is intentionally or unintentionally causing harm to someone so it's kind of, you know, initially it was just physical. The word violence to me, was just physical but now as I'm getting older and more being educated about it, it's actually,

you know, can be emotional, as well as physical and sometimes it's unintentional or intentional, I mean like I think Brianna brought up a good example of her grandma where she unintentionally, you know...just being around situations like that brought...like concern or fear, or even your brother (motions to Brianna), at one point, so that could have been unintentional...but that's what was taught...And to echo what you said just now...when I grew up, I went through some form of physical abuse, and you know...verbal abuse so I'm seeing a therapist dealing with all my childhood stuff right now too. So kudos to you for taking that step and doing the work. You know it's not, it's not easy.

Jeff: No, it's not.

Representation matters. This is a powerful example of how one Man of Color engaged another Man of Color during an interracial conversation and how they were able to share their collective stories together. Jeff was more willing to engage in a conversation about violence and his lived experiences when he was invited into the dialogue by Don. They ended up not only sharing stories but engaging in supportive conversation and narrative resilience. These conversations explored their desire to break transgenerational patterns, heal, and as a result, provide their biracial children with new and more peaceful experiences.

It was evident that without Don as a research partner, this research with interracial families would not have the complexity and insight needed to analyze a cross-racial experience because the minority voice from a racial perspective would be completely overshadowed by two white voices. Don brought another perspective, voice, and presence in the interviews that kept the dialogic space less skewed by the white racial frame even though we acknowledged that we could not escape it. When white people do not understand the space they take up, even if it is a close emotional relationship like a marriage or long-term relationship, this can be harmful when discussing racial dynamics. Even though the intent is good, the impact can create more

roadblocks ironically to unpacking what we all got together to intentionally unpack: race and gender. Once he felt acknowledged and heard, Don went further into his analysis of not escaping the white racial frame by explaining how he strategically navigates whiteness represented in the literary arts-based narrative below.

That's How I Will Teach Them to Survive

I don't see whiteness the same way you do
To me it's not violence
As long as I engage with the white racial frame
It becomes my advantage
When the white kids on the playground call them Jackie Chan
And our sons are reduced to a stereotype
I'll tell them to embrace it
I married you-
That's another strategy to survive the dominant culture
Because I'm hoping our biracial sons have an easier life than I did
That's when whiteness becomes my advantage
That's how I survive
That's how I will teach them to survive

Don's narrative shows his strategic navigation of living a life as a Man of Color in the United States in which he cannot escape the white racial frame. As I hear his story, I practice intercultural listening as an operationalized peacebuilding approach, working through the resistance and disorientation of hearing how hard his life has been, and what he has had to do to survive by making whiteness an advantage. As I listen and create my own peace within myself (i.e. inner peace), I remind myself of the future we are creating together and for our interracial family. I monitor my own mindfulness. When I open my heart and mind to accept his story as his

truth even though it is very different than how I have experienced the world as a white person, transformation can take place. That is why critical hope is such an important part of committed interracial relationships and cross-cultural communication.

Through this process of acknowledgment of not escaping the white racial frame, we partook in narrative restructuring (i.e., narrative therapy as an interracial family communication technique) through the lens of critical hope. It is important to begin to reimagine what a new and transformative form of communication would look like if we become more in tune with our oppressor and Oppressed identities. When we roll with resistance (i.e., motivational interviewing technique) and have courageous conversations about race, we begin to acknowledge and discuss intersectionality, more specifically race and gender. As a result, we can find new ways to adapt to one another, our children, our community, and our world. In this case, critical hope does not dismiss the white racial frame: it incorporates it into a new adaptive cross-cultural process. An example of this is as follows:

Once this white-dominated communication dynamic had been explicitly shared with the couples/families, Don expressed that the intercultural humility and resilience experienced from the white researcher/participants through the art pieces as well as the dialogic flow of the final interview were significantly different. White women seemed more aware of the space they were taking up and Men of Color seemed to take up more dialogic space and contributed to the conversation more easily. As a result, there was more engagement overall in the storytelling process. Stock, concealed, resistance, and emerging freedom stories emerged so that new cross-cultural narratives could be shared. Additionally, we all had the time to better get to know one another and understand that this was a safe space to have courageous conversations.

First Time Talking Intentionally about Race and Gender

In response to RQ1, for many interracial families/couples, it was the first time they had dedicated time to unpack gender and race in their relationship in an intentional way and it was the first time for the research team to sit down and talk intentionally with other interracial couples/families. For others, they hadn't talked about it intentionally until more recently in their relationship due to having a child or the rise of publicized Asian hate and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement during the COVID-19 pandemic following the death of George Floyd and many other victims. Even though it was challenging, they acknowledged the benefits of critical intercultural communication and articulated that if we hadn't had these interviews, we may not have talked about it in such an intentional and committed way. It had often been difficult for me and Don to discuss race and gender in the same conversation because one seemed to dialogically negate the other just by bringing it up in the same communication. Therefore, part of our process was to learn how to have intersectional conversations about race and gender in the same conversation while affirming the lived experiences of racialized and gendered violence without minimizing or dismissing the stories that one of us were sharing.

Below is an example of the interconnectedness that was felt because of sharing collective stories about race and gender with other interracial families/couples:

Aliah: These stories that have been told, like I feel more resilient within my interracial family. So that sense of belonging, I feel like is another tool for resilience that has come out of this, like we intentionally made time to meet, and we have become more resilient because of it. What are you thinking, Heidi?

Heidi: Um. Yeah. I think I would agree with that. It was like the storytelling provided a framework for discussions that we wouldn't normally have had on our own and so in that way, it allowed us to explore some of the interactions we've had with the world or between each other or within our close circles that normally, maybe, we would have mentioned something about

something that happened, but we wouldn't have sat down and like talked through that interaction. So, it allowed us to talk about really hard things but in a very neutral space. In a space where we didn't, we weren't at each other or super upset. Yeah, it provided the framework for the conversation that we wouldn't have normally had. That allowed us to explore things in a non-heightened state and I think that really allowed us to come to some of these like different realizations and things.

Aliah Mestrovich Seay: Yeah, that kind of neutral space...That's another like it's a healing space. Um, I remember in couples therapy one time we had a wonderful couple therapist, and she said, "You know the best time to resolve an argument is when you're not having one," and so she's like, "Be preventative. Sit down at the kitchen table once a week for like thirty minutes and talk about your week. Talk about things that went well, things that you'd like to improve upon, and then plan for the next week". She's like "You're a team. Sit down in a neutral space and have these conversations." And I mean that's like a physical space, right? But um, but I think these types of conversations allow for that, too. It's just like mindfulness. It gives us space from ourselves, and that can be really healthy for me. I'm with myself all the time. I need a break. You know. It's just like - it's good stuff.

In response to RQ1, critical intercultural communication about race and gender requires intentionality and commitment of both parties in a cross-cultural exchange for peacebuilding and resilience to unfold. It is crucial to cultivate intercultural resilience when discussing historically polarizing social phenomena like race and gender. Additionally, intercultural humility and resilience requires motivational interviewing techniques such as working with resistance, narrative therapy tools, and being openly committed to having courageous conversations about race and gender. In the interviews, couples committed to talking about their own intersectionality and communitive tools to create opportunities for peacebuilding and resilience to occur. This was transformative and created opportunities to change toxic family cycles that were racist and sexist.

Using narrative therapy techniques involved reframing the current toxic cycle and providing opportunities for restructuring and positive change to occur. Interracial couples/families found peacebuilding and resilience tools to utilize as they were exploring race and gender. For instance, couples and families discussed the importance of choosing a neutral space to have conversations about race and gender when an argument hadn't already erupted. Some neutral spaces were physical spaces like the kitchen table or the interview space where they could gain self, other, and couple/family awareness, and counseling spaces with a third part intermediary. There were moments of discomfort and resistance to change which is part of the peacebuilding and resilience process. White women often shared that men were more perceived as more valuable than women in society and Men of Color consistently talked about the privileges that their white partners had that they often had been blind to. All couples/families shared that this research had been a positive almost "therapeutic" experience and the more they talked about race and gender, the easier it got to talk about it. Some interracial couples earlier on in their relationship shared that they felt they had made a lot of progress understanding one another that they may not have made without the collective research we partook in together.

Table 4. *(RQ2) Experiences with Daily Violence*

Theme	**Description**	**Code/Examples/Embodied Process**
Personal experiences with violence on a spectrum	Researcher/participants brainstormed and shared their intersecting definitions of violence as a form of collective meaning making and peacebuilding. Violence exists on a spectrum.	Physical aggression Physical and Emotional Abuse Designed to Create Fear Intent vs. Impact

		Daily Microaggressions
The Interconnectedness of Childhood Abuse and Rape and Domestic Violence in adulthood	Researcher/participant explored childhood abuse, rape, and the connections to her experience with domestic violence as an adult and how that impacted her understanding of herself and her healing process. Researcher/participant and research team held similar experiences.	Feelings of worthlessness Shadow self Transgenerational violence Feelings of worthlessness Cellular Memory
Violence is Ubiquitous	Researcher/participants discussed the nature of violence from the micro, meso, and macro levels.	Inner violence Blind spots related to race and gender Couple tension Culture clashing Pressure from Extended Family Educational System Police brutality Systemic racism

Personal Experiences with Violence

In response to RQ2, researcher/participants were intentional about how they defined and described their individual and familial exposure to daily violence from a racialized and gendered perspective as their definitions originated from their lived experiences. Even though each of their definitions were different, they had highly intersecting qualities among all the interviews that resonated with our interracial research team. One researcher participant talked about all the different faces that violence holds defining violence as it exists on a spectrum.

Mariya: Violence is any behavior that's intended to hurt someone, but I think it can also be unintentional. So, any behavior that hurts someone whether it's intentional or unintentional. Because I think that a lot of times, people do hurtful things without meaning to or like without intending to and it's just like something that's kind of innate to them, and I think that also comes in, with a lot of underlying racism or like anything having to do with gender violence and stuff like that, or like weird little comments that they don't see as hurtful but they actually are, and I think that can be violent.

Additionally, researcher/participants brainstormed and shared their intersecting definitions of violence through the lens of both their oppressor and Oppressed identities that are summarized showcased by the italicized and regular font in the collective narrative below.

A Collaborative Expression of Violence Defined

Violence creates fear in the other.
It can be by physical, mental, social, emotional, or economic means.
Holding them down.
An act of aggression or control – systemic acts.
It can be unintentional like implicit bias.
Sometimes when we are from the dominant culture, and we self-protect – that is violence.
Violence is minimizing the life experience of the Other.

It can start in childhood where we are exposed to it at home –
Domestic violence, child abuse, and subtle microaggressions.
Violence is intentional physical or mental abuse.
It's any behavior designed to create fear.
Any behavior that is intended or unintended to hurt someone.
Intent versus impact: if I hurt you, I want to know.
Remember that there is violence in all of us.
Let's get in touch with the violence we hold.
In us, between us, and among us.

As researcher/participants talked through their definitions of violence, some started with just naming the physical aspect but then these definitions quickly transformed to collective meaning making that included violence on a spectrum including behaviors that cause harm whether it is intentional or unintentional. When couples created a definition of violence together, they began to naturally explore their own racial and gender-based experiences and as a result, began to have courageous conversations about race and gender. In multiple interviews, researcher/participants discussed how their definition of violence was rooted in the impact their communication had on their partner and that good intent did not negate the negative impact they had made. My own definition came from deep reflection on all the times I had felt afraid of males from my first childhood experiences of corporal punishment to the last time I was physically or emotionally hurt by a man in my adult life. Through my own trauma story, I was socialized to fear men and as a result, I cultivated my own definition of violence based on my lived experience.

I also thought about the socialization I had had with race over the course of my lifetime and how often I had hurt my partner unintentionally because of my whiteness. It is evident from this collective narrative that our definitions of violence related to racism and sexism came from

our life experiences and from our own socialization as well as the violent acts that had been done to us. In this way, violence was a living breathing being and an integral aspect of our socialization. Researcher/participants harnessed self-awareness and intercultural humility and resilience to articulate that they were capable of violence based on their socialization and oppressor identities.

The Interconnectedness of Childhood Abuse and Rape and Domestic Violence in Adulthood

Another major theme that emerged in response to RQ2 was about the perpetual cycles of trauma originating from child abuse and how this impacts how we navigate violence in the present. This story stood out against the rest as a significant example of transgenerational violence and as a result, an opportunity for transgenerational healing. The research team worked with a researcher/participant, Tess, who had been subjected to childhood sexual abuse, rape in college, and finally, she and her children had been impacted by domestic violence. She also talked about gender-motivated violence in the workplace: losing her job as a single mother because she had to choose between her child who was in the hospital or her work and finally, racially-motivated societal violence in her community and her children's school. This story was unique from the other interracial families and couples and resonated deeply with the research team.

Tess brought up the process of acknowledging and understanding the interrelated spectrum of violence that had occurred in her life from childhood on and the importance of addressing one's shadow self as we navigate violence that has been directed at us. Don and Tess immediately connected on the phenomenon of the shadow self as they had each participated in

community-based healing and group work around childhood abuse and how this impacts how we navigate our relationship with ourselves and others in the present.

Tess: From the standpoint of domestic violence and stuff. It's just imperative that you do your shadow work so that it does not trickle down to be another trauma or generational curse that you pass down to your children like it has to stop with you so your kids have a better chance of moving forward in their freedom and in their peace.

Aliah: What does shadow work mean?

Tess: Shadow work means as much as we'd like to say we're perfect – you have to dig into those negative traits that you hold of yourself. Addressing the things that you don't want to address and feel the things that you don't want to address, or maybe you forgot what happened in your life. And killing everything at the root, so you can move forward with more positive, more light, more peace.

Aliah: So the shadow is like…

Tess: …the ying and yang of your spirit.

Don defined shadow work as, "The negative outlook you have of yourself or what people have placed on you." Family systems tend to revert to a state of homeostasis even if that state is toxic and dysfunctional. Doing shadow work and being able to deconstruct the shadow self is a direct line to healing oneself and peacebuilding and resilience within the nuclear family. Shadow work is part of intercultural resilience framework as it is a place to work through resistance and utilize reframing that comes with narrative therapy techniques. Exploring daily violence with my research team and the researcher/participant was a transformative and deeply healing process. The alignment of Tess's stories with mine and her ability to embody intercultural humility and resilience allowed me to meet my shadow self and feel the impact of daily violence within me:

my cellular memory tells me to watch out, to be afraid of men; they tell me I am worthless. That is my shadow message. As I shared my stories with Tess and Don, I felt a sense of connection and belonging; I witnessed an opportunity for peacebuilding and resilience to occur.

Violence is Ubiquitous

Finally, to summarize RQ2, researcher/participants discussed the nature of violence as being inside, between, and among us from the micro-, meso-, and macro- levels. They discussed their contribution towards violence in their relationship as well as the struggles and pressures from their family of origin, extended family, educational systems, and society at large.

The majority of researcher/participants acknowledged their own relationship with violence such as inner violence, coming from their place in the societal hierarchy and how this impacted their interracial family communication. Heidi reflected on how she was aware that she had hurt her partner many times and sometimes she had been completely unaware she had been doing it.

Heidi: So, I guess when in my brain sometimes, I come at it from, like the other side because I am white and like often take on the oppressor role and so like when I do something or say something regardless of like what I mean by it, if I cause harm to like Houston then like I have perpetuated an act of violence against him even if I didn't mean it. The harm was caused and so I need to take action to fix it. So that's kind of how I see it, especially regardless of intent like I don't mean to hurt him that doesn't mean he wasn't hurt.

Aliah: Yeah and like you can't escape who you are. So why not face it, you know, but you gotta face yourself like the violence you hold.

Cultural self-awareness is a part of the process to be able to create opportunities for cultural other awareness and as a result, behavior change in cross-cultural communicative exchanges (Bennett, 2004). Heidi demonstrates in this passage that she is sometimes completely

unaware of how her whiteness impacts Houston. In fact, both Heidi and Houston talked frequently about the violence they had internalized that was part of who they were and how that acknowledgment of this daily violence brought new awareness to them. With this awareness brought more stories at the meso-level about blind spots related to race and gender and the tension in the couple that arose from different communication and conflict styles, each person holding a different oppressor identity whether it be race or gender, and the pressure they often felt to conform to a certain pre-established way of being in society coming from their family of origin or system of education. Interracial families also expressed how difficult it was to successfully navigate interracial family dynamics and coined the term *culture clashing* when differing values and beliefs made it hard for cross-cultural communication to occur without feelings of violence to erupt. In these moments of tension, cross-cultural disorientation and conflict, this interracial couple naturally made use of intercultural listening, critical empathy, and intercultural humility techniques to deepen their understanding of how to better communicate with their partner thus creating opportunities for peacebuilding and resilience.

Finally, major themes emerged surrounding Asian hate, systemic racism, and police brutality which were all topics that were covered at a macro societal level creating feelings of daily distress and fear based on the socio-cultural ethnic and racial make-up of the interracial family. The following excerpts illuminate different types of societal violence at the macro level that emerged as concealed stories related to Asian hate, systems of education and systemic racism, African American hate, and the phenomenon of police brutality in the United States.

Asian Hate

Houston: When I see no MSG labeling I view that as like a form of like microaggressions and, like the violence to me because it's a subtle form of racism that is almost accepted and you know I view it as offensive because it's already been proven that you know it doesn't cause the effects

people claim it does, but people still have this view of it like, “No MSG!”, which is a very anti-Asian sentiment. Some people might just see, “No MSG!” as nothing but to me it means a lot more.

Don: I don’t really see that in the same way. It doesn’t impact me. They made it out to be such a bad thing. It’s very much directed toward like Chinese restaurants and stuff like that. The whole Kung flu thing that is extremely offensive to me and because you know or blaming the whole COVID thing just on you know like to Americans to white people to other races: black Hispanic - we’re just Chinese it doesn’t matter if we’re Thai you know or Filipino or you know – they just lump us all in. It’s offensive and it’s really like passive you know I mean like you’re disrespecting regarding who I am. Then the layer on top of that it’s like all the violence being targeted towards Asian people you know, like that to me has been like the past two years. You know, I’m afraid to leave my home. Or when we go to rural areas – I can’t hide who I am and that’s hard.

This dialogue between two Men of Color who identify as Asian carry significance in that they are both Southeast Asian and have different experiences with violence at the macro level in their daily lives. Houston is talking about daily microinsults whereas Don is discussing daily microassaults. Both types of violence hold significance for these men even though they do not agree on the type of microaggression that impact them as Asian men. In this way, Don and Houston have committed to a courageous conversation about race.

Systems of Education and Systemic Racism

Tess: My child went to school there - a public elementary school. I had noticed they would have you know, like Columbus Day information and all these other holidays and it came to Black history month and Native American history month and they weren't sending anything home. So, I asked to meet with the principal. And I had my meeting, and I was asking, “Is there a reason that there's no information coming home about Black history month or Native American month, because I think it's important to me and my family that we’re well rounded and learn about different things.” And I was told, “Ms. Smith, our community is not ready for that. You may want to look to enroll your son in a different community,” and of course I lost it and it; you know, kind of went off on the principal. But anyways it was just - there was just a lot of things in

that community that I realized as much as the world is progressing there's still so many areas that are not.

We attempted to go out to restaurants in the community and different things, and we always got the look and the things, but then it got to the point where people with their flags and their different resources. I'll say that ummm would start coming if they would see us drive around and surround us with their trucks or their flags. Even make it a conscious effort to tell us that we don't belong in this Community. So, it was progressing to a standpoint of violence. And…then a week before, we decided we were going back to (city name) that it's actually a biracial child at a school that was 20 minutes from my mom. He thought he had made some friends and went on a car ride with him, and he ended up getting his throat slit and murdered and dumped on the side of the road. And it was a little boy who was, I think he was 15 or 16, who did it. It was him and his little brother and he said that he just wanted to show his little brother how N's bleed and die, and so that was our first sign that maybe to move and so that next week, we packed up and that's what made us move back to (city name).

Tess explains in her story that no place is safe for her biracial children. She is a single mother on high alert in public places like restaurants and ready to go to bat for her children in a school system that does not treat them like first class citizens because of the color of their skin. It is important to note that many of the peacebuilding techniques presented in this manuscript cannot work if the system creates emotionally or physically unsafe conditions to try out these methods. This story is an important example to indicate that. Therefore, this research was done with interracial families committed to talking about race and gender and specifically violence and peacebuilding wanting to find transformative ways to reframe and heal from violence. In a system of education or community that is unsafe and uncommitted, different measures must be taken for self-preservation. Sometimes, peacebuilding and resilience are not the goal, staying alive is.

The Phenomenon of Police Brutality

Brittany: So the officer pulls us over and it's one of those deals where you're going: both sheriff's departments, one, he flashes his lights and we weren't really speeding or anything. First question was, "Where are you going?" and you know it's one of those things where, at this point we're relying on the nonverbal and Jeff like he shuts down. And I give Jeff a minute to see if

he’s going to respond and Jeff just couldn’t get anything out at that point. I’m like okay he’s literally like shitting himself. He does not know how this interaction is going to go and so at that point, you know, the officer’s kind of staying there and all I could think of is I think I’m gonna to have to use my white privilege in this situation. So, I said we’re headed to (city name) to trade in this vehicle...then he asked for the registration and everything so it’s one of those deals where you know I’m in the passenger seat so know trying to be very careful and everything and yeah handed it over...we basically got pulled over for no reason just wondering why, in my opinion, is there a Black driver in town. After we leave (biracial child), you know was just like “Why did mom start talking for dad?”

Aliah: Oh.

Brittany: You know, and she would have been seven at the time, and so it's like well dad was super super nervous wasn't sure how this was going to go down, but at some point the officer was expecting a response and I was kind of hoping being the white girl in the vehicle, I could kind of talk our way out of this essentially and like I think they were a little suspicious about what we're doing in this part of the state, because really you know it's desolate.

Don: Yeah.

Brittany: Out there, but most everyone out there, my understanding is there either white or they’re of Hispanic heritage, so, you know, Jeff didn't fit it. So it's one of those deals where it's like okay, the whiteness kind of helped in that situation, but it was really infuriating that based on and again this was kind of the height of all the protests and everything.

Aliah: Oh wow.

Brianna: It would have been December 2020 when the…

Aliah: Woah.

Brittany: (inaudible) was going on, you know so it's just like (biracial child’s name), you know, at some point, there are concerns about when there's a law enforcement officer...How's this going to go, you know, and so I could tell your dad just couldn't muster out the words we needed to

give him an explanation and I’m also going I'm white I might be able to help the situation which is sad.

Don: yeah.

Brittany: yeah.

Aliah Mestrovich Seay: Yeah, it's taken me a long time to figure out how to act in situations where Don is discriminated against, here or it's just not safe.

This dialogue demonstrates the collective storytelling process that comes with cross-culturally congruent listening as a response to societal violence and in this case, police brutality. In this dialogue about violence, the interracial couples held space for each other and utilized critical empathy and intercultural listening as they navigated societal oppression and violence. The white women navigated their own power and privilege wondering how they could leverage their privilege when in an unsafe discriminatory situation with their spouse of color. The families also began to explore how they would unpack this violence with their biracial children when they were witness to this type of violence. Self-awareness of power and privilege paired with commitment to cross-cultural communication and understanding made way for adaptation and behavior change. The white women acknowledged their own limitations and the challenges (intercultural humility) in understanding these racialized dynamics they had never had to navigate before and additionally, responding in the moment to respond to racism and racialized violence. These interracial couples shared feelings of connection and belonging because even though the stories were different, they didn’t have to explain the reality of the violence that had occurred to each other.

It is sobering that violence is all around us, inside us, within the very nature of the relationships that we hold closest to our hearts like that of our beloved, as well as within the

places we send our children, and as we navigate from point A to point B in a vehicle. However, in allowing these concealed stories to be told and retold, we develop collective peacebuilding and resilience strategies as a response to this violence that penetrates our daily lives. I have often wondered how to respond to being an oppressor or to feeling Oppressed. How do I respond to daily microaggressions? How do I respond with humility when I realize that I am perpetuating harmful racist thoughts or behaviors? What does my emancipatory process look like as a woman and how can I actively work towards anti-racism? First things first: exploring how violence is experienced in our daily lives individually and collectively is a good start. Then, we can start exploring peacebuilding and resilience strategies generated from the stories of violence that are told and retold; new stories of emancipation and resistance, of peacebuilding and justice emerge. We must acknowledge the violence, however painful it is - our part to play in it, and where we find ourselves within our inner self, our family, system of education, and society at large before we can create a plan for peace.

Table 5. *RQ3: Experience with Peacebuilding and Resilience*

Theme	**Description**	**Code/Examples/Embodied Process**
Intercultural Listening	Intercultural listening describes the embodied experience of intentionally utilizing listening being, active listening, constructive listening and narrative listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective as I navigated the interview process, supported the creation of art, and my autoethnographic responses.	Listening Being Intrapsychic experience Critical Whiteness Feminism Active Listening

		Narrative Listening Constructivist Listening Culturally-congruent listening Facilitating Arts-based Storytelling
Intercultural humility	Researcher/participants had a certain level of openness to not always being right, learning about the lived experience of their partner and/or family members/biracial children that allowed for intercultural humility and growth to occur.	Transgenerational healing Two feet in/All In Healing happens when you're ready Critical hope for biracial children
Critical empathy	Researcher/participants expressed compassion about the gendered and racialized experiences of their family members and wanted to support the healing process to occur while reflecting on their part to play in racialized and gender-based violence.	Doing Shadow Work Acknowledgement of Oppressor Identities Empathy-based action Communicative Shift Transformation

Couple's debrief	Researcher/participants noted the importance of having intentional time to connect about cross-cultural stressors, communication, and conflict.	Neutral Space Intentionality Terrified Frustrated Confused/Disoriented Cross-cultural tension Emotional catharsis
Cross-Culturally Congruent Listening	Researcher/participants experienced a phenomenon during their collective storytelling experience that made them feel that they did not have to explain or minimize their interracial family dynamics as it was already understood by the other parties.	Connection and Belonging Curiosity Comforting That happens to you too??!! Experience is not minimized Cross-cultural education is not necessary
Hybrid Culture	Couples/families voiced the importance of finding ways to incorporate their collective values and beliefs into their	Transformation Hybrid Culture

daily lives to create a hybrid culture that they had not experienced in their family of origin.	Evolution Equity Freedom Cultural Adaptation Integrating Cross-Cultural Values and Beliefs

Many peacebuilding and resilience phenomena emerged from the collective stories of interracial families that were shared, including my interracial family/research team, some of which are discussed below:

Intercultural Listening

In response to RQ3, intercultural listening describes the embodied experience of intentionally utilizing listening being, active listening, constructive listening and narrative listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective as I navigated the interview process, supported the creation of art, and my autoethnographic responses. As a result, I was able to experience cross-culturally-congruent listening and facilitate arts-based storytelling supporting interracial family communication centered in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and resilience. Finding different ways to share and listen to cross-cultural stories is important when interracial couples/families make up different and sometimes conflictual or opposing cultural dynamics. Just as intercultural listening provides a space beyond discourse and dialogue, creating art provided researcher/participants with other mediums to communicate and connect with each other beyond the spoken word.

The following is an analytic memo of the embodied process of developing intercultural listening.

The Embodied Process of Developing Intercultural Listening

Imagine what would happen in our world in times of crisis if we began all interactions with people who are different from us with the solemn intention of deeply listening to them. As a white person, what if I openly committed to listening to the concealed stories of People of Color? How might my understanding of myself and the world shift and change if I committed myself to listening so deeply that I had the ability to just be with the other as my only agenda (Lipari, 2010)?

As I quiet my mind, I become more and more aware of my own thoughts, assumptions, biases and my own inner voice. Sometimes the silence is deafening because I am so unaccustomed to it in the Western world. In trying to fill the silence, maybe I am missing the point. With the deepening of my breath, I deepen my commitment to listen, and I become more aware of the world around me. As I deeply listen, I transcend my initial understandings of myself and others: who they are and my pre-conceived notions about them. And with this commitment comes a certain humility that I can never really understand what it's like to be this other person, but I can still try to understand their story.

So, I wait and as I wait, I open my heart and mind to be a holding space. I do not need to interpret or evaluate their stories to support their narrative process (Hyater-Adams, 2010). As I dive deep into myself, a journey inside of me, I question my every thought and feeling in the direction of learning an unconditional yet ethical way to listen inwardly to People of Color and to my inner voice.

At the heart of constructivist listening is practicing unconditional positive regard in the name of social justice (Hyater-Adams, 2010). This practice is more than just an opening of the heart and mind: it requires being broken open by the sensations of listening. Intercultural humility isn't a matter of being broken open once or twice but rather thousands of times as I work through the emotional experience of listening and connecting to their stories. Being broken open can be painful at times as I navigate my own white fragility and inability to fully understand their lived experiences. Yet, sitting with that experience and breathing it in, makes me begin to listen in such a way that I can feel their voices, differently than before: it is a felt listening that transforms itself into a felt knowing of the collective experience of supporting social justice in higher education.

Listening being, critical whiteness, and feminism were at the core of my embodied experience as a listening practitioner. Other forms of listening such as active, narrative, and constructivist listening supported the overall storytelling process as I took in the stories of the

interracial couples and supported their voices to be heard. Through this embodied intercultural listening experience, a feeling of connection and belonging took root that naturally allowed for cross-culturally congruent listening and arts-based storytelling to unfold. Developing intercultural listening and intercultural humility in myself first, allowed me to better facilitate cross-culturally congruent listening and arts-based storytelling with interracial couples. I was also able to model critical empathy and intercultural listening and witness couples beginning to utilize the core techniques during the interviewing and art-making process.

Intercultural Humility

As mentioned in Chapter 2, intercultural humility goes beyond the intercultural competence paradigm and addresses a dynamic of cross-cultural communication that lends itself to peacebuilding and resilience. When a listening practitioner learns to employ critical empathy and intercultural listening in cross-cultural dialogue, intercultural humility is operationalized. Interracial couples/families demonstrated high levels of intercultural humility throughout the interviews together during which they were committed to talking about challenging subjects related to race and gender. They were open to not understanding cross-cultural dynamics but being committed to unpacking these with their partner and with the research team. After collecting data, it was evident that intercultural humility was an action, not a noun, and it was a way of demonstrating peace building at a very deep level through cross-cultural resistance and tension to the emergence of transformed cross-cultural communication in which couples stated they felt further along in their relationship and healing process.

All interracial couples and families, including my own, demonstrated significant levels of intercultural humility throughout the research process. The greater the levels of intercultural humility, the greater the level of intercultural resilience. Interracial couples were able to actively

practice intercultural humility and resilience with each other understanding that cross-cultural misinterpretations and conflict can be expected daily: cultural disorientation because of cross-cultural communication is to be expected.

A good example of this is when Tess tells the story of her healing process from domestic violence and the process of intercultural humility that she has taken with herself, her family, and has extended this peacebuilding and resilience process with those ready to take that step in her community. The research team got to experience her intercultural humility in action and personally, how she demonstrated this in her daily life has helped me to better understand my shadow work and the resources I need to explore to continue to heal as a survivor of childhood sexual assault, rape, and domestic violence – the two go together. Through her intercultural humility in action and modeling this to me, she helped me find my voice and move from victim to survivor. Additionally, Tess's intercultural humility work illustrates how healing starts from within ourselves at a very profound level – a space where we finally hear our own inner voice louder than the voice of the abuser – the ultimate oppressor. It's a space of healing where we decide that we will be abused no more, no matter what and that our children will not carry this transgenerational curse. It's a moment where we find our own intrinsic worth as human beings and we never go back. When we do this, we impact not just ourselves but our children and our community. This healing work goes from our inner life into our community life.

Tess: I would say, a year ago I wouldn't have talked about anything. There was absolutely no way I was going to let anybody in – you weren't going to know my emotions - just nothing like I just disassociated everything, and it was just like just keep moving and put it in the back of my head. And then when I started going through the studies with (community and faith-based healing group), you have to actually do the work before you can help lead and it made me find my voice and it made me face things that I wasn't maybe ready to face or I didn't know how to face or how to talk about. But one thing that I've learned is, if you don't find your voice and you

don’t talk about those things, you can’t heal first and you can’t help somebody else maybe find their voice and their feelings so it’s just really been probably about a year in my journey of healing and speaking and making sure that I can speak for others that maybe aren’t able or aren’t ready yet.

Aliah: Um oh wow. That’s not very long but it just seems like so much has happened in your healing process.

Tess: Yeah, I mean, I think the healing: you have to fully submit everything. You can’t just have one foot in one foot out because if you try to hold onto any of that emotion within you that’s where your mind, can play those games, or you can revert back to the same shame, the same anger, the same guilt, the same whatever emotion, it is so you have to just jump full in and say look I’m ready, I’m tired, and you have to just take on that journey as hard as it is, and sometimes, it’s harder than the actual event.

Aliah: I feel like I've been kind of a late bloomer in terms of just more awareness about myself and why I’ve um just um I don't either not address my trauma or stay in situations where I continue to feel worthless, and I really had to acknowledge that, like deep down, because of the way I was treated as a kid. Um, I just like at a cellular level, just felt really worthless, but I would never admit that to myself. But the ways I have allowed myself to be treated, or just shows how worthless I think I am, and so like it, hasn't been until very recently, where I just really admitted to myself that that is part of my formative years that I learned that I was just a worthless human being. That's what I thought of myself, and so to then try to climb out of that mid-life and be like well, this is actually how you feel about yourself, even though everything else like in terms of what you do with your job, and your good grades, and all this like it looks like you feel great about yourself, but you really don't um because of what men have done to you when you were little. Now I had to admit that to myself to then do my shadow work, because otherwise I was just kind of lying to myself. I had to admit that to myself to then do my shadow work, because otherwise I was just kind of lying to myself and I think that's just part of my own defensive mechanism, like when things would happen when I was being abused, I would just imagine that I was somewhere else, or I would imagine that it wasn't happening. And so I just kind of carried

that defensive mechanism with me throughout my life that no, that's not happening, or that can't be happening. I'm not in this situation, and that's just happened for a very long time. So yeah, I. It's. I just like it's later in life to acknowledge that and do shadow work but I guess you have to do it sometimes if you want to heal, you know.

Tess: Just for you to know there is no timeline on healing. Yeah, don't put that shame or that guilt on yourself, because when it's time for you to heal is the right time. You know it comes to you when you're ready and um I think the biggest part and the hardest part like you said, is accountability like what happened to us by no means was our fault. We didn't deserve it. We didn't bring it on. But the shame or the anger, or the emotions that we carry in ourselves. That is our responsibility, and the first way to heal it is our accountability of hell no – no longer. I accept that. I'm ready to let this go, and I'm ready to be free of this, you know. So, you're doing great.

Aliah: Well, and I feel like there is a parallel like when you are talking about you have to put - you can't have one foot in and one foot out. Really, it's, you know: It's like this whole total shift in like even the energy you have as energetically like as a victim or a survivor, and I feel like as a victim, I had a different way of navigating where I wasn't truly accepting what had happened, or how I felt about myself, and so really putting both feet in and going forward and shifting. That is really accepting all those things and doing the shadow work. And interestingly, it's just it's an individual thing, but I also have found like it's really a group thing like it really helps to be able to be able to talk about this in a group that's open and accepting. If there's like a sense of belonging there and connection that I find really healing,

Tess: I can never encourage you enough is to try a (community and faith-based healing group).

The original structure of interracial family communication towards healing proposed in Chapter 2 shows intercultural learning and cross-cultural communication as a developmental process (Bennett, 2004). Intercultural humility is positioned as an "engaged consciousness" working in tandem with critical empathy and intercultural listening to building peacebuilding and intercultural resilience. The example of the dialogue above demonstrates intercultural humility in

action. Tess's use of intercultural humility incorporates unconditional positive regard: an openness to meeting people where they are at in their healing process with no judgement. It is important to note that in Tess's individual healing process she first utilized critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility in action with herself as she healed herself and her family from the scars of domestic violence and a lifetime of gender-based violence.

Intercultural humility in action in this specific story explores the very depths of the shadow self when we truly look at ourselves in the mirror and remember all the times that we were told directly or indirectly specifically because of our race and/or gender that we were worthless. Getting in touch with the shadow image and putting both feet into the healing process – the peacebuilding and resilience process, requires us to sometimes let go of most of what we have come to know about ourselves – all the defensive mechanisms that built up over the course of a lifetime. Intercultural humility is a way of being and a way of communicating with ourselves and others authentically to reframe our lives to let peace in. In this way we exercise peace within, peace between, and peace among in our daily interactions. In other words, intercultural humility starts with the self and then propagates into cross-cultural communication as well as supporting others in their healing process and finally, engaging the community in peace building and resilience.

Practicing intercultural humility and other peacebuilding and resilience tools require peacebuilders to not only roll with resistance but experience discomfort for growth to occur (i.e., motivational interviewing) so that the state of homeostasis that family systems naturally return to can be broken for transgenerational healing to take place (i.e., family systems theory). I consistently noted in my analytic memos throughout this process that even though the interviews were in a safe and supportive environment, it physically hurt to do this peacebuilding work in

community with Tess and the research team. As we collectively shared stories of violence, peacebuilding, and resilience, physical pain erupted in my heart every time I did the interviews with Tess and when I read the transcripts afterwards. I cried every time. Sometimes it was so painful, I couldn't even speak in the interview. There were moments when I wondered if I could handle revisiting the traumas Tess and I shared. It's true that the journey to peace and resilience can be harder than the actual event because at the time of the trauma the body helps victims disassociate but the body never forgets. As Van Der Kolk's (2014) book title indicates, *The Body Keeps the Score:* the body, mind, and emotional spirit keep the memory of the trauma and you can choose to deal with it or let the trauma follow you and impact your behaviors, actions, and how you feel about yourself for the rest of your life.

Critical Empathy

In response to RQ3, critical empathy manifested itself dialogically in the interviews with interracial couples and families the most when partners acknowledged their oppressor identities, the negative impact that made on their significant other, and how they could not truly understand what it would be like to hold the Oppressed identity their partner held. The acknowledgement resulted in empathy-based action in which interracial couples skillfully navigated how they could come together and find new ways of communicating that allowed for cross-cultural communicative shifts manifesting peacebuilding and resilience in their relationships. Houston and Heidi discussed how the struggles they had experienced in their communication and conflict styles and the pain they had both brought to each other when they did not keep critical empathy in mind in their communicative interactions. Without critical empathy, there was less acknowledgment of the violence each of them both held within their oppressor identities. The following illustrates a communicative shift when Houston acknowledges the violence he holds

within and how this impacts Heidi and his desire to take action-based steps to walk through their relationship with more peacebuilding approaches. In the following excerpt from the interviews, Houston discusses how he was raised in an Asian American family and how his socialization and lack of connection to his own emotions ended up hurting his wife. He acknowledges his lack of understanding in her miscarriage and with critical empathy, asserts that he feels this is gender-based violence against her.

Houston: There wasn't really like gender roles, it was just, you know, it felt more equal in my household. Like my dad would cook and clean; I cook and clean and so it's like I feel like I had a lot more equality and equity within my household, but it was really hands off and so I've kind of built a lot of emotional detachment so like I'm pretty apathetic just overall, I never really learned emotions...too well, and so like I'm pretty stunted in that way, but I think I bring value in other ways, I guess.

Don: Of course.

Houston: And I guess my critical thing is like when Heidi miscarried. I was pretty stone faced about it, and in a way my lack of action or empathy is like an act of violence, almost because you know, not being able to like be there for her as well as like I'll never really get to know what it's like to have a miscarriage just because I am a man and so I don't know it's just like I wasn't fully able to support her at that time and that's, just like the gender as well as race just the way I grew up. I wasn't able to connect at all, really.

Throughout the entire interview process, Houston talked about his socialization as a Vietnamese American male living in a household with two immigrant parents. His cultural upbringing consisted of learning emotional restraint as a way of navigating the world and is viewed in his culture in a positive light. Showing emotional restraint is a sign of good upbringing and strength in Vietnamese culture. However, once he married Heidi, he realized that his lack of

emotional engagement ended up being hurtful in moments of crisis during which he couldn't emotionally connect with her. In these moments of cultural clashing, he was unable to find ways to hold space for Heidi and she was left feeling very alone. In hindsight, as he was working through this process, he realized that the inability to be culturally adaptive and specifically when it is about gender-related/fertility issues, was a form of gender-based violence. Intercultural listening, intercultural humility, and critical empathy work together so that cultural adaptation and intercultural resilience can take place. In other words, ethnocentric ways of being can create harmful barriers to peacebuilding and resilience. Making a commitment to work towards an ethnorelative mindset in which Houston can be able to emotionally connect with Heidi in times of crisis is one of the goals he has. Being able to listen deeply and provide space for Heidi to share her lived experiences even if Houston cannot know what it is like to miscarry or to be a woman are some of the ways he wants to build intercultural humility and resilience and further his own discomfort for growth in the relationship.

Couple's Debrief

Researcher/participants noted the importance of having intentional time to connect about cross-cultural stressors, communication, and conflict. As previously mentioned, having a neutral space whether it be in a counseling session, during the interviews for this study, or a physically neutral space like the kitchen table, allowed for interracial couples to work through different communication and conflict styles rooted in different values and beliefs. To be able to be part of facilitating this cross-cultural family communication allowed me to better understand how this flow of communication that leads to peacebuilding and resilience is similar in my own interracial family. Setting up intentional couple's debriefs is a transformative way to enact peacebuilding and resilience in an interracial family. Interracial couples shared that they found this very helpful

and some naturally did it on their own outside of the interviews. For those interracial couples that were being exposed to the couple's debrief for the first time, I suggested that they continue to try this outside the session to continue on their peacebuilding journey to build resilience. It is demonstrated through the following example of a couple's debrief that oftentimes, these conversations about race and gender in the interview started with tense conversations that illustrated the power dynamics of oppressor and Oppressed identities and then shifted to exploring these value differences often coming from the couple's/family's socialization and family of origin, and finally, when cross-cultural conflict was fully resolved was when emotional catharsis occurred. This shift from power dynamics to values to emotional catharsis was common across most interviews with different interracial couples/families. Sharing feelings and allowing our emotional portal to remain open instead of getting angry or philosophizing can be very hard to attain because this emotional space is when we are the most vulnerable with our partner. However, all interracial couples/families achieved emotional connection with each other and a sense of connection and belonging with the research team because of the neutral, unconditional, and courageous space of the interview in which emotional catharsis was achieved.

The following dialogue is an example of a transformative couple's debrief in which I was using a hybrid affective coding method with *versus, values,* and *emotion* coding. This coding method originated from intentional facilitation as the family communication facilitator as I supported the couple in moving from intersectional dialogue about race and gender, to connecting to their individual value and belief systems, and finally to experiencing emotional catharsis, vulnerability, and intercultural humility as a way to engage in peacebuilding. This particular interracial couple was struggling with gender-based communication with a self-identifying independent young woman and her partner being a protective more traditional male.

The woman identifies as light-skinned, Muslim, and multicultural and the man identifies as Black.

Transformative Couple's Debrief

Versus Coding. The first part of the couple's debrief involved predominantly versus coding as Mariya and Jeremiya explore the power differentials in their relationship. The couple beginning to discuss this was obviously a point of tension for them and exploring these power differentials was explained as unresolved in their couple communication.

Mariya: Jeremiya always says, I have a hard time asking him to do stuff for me like I would go so far out of my way to get something done rather than ask his help. And I think that my upbringing, has a lot to do with that, because my mom is the same exact way like she will never ask a man for help ever ever ever ever and. I will like (looks at Jeremiya) What did I do that one time, when you were like, "Why didn't you just ask me?" I forgot what it was, maybe I think I just...It was something to do with like getting a ride somewhere and I asked every single one of my friends and like did all these things, and finally, I couldn't get anybody to do it, and I was like, "Jeremiya I'm so sorry but I need you to do this for me," and he's like., "You never ask me to do anything for you." Like, I have a really hard time asking people to do stuff for me in general, but especially men like it's so hard.

Jeremiya: Yeah. It gets to the point where like if something's high up on a shelf, she will stretch until she cannot stretch another inch before she asked me to get it, for...just something that small - you do all the time.

Mariya: I mean it's pretty innate too.

Jeremiya: Yeah.

Mariya:What were you gonna say.

Jeremiya: I forgot, I don't know. Now that you said that.

Mariya: Sorry, that's another issue I have too is interrupting. And I think that that's learned, because my mom does that a lot and I do it to Jeremiya all the time and it's like so unintentional but it's also like so hurtful. So that's something that I've been trying to work on, but I'm really bad at it.

Jeremiya: I think that... Probably a bad thing I'm not as patient with Mariya. Sometimes, I think I should be. She always says I'm the most patient person that she knows, but I think kind of like just seeing how my sisters do things I like, I don't expect her to do it the same way, but I'm like okay I've seen how these things go and how they did it, so I kind of, I want to say expect, but I kind of think that she's going to do it at that same pace, I guess, and (I'm) just being impatient. I think that's definitely kind of a bad thing, because there's sometimes, I'm just like "Dude just figure it out!" Like she's sitting there like trying to do something over and over. I'm like, "Either ask me to do it or just figure it out!"

Aliah: I get it.

Both individuals were trying to better understand themselves and each other as they navigated power dynamics in the relationship. Mariya, identifying as Muslim American and multi-ethnic, comes from one culture where overlapping in conversation is more common than in Westernized communication. Mariya vacillated from feeling apologetic towards Jeremiya when she is feeling that she was interrupting him like when her white American mother would interrupt her Middle Eastern father, to acknowledging that this was her Middle Eastern family's cultural communication style. They typically do not take turns like in traditional Westernized communication styles. Jeremiya voiced his frustration with feeling that Mariya was interrupting him which could be felt from both a gender and racial perspective as well as frustration with Mariya's level of independence and how different it was than the women in his family of origin.

Values Coding. Next, in the interracial couple's debrief, Mariya and Jeremiya explore the differences in their value systems and how this has created cross-cultural conflict in their couple relationship.

Aliah: Um, so Mariya, with being an independent woman as part of your personal identity, you don't have to answer this if you don't feel comfortable, how does hearing Jeremiya, you know, use protective language like, "I'm not gonna let you walk home at night in a big city" or like this protectiveness that he has that's part of his deeply ingrained value that his father imparted to him, I mean I see those two things as really rooted in fundamentally who you both are. That

could compliment or be tough to I mean what kind of what we talked about it...it could be hurtful at times, because those values might not overlap.

Mariya: Yeah, I mean... that night, like the reason that Jeremiya said that I think in the first place is because that night we got in a huge argument like we were like yelling at each other on the street.

Jeremiya: Not yelling.

Mariya: Like in the middle of the night, we were on the street arguing um but yeah I mean.

Aliah Mestrovich Seay: That's happened to us, too.

Mariya: I mean it's extremely hard like. I think there's a middle ground but it's really hard for me to let somebody tell me to do something. I don't like being told what to do in general. And then having to rely on somebody else for help bothers me even more, and so, even though I know like what he said. It makes sense right like why am I walking home by myself at 2AM, especially when I'm about to move to a huge city that has a lot of crime and, like something could happen to me but there's just like that thought in the back of my head that's like, why are you letting somebody else tell you what decision you need to make and that's something that I really need to work on, is because, like in a partnership, they see things that you don't. Like Jeremiya complements me in a lot of ways, when it comes to stuff like that, but it's really hard accepting someone else or accepting the fact that someone else is telling you something that you should probably listen to.

Aliah Mestrovich Seay: mm hmm.

Jeremiya: I think I can change, I think I could change my approach to it. In that situation I probably shouldn't have said "You're not walking...like I'm not letting you walk home."

Mariya: Yeah. That was the issue was that he said, "You're not walking home," and I was like, "Yeah, I am." I'm sorry I didn't mean to interrupt you.
Jeremiya: it's okay you do it all the time. I should have said, I should have like explained to her first, and I think that's my impatience is like my sisters would understand...I'm not gonna let them walk home alone like I can't stand here and watch you do something like that. I would say that to my sisters and they would get it, but she's different she's not... I need to be more patient with her and I need to explain to her.

As Jeremiya and Mariya explore their opposing values and beliefs, they both utilize intercultural humility as a resilience technique. Mariya realizes that she is frustrated and

struggling with feeling the gender dynamics in the relationship even though she feels walking home at night in a big city is not a safe move. Similarly, Jeremiya feels that he could have worded his concern differently instead of telling Mariya what to do which she has identified as being triggering and against her value system as an independent woman. Both individuals are using cross-cultural adaptiveness in their communication with each other. Intercultural humility is often the gateway to emotional catharsis in these interviews with interracial families.

Emotion Coding. In the final part of the dialogue between Mariya and Jeremiya, Jeremiya can utilize intercultural humility and resilience through the catalyst of emotional catharsis to engage with narrative reframing to build a bridge across their differences.

Jeremiya: I'm not saying that you can't do it I'm saying that I'm not comfortable watching you do this, knowing that something happens I could have done something like just me being there could have stopped something. So, I think being more patient in that sense and explaining myself a little bit more, instead of just blatantly saying like, "You're not doing this," probably could have saved 30 minutes of arguing but.

Aliah: Yeah, I really like that reframe...Like even hearing that as a woman. That has such a different feeling because you're actually being vulnerable...you're being more vulnerable because you're talking about a fear you have and it just has a whole different flavor to it.

Jeremiya: Yeah - which I think Mariya would have understood that if I said it in a different way, I don't know if you remember, but during an argument I said, "This is why I'm so terrified for you to go to a big city because I don't want you to think that doing things like this is okay, and that was me trying to be like hey I'm a little scared – I want you to talk to me about it.". Which we did and I'm talking about it, but I don't know if you noticed that during the conversation but that's why I was saying, "I don't want you to walk home alone cuz yeah it does it terrifies me...terrified if something happened to you, knowing that if I would have been there, it may not have happened so.

Mariya: Yeah, I think that's what made me even more angry, too, because it felt like you were saying because of this, I don't want you to go to a big city or like you shouldn't be going to a big city because you do things like this, and I think that's part of why I got so angry too.

Jeremiya: ….I didn't I ever want you to think that I didn't want you to go because.

Mariya: yeah.

Jeremiya: I don't know if you remember, I was the only one in your corner months ago saying that you needed to go.

This couple's debrief was transformative for a variety of reasons. Mariya and Jeremiya demonstrated their ability to foster intercultural humility and intercultural listening by reframing their gender-based value differences and tension and working through the resistance that these differences brought to their relationship. They utilized motivational interviewing techniques such as tolerating discomfort for growth, committing to the change process, expressing critical empathy for each other, rolling with resistance, as well as enacting behavior change right in the interview. The interview process was structured in a way that supported these concepts of motivational interviewing to take place. Don and I modeled intercultural humility and intercultural listening by sharing our own stories of struggle in our interracial couple and having authentic moments of discomfort as well.

Even though Mariya and Jeremiya had spoken of race and gender together in the past, they had never really dedicated time together to have courageous conversations. This couple naturally utilized the four agreements of courageous conversations (Singleton, 2022) by staying engaged with us and each other, speaking their truth by unpacking their very different gender-based value systems in the interview, experiencing discomfort as they navigated conversations about race and gender, and finally, learning experientially that these conversations about equity are ongoing and as a result, non-disclosure is a part of tolerating discomfort for growth in their interracial couple. Furthermore, Mariya and Jeremiya, were able to restructure their struggles around values related to gender by learning a new way to co-exist, accept their differences, and work on changing themselves instead of trying to change each other throughout the interview and art-making process. In this way, narrative therapy techniques were used to help the couple

restructure the tension in their relationship into transformative communication. A good example of this is when Jeremiya talked about his feelings for the first time and instead of commanding Mariya not to walk home alone, he told her it terrified him thinking of what could happen to her. This shift in the narrative process brought the couple closer together when Jeremiya expressed emotional vulnerability. As a result, they were able to unpack and clarify a miscommunication they had about Mariya leaving for graduate school and her feeling that Jeremiya was not being supportive. In this way, the couple engaged in narrative resilience and peacebuilding.

Cross-Culturally Congruent Listening

Researcher/participants experienced a phenomenon called *cross-culturally congruent listening* during their collective storytelling experience that made them feel that they did not have to explain or minimize their interracial family dynamics as it was already understood by the other parties. For some researcher/participants, this was the first time they had experienced storytelling with another interracial couple/family and expressed that this was a positive experience. Cross-culturally congruent listening was marked by a deep sense of connection and belonging that occurred naturally during the storytelling experience between interracial couples. Below is an example of this phenomenon that was articulated all interviews:

Aliah: What are kind of your thoughts, since then, have you reflected on it at all, have you talked to each other at all, and if you haven't that's okay, we're just kind of curious because it's come up more in conversation for us. And so we're just curious what it's been like for you all.

Brittany: I would just kind of start by saying it's nice to have another couple that you can have these conversations with you don't have to worry about. How the context you provide or what details, you may leave out either you know you can just be very transparent very forthcoming. And the other side is receptive to it, they ask questions you know there's that curiosity is actually a conversation. Versus you know, like having to almost in a way, persuade someone of hey, this

was an experience we had, and yes, it really WAS an experience, so I feel like so many times you go to tell someone something no, no, or they think.

Aliah: (Sarcastically) I can't believe that happened really.

Brittany: Exactly! You're exaggerating details or something like that or you're exaggerating because I still remember like the story he talks about and got pulled over in the middle of nowhere Kansas.

Brittany: You're both just like you know our stomachs were in knots and everything, but you say that and a lot of people are “Come on!” it’s just another “Please stop!” (jokingly) ya know so it was really nice, you know to be able to share.... And also some validation yeah that you know people do have experiences, you know it's not just US you know, unfortunately it's not just us.

Aliah: That really resonates with me, but I really hadn't thought about it until you said it, but like I’m at the point of kind of like just rolling my eyes about it, where it's like if there's oftentimes because I’m I am more in a white bubble. Like the women I'm around in my family and the people that are also attracted to the work I do I'd normally do a lot of diversity inclusion stuff for white people to talk to white people as a white person and the amount of shock that always comes up it's so chronic and that gets old.

Brittany: mm hmm well I guess that was one thing, like in telling our stories like you guys didn't have that shock it wasn't like “Oh no, that really happened?”, like you, guys are yeah, “Yep, we have our own version of you know something similar that happened”, but you could actually converse it wasn't having to enlighten someone, you know.

Aliah: (sarcastically) Or like get through the shock that this could happen in a post racial society.

Brittany: mm hmm and then the same community we're all living in too.

Cross-culturally congruent listening was a communicative phenomenon that was created by multiple dynamics at play during the interview process. Having emotional proximity built with at least one person in the couple/family helped trust with both families to be built more quickly than if we had not known each other at all. There were multiple socio-cultural communicative experiences that built connection and belonging between the interracial couple's/families and the research team. One, there were white women and Men of Color at each interview which allowed us to explore relationship dynamics that had a lot of similarities and some differences. Three of the five couples/families (our family included) were experiencing co-parenting in an interracial relationship with biracial children and even if we came from different racial backgrounds, there were many life situations in which we shared understanding and common ground. Interracial couples sharing similar yet different interracial experiences and coming to connect intentionally around race and gender knowing that this would bring tension and discomfort was another communicative agreement that we all shared. This phenomenon of cross-culturally congruent listening with other interracial couples brought a feeling of relief for many of us knowing that we were not alone and that connection and belonging and essentially, peacebuilding and resilience were created through the act of engaging in collective storytelling with each other.

Hybrid Culture

Couples/families voiced the importance of finding ways to incorporate their collective values and beliefs into their daily lives to create a hybrid culture that they had not experienced in their family of origin. In response to RQ3, this cross-culturally adaptive process of *hybrid culture* incorporates the values and beliefs of both partners and allows them the opportunity to appreciate the cultural differences that the other party brings to the table. This adaptive process is expected

to be wrought with painfully confusing experiences and disorientation but can yield rewarding intercultural results such as being able to harness this adaptive process to then share with our biracial children, extended family, community, and larger societal systems. The families/couples espoused a critical hope that this transformative process of intentional and committed critical intercultural communication within their interracial family would allow for a more evolved, equitable, and just ways of communicating, being together, and navigating the world.

Below is an example of how interracial couples/families talk about this transformative process when there is commitment and intentionality to integrate these values and beliefs in an interracial family. When reading the dialogue, it is important to note that engaging in metacognition is one way to incorporate ethnorelative communication frameworks into a cross-racial relationship.

Houston: Yeah, Because I think that at least I see in like her family that she's like breaking off from the values of Christianity that are very harsh, and have a lot of like consequences when you like lead away and um me as well kind of doing like trying to find something I like doing and want to do rather than what my parents felt was good for me and like that's kind of breaking patterns and habits of like past generations

Aliah: Yeah. And I feel like when you disrupt those dynamics and those transgenerational patterns that it's like you are creating this space for new things to emerge. And also this um understanding and this cultural hybrid that's existing within your family right now that you're making together, it's like you know it's not just one or the other. It's like this. Give and take, and yes, you could say that any marriage could be like that. But specifically, about all the things that we've been talking about, related to gender and race and religion, which really does tie back to many things related to gender and ethnicity and race. Really, I mean that that's all part of you know, religious upbringing. Um, it's like you're creating this new way of being together.

To work through racist and sexist patterns, it is important to become more aware of the implicitly toxic systems that are in place within the nuclear family, family of origin, and from a transgenerational lens. Family systems have a way of implicitly trying to achieve homeostasis even if the pattern in the family is toxic and dysfunctional. These families coming together to discuss communication about race and gender, daily violence, and peacebuilding and tools for resilience, creates an opportunity for transgenerational healing to occur. Not only have the couples/families agreed to come together to discuss race and gender, but they have also talked about the hybrid culture they have and are continuing to create for their interracial family to break these toxic racist and sexist patterns. Each family had a way of navigating communication about race and gender as well as parenting biracial children that kept in mind each person in the couple's values and beliefs and their oppressor/Oppressed identities. Each couple/family had a way of navigating their relationship that took account of these differences and there was engagement and continual commitment to work on issues of inequity as an ongoing process (i.e., motivational interviewing). As the couples/families continued to work through different tensions in the interview process, they utilized motivational interviewing techniques, to disrupt dominant narratives and become more aware of the hybrid culture that they were creating together as an act of peacebuilding and resilience.

Table 6. *Gendered and Racial Communication in Interracial Families*

RQI Communication about Race and Gender in Interracial Families **Themes**	**Description**	**Codes/Examples/Embodied Process**

Stock and Concealed stories	The interviews proved to be a microcosm of the world in which gendered and racialized communication manifest themselves. The more we talked and reflected on the data, the more we gained awareness and acknowledged this phenomenon.	Microcosm of the world Perpetuating racism and misogyny Resistance Stories Modeling critical empathy Building trust
Parenting Biracial Children and Critical Hope	Interracial couples/families discussed their hopes and dreams for their children whether they had them yet or not. They also acknowledged the differences in values and beliefs when parenting their children and the tension that this can cause along with cross-cultural communication	Emotional proximity to white mother Communication struggles increased when biracial children arrived in the family Positive and whole biracial identity Monoracial Cultural marginality Encapsulated marginal Model cross-cultural peacebuilding and resilience with children

	struggles occurring in those moments.	Build a better future Comfort in sharing parenting struggles
Storytelling as an Act of Peacebuilding and Resilience	Data indicated that across all interviews that storytelling in and of itself was an act of peacebuilding and resilience.	Critical intercultural communication Connection and belonging Cross-culturally congruent listening Cultural adaptiveness Critical empathy Intentionality and commitment Self and other awareness Cultural hybrid Behavior change

Stock and Concealed Stories. In response to RQ1, the interviews proved to be a microcosm of the world in which gendered and racialized communication manifest themselves. The more we talked, the more we acknowledged this phenomenon. Even though we all wanted to meet to unpack race and gender, we found ourselves perpetuating racism and misogyny or sexism dialogically. Through the storytelling process, these socialized dynamics began to transform themselves and we even found times to gently call each other out on the violence in the interview. These moments, though tense, were extremely powerful as we tore down the stock

stories and replaced them with concealed stories that transformed into resistance stories that were acknowledged by the partner or community member that represented the oppressor. Modeling this level of intercultural humility and resilience built a significant amount of trust that crossed race and gender divides and acted as a bridge instead of a wall. Below is an example of this:

Aliah: (In response to Tess's story about being made to dress a certain way in a law firm based on her gender) Just extremely oppressive like just the way, like the way you were told to dress that's the dress policy that I mean it was just it was so wrong to tell young girls, that they had to dress a certain way, anyway, so I completely feel you.

Don: I feel that, so this may come as a surprise, but men get it too is like what you were saying about the women going kind of like way you know don't you get it like you know, so I was unemployed. You know, for a year and you know and men were like, "So you let your wife make all the income." You know, like that's not my intention, but that's what it is right now. You know and "How do you feel about that you know now you're the housewife?" and like there's like an underlining calling me out. I was getting a lot then then for it to be thrown like you know "You're not even supporting your family". I'm like "Whoa I am in other ways that's not financial". Yeah so it, I don't know what it is about society, but you know, like the whole old school mentality and then you know, so I mean we do get some of that and even comments I've worked like you know, like "Can't your wife do it?" You know, like "No like that's my kid too, you know, like "I could do this".

Aliah: (Responding to comment "Can't your wife do it?") you know that is so fucked up at like so many levels - I mean wow.

Don: You do hear a lot and I think most men would just brush it off, you know but like for me was like it's not just her responsibility to me that's our kid that's my kids. You know so there's like, you know, like what I do at work, it's important to a certain degree, you know what was happening at home is important if not more. For me, you know so yeah I mean there's a whole another level but females are going through, it significantly more you know I'm not gonna be I

would never be told to like to wear certain things. You know or how I'm supposed to dress or how I'm supposed to act. Like I would never have to deal with that.

Aliah: Can I interject something? So it took me a long time to figure this out, but when that happens to you, that is really wrong and extremely hurtful and it actually still oppresses us right like what happens to you isn't oppression in those situations because you're not the target of the marginalization, but you have acted as an ally like pushing back on that and being like no I'm there I'm their father, too, but that for men and women, acting like this, I mean women are just as bad, I mean the things women have said to me like "You don't need to come to this executive meeting if it's on a Saturday, you know we know you have you know your kids to take care of." I'm like "To hell with that I get to meet (Senior administrator)! I'm going to the executive meeting." Like a woman said that to me like she was trying to get me not to go, because I have kids on a Saturday so I wouldn't. So, what I'm trying to say is like just like reverse racism for white people does not exist, reverse sexism does not exist. What happens to you is really wrong - it's not oppressive though you see what I'm saying it's not because you're not the marginalized group in that situation.

Don: Yeah, I mean it's nothing - mine is not equal to what you guys are saying, but it does happen to men because of society, not in a work environment. But like, you know, like there's a societal means that we try to meet you know, like well "You're the man. Why don't you bring home the bacon?" You know or the bread or whatever. You know, it does feel that pressure, you know and-

Aliah: Which perpetuates oppression to women... it took me a while to get this.

Don: No, I get it.

Aliah: Like it took me a while to even be able to articulate it but it's like all that's part of the same system that's oppressing us.

In response to RQ1, one of the experiences we had was discussing reverse sexism – the stock story of men also being oppressed because of their gender. A lot of trust had to be developed and intentionality and commitment around understanding and talking about gender-based violence for Aliah to be able to share her concealed story with Don. Don had also shared his role in this interview with two survivors of childhood sexual abuse and gender-based violence in adulthood. His role was to listen, and he added that he wanted to help us heal. When working cross-culturally, it is important to practice intercultural listening. Don did not come to further his own agenda as a Male of Color or to take up more dialogic space. He truly wanted to support the stories that Aliah and Tess were sharing and to be a holding space even if he couldn't truly understand our lived experience. As indicated by the above dialogue, when he tried to engage in perspective taking and practice empathy, and as a result, it actually made us feel less heard. Instead, Don learning how to practice critical empathy was essential to this peacebuilding process just as it was important for Aliah to sit with her discomfort to have a courageous conversation about gender. This is a good demonstration of how intercultural listening, critical empathy, and intercultural humility work together to support concealed stories to be told and for intercultural humility and resilience to take place dialogically.

Parenting Biracial Children and Critical Hope

Interracial couples discussed their hopes and dreams for their biracial children whether they had them yet or not. They also acknowledged the differences in values and beliefs when parenting their children and the tension that this can cause along with cross-cultural communication in those moments. All researcher/participants articulated the critical hope for their children to have a better future in which they did not have to navigate the same amount of racism, sexism, and misogyny. White women expressed desire for their biracial children to know their history and ethnic roots and supported racial and cultural identity development. Men of

Color shared their hope that their children would not have to grow up and be socialized to the same levels of violence that they had been.

Interracial couples/families with children discussed the challenges they encountered with their communication and conflict style differences and how this was perceived by the other party and how true conflict and marital discord arose when they had children. Individual and couple's counseling was a resource that was mentioned as very important to assist with healing from childhood trauma as well as assisting with cross-cultural communication and co-parenting. Couples also shared instances in which the couple's counselor had the cultural knowledge and/or background to be able to counsel interracial couples even though talk therapy is often Eurocentric and does not always account for the interracial family experience. Additionally, couples/families explored how biracial children would often go to their white mother first to talk about race due to the close emotional proximity even though they could not share the lived experience with race that their biracial children had. White women discussed family of origin stressors and how they were processing their racist identities and socialization and how this impacted their nuclear family. Men of Color shared their struggles with emotional detachment and expressing their anger during cross-cultural conflict especially when it came to co-parenting their children.

Couples and families expressed wanting their biracial children to have a positive and whole biracial identity even though most interracial couples identified as monoracial and were unaccustomed to navigating biracial identity. For the couple self-identifying as multiracial or multiethnic, they expressed feelings of cultural marginality and how they worked through this to become encapsulated marginals or were still exploring these feelings as unresolved in adulthood. This allowed the research team to think about their own biracial children and how they could

support their children's process with cultural marginality as well. The interracial families/couples also expressed a desire to model cross-cultural peacebuilding and resilience with their children to build a better future for them. Interracial families/couples found comfort in sharing these parenting struggles with each other and realized that they had similar struggles but hadn't realized it until the storytelling process occurred. Below is an example of an interracial couple communicating about parenting biracial children in which the research team found similar challenges regarding communicating about racism with our own child:

Brittany: You know, we haven't really dived too deep into this, but my concern is as she (biracial child) gets older, some people will see her as a Black female you know, some will see her as a mixed-race female... But I think it's going to be interesting in certain situations how she'll be okay but in other situations, I don't think she'll be okay. You know, I think there will be some challenges and yeah so far she's been okay at school with her peer friends. There's something when she was young, that she picked up - she would have been preschool age; I can't remember what it was, but you know it was just very interesting, how well "Slavery's over why are we dealing and talking about this (racism)?" I'm thinking well one, I'm going "No, it's not". I'm like, "Where did you hear that? You know, we don't talk like - that's not how we talk in our house."

Jeff: No.

Aliah: Right.

Brittany: You know so it's like where is she hearing that ya know and we talked very frequently about you know. Your (Jeff) dad's family was on the plantation we have a book about the master was Irish you know, like we talked about what we do know about that so I'm like oh. We're gonna have to start asking more questions trying to figure out who's saying this type of stuff because they may be saying things that they don't realize are hurtful to her, and as we unpack.

Aliah: Yeah.

Brittany: When she comes home, gets older, you know I'm just like so yeah I hadn't even had a chance to tell Jeff about that, because that happened just South of (City Name) on the way home. Today, and I was just like whoa this is deep but we're going to talk about it and it's a good opportunity to start talking about you know unconscious bias.

Don: Uh-huh.

Brittany: A lot of that, and I'm going, a lot of adults don't even understand that concept, but here I am talking with my eight-year-old about unconscious bias does exist. That's why we need to have these conversations. So, then, that way, everyone can start to work to get there, you know, but it was just shocking that she said that cuz I'm like: whoa whoa whoa whoa you were in the truck with us when we got pulled over. There have been other instances that she's been around and so it just it kind of blew my mind so.

Aliah: I think one thing that's been hard for me is coming to terms with that my sons will never have the privilege I have. Ever.

Brittany: Uh huh.

Aliah: yeah they're male, but they are Men of Color, and that is different than being a white woman.

Aliah: And he has had struggles with race, I mean he is during the pandemic he thought that kids didn't want to play with him because he was funny looking. He’s tried to make himself white with baby powder. He’s told me he wants to be white. I mean and he - and then I do a lot of work professionally with like you anti-racism and diversity, equity, and inclusion and so he heard a lot of that during the pandemic and so that was also very confusing to him to be home, there’s not place for him to go, here I was doing these workshops and he was hearing how you know Black people don’t have a voice at the table like things like that that just doesn’t make sense to a four or five year old but on top of that there’s nobody here that he identifies with not even his dad -

now his brother, maybe, but his brother looks more Asian than he does so he doesn't really and the kids at school, most of them are monoracial Asian and none of them are Thai and white. Um, so yeah he's had some struggles I really don't know if it'll be easier for him, I don't know. I don't know how to define that or I mean, I hope it will be - he's still a person of color, a Male of Color in the United States so I'm gonna, I'm gonna as his mom knowing that I can't access his experiences, I can't protect him from racism and I really don't know what it's going to be like, I just want to be as proactive as possible. Knowing that I can't access his experiences I can't protect him from racism and I really don't know what it's going to be like, I just want us to be as proactive as possible.

Don: And I think, for the most part, I mean we're just saying like what Jeff was saying we are going to try to instill our morals and ethical.

Aliah: right.

Don: You know upbringing - the positive stuff at least.

Jeff: Uh huh.

Don: as best as we can to our children but yeah that was that was just a you know from, from my perspective, like I you know, has it been a hard conversation, you know, because we are going to eventually have to have a sit down and talk with the boys about you know how to navigate life and society and everything else but yeah I mean I don't want to steer us too far away from our topic, but yeah. This is all relevant.

As we worked through answering RQ1, I noticed the tone of the conversation changed for all of us when we talked about our children. Racialized trauma was kicked up as Don often says, "Our children are extensions of us". We all held the critical hope that life could be better for them. Don shared that he hoped that if their skin was lighter than his that maybe, they may have more opportunity than he did and have to encounter less violence in school and society. I

felt my heart echo in the hearts of the other couples/families because we had all embarked on a life and process that was unknown to us: how do you parent a biracial child when you are monoracial? How do you parent them when you're white and you won't ever know their lived experiences or when they come to you and tell you that racism doesn't exist anymore because slavery doesn't exist? How do you help them find peacebuilding and resilience strategies when you aren't even sure you have found them yet yourselves? There's a lot more questions we were asking than responses to the questions because we were more aware as adults of the violence that exists with racial and gender differences than peacebuilding strategies, but we asked them nonetheless.

Expecting non-closure is one of the tenets of having courageous conversations (Singleton, 2020). As we explored our experiences with race and gender, and specifically parenting biracial children, we understood without having to explicitly say it to each other that parenting biracial children in an interracial family was an ongoing process of discovery in which we had to experiment, try different things, succeed and fail, build intercultural humility and resilience, and come back and try again. Many times, within the context of our interracial family communication blind spots about race and gender got in the way of effective cross-cultural communication and parenting biracial children and so expecting to work with resistance and experiencing discomfort for growth was an important part of the peacebuilding process (i.e., motivational interviewing). As interracial couples, we learned to expect this cultural clashing and cross-cultural resistance. We discussed creating opportunities for emotional space in those moments so that we could trudge through our own oppressor and Oppressed identities and come back together to have a couple's debrief during which we focused on appreciating the different values and beliefs each person in the couple brought to the proverbial table. Cultural clashing

was a normal part of reframing the narrative to incorporate the voice of both partners in the couple (i.e., narrative therapy techniques). Operationalizing intercultural humility allowed for intercultural resilience individually and within the interracial couple/family to take place.

Storytelling as an Act of Peacebuilding and Resilience

In response to RQ1, data indicated that across all interviews that storytelling in and of itself was an act of peacebuilding. Additionally, some families expressed that after going through the storytelling process their concerns about their cross-cultural communication and differences in value and belief systems seemed much easier to navigate than before. Researcher/participants, actively engaged in critical intercultural communication, were dedicated to creating a space to listen to concealed stories related to race and gender even though for some couples, this was the first time they had ever spoken in depth about these lived experiences with each other.

Aliah: I would say that it took us a lot longer to talk about race constructively in our relationship and something I have become much more open to and cognizant of is when Don really needs to vent about white people including me and my family and just white people in general, and that in Communities of Color and Families of Color that's a really typical thing, but I don't have that socialization so and it's normally negative because hey, you're talking about the oppressor! So I had a really good friend, a Man of Color, he's like my best friend and he's like, "Aliah, that's your white entitlement feeling uncomfortable with Don being negative about white people – that doesn't mean your kids are going to hate you. That doesn't mean they're going to hate their grandparents. That doesn't mean they are going to hate white people but we have to have a way to vent about this, and we do that, within our family, typically and within our friends, and you know community – your family just happens to have a white person in it". And so that just has been a very recent thing for me where you know we probably it took us longer to talk about race in our relationship, because I have (inaudible) but I'm always going to have them.

In conclusion, for this particular example of storytelling as an act of peacebuilding and resilience, I will tell my own personal healing story and unpack the conceptual framework

presented in Chapter 3 for evocative autoethnography as a cross-racial gendered coinquiry. (Figure 3) As I told my story, I remembered all the cycles I went through to arrive upon a place to be able to listen to People of Color, hear their stories, and then partake in behavior adaptation. It first took building intercultural awareness and sensitivity, and some level of intercultural competence. I self-identified early on in my process as an interculturalist and believed that building intercultural awareness and sensitivity was enough to create opportunities to build intercultural competence. The more I listened to the stories of culturally different Others with whom I had built trust, the more I felt uncomfortable, but I did not have the tools to truly listen. Then, I began developing the concepts of intercultural listening with a Colleague of Color who had become a close friend. I remember having a philosophical debate about the importance of active listening and my training as a clinician which obliged me to take an evaluative form of listening with clients. He urged me to partake in a radical cross-cultural journey which required me to listen to support the stories that were being told, to support the cultural and emotional experiences without trying to understand them. It is then when I began to break free of the intercultural competence paradigm.

We not only developed a working framework for intercultural listening, but we also worked on a conceptual framework for critical empathy together (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022) during the same time the Black Lives Matter movement responded to George Floyd's murder along with the murder of many Black people in America and Asian hate raged on. We continued to work on these conceptual frameworks while Black and Brown people feared for their lives and white people wondered what they could do to help or completely dismissed what was happening all together. During this time, my husband began to be more and more verbal about how much he hated white people within hearing distance of our children. I mentioned this to my best friend,

and he urged me to support my husband's story and lived experience. At that time, I had yet to go through many steps in my own healing process and listen to my inner voice. I was still afraid of men. I felt like a victim instead of a survivor: I still felt worthless and unable to stand up for myself. I had to go through my own healing and transformation. I had to listen to my own concealed stories and those of others to be able to no longer feel afraid when my husband shared his hate for white people, my people. Addressing our intersectionality was a must because with that acknowledgement of oppressor/Oppressed identities in our relationship, healing could occur.

My transformation started with listening being, listening to my inner voice, sifting through critical whiteness and feminist scholars. Storytelling for peacebuilding and resilience started inwardly with my own quietness. Then, I was able to engage with others and listen to their stories. First, I actively listened because that was the only way I knew how to listen: a Eurocentric whitewashed way. Then, I opened my consciousness to support the emotional and cultural stories that were being shared as a way for cross-racial healing to occur. I utilized constructivist listening and supported People of Color in supporting their emotional and cultural experiences with unconditional positive regard even if I couldn't fully understand and supported the reframing of the narrative by employing narrative listening just like I was learning to do with myself.

During this study, I began to utilize intercultural listening with other women and noticed that the same intercultural listening frameworks could unfold – we shared similarities in our subjectification to violence, but our stories were also very different. These stories created opportunities for healing and collective peacebuilding and resilience as we learned how to support each other. The more we did this peacebuilding work, the more we began to imagine what the world would be like for our children and our children's children. We engaged with

feelings of critical hope that expanded to other systems beyond ourselves and our families but to the predominantly white systems of education with which we all were involved in some capacity and then society at large. One participant said “This is how we heal the world.” We began to feel at home in each other’s stories and recognized the healing nature of cross-culturally congruent listening as we shared with each other in community. In this way, my autoethnographic process had become a cross-racial gendered coinquiry and this process was contributing to community-engaged scholarship: collective storytelling about daily violence, peacebuilding and tools for resilience regarding racism and misogyny.

An unexpected part of this study was my own healing and my ability to partake in peacebuilding with myself and others. Finally, after working through the different non-linear processes of my conceptual framework for critical evocative autoethnographical work as a cross-racial gendered coinquiry, I felt that I could listen to my husband talk passionately about race and specifically hating white people without feeling afraid of him or what he might do in those situations. I trusted myself and I trusted him in those situations where both of our trauma responses were high, and we triggered each other’s racial and gendered traumas. In these moments, we could attend to our intersectional identities of oppressor and Oppressed and still deeply listen to each other. These stories needed to be told, they were painful and healing, quiet and loud, simple to understand yet earthshattering: They were burning inside of us.

4B: The Stories are Burning Inside Us

In this chapter, we continue to unpack storytelling as an act of peacebuilding and resilience and as a response to the violence that we defined in Chapter 4A. In this chapter, you, the reader, will be exposed to literary and visual arts-based narrative inquiry through the creations of four different interracial couples/families who were actively involved as

researcher/participants. You will also experience the literary and visual art-based narratives of the research team as they collaborated with the researcher/participants. Each couple/family decided how they wanted their art piece to be created and presented to the world. These stories are concealed stories, stories that lie below the surface of mainstream culture and dominant narratives. As we told these stories together, they became resistance stories that pushed backed against the violence of inequity, injustice, and oppression. As we told these resistance stories and used literary and arts-based means, we began to feel a comfort and freedom as we enacted peacebuilding in community together, as we acknowledged the oppression we played a hand in, and finally, we told the stories of our own oppression together. As a result, these intersectional stories became liberation stories and we knew that we needed to share these stories with the world. These are the stories that were burning inside of us.

In this section, I will provide background about the stylistic choices and foundational story of each art piece. Then, I will take up less space as a researcher and support the voices of the interracial couples/families who created the art pieces to have a platform to share their stories. After each art piece, the research team responded to the art piece and paid tribute to the valuable time spent with each interracial couple/family. The relationships and trust built over this research period are notable and we wanted to take time to respond to each interracial couple/family to let them know what doing this work with them meant to us.

Please note, as indicated in Chapter 3, that each art piece reflects the stories told during the first two interviews. Methodologically, research participants reviewed a written and video summary of the interviews and made use of the affective and in vivo coding completed by the research team so that the researcher/participants could create their art piece as a response to the three research questions. Therefore, the art pieces respond to all three research questions in an

integrated manner. Additionally, the research team's response to the art pieces was inspired by the coding of the first two interviews and the third interview during which the couples/families unpacked the art piece with us and we collaboratively discussed our "Now what?". Differently from Chapter 4A, Chapter 4B acutely focuses on the narratives of the couples and families and the research team's collective response to descriptively, artistically, and analytically answer the research questions. Instead of basing each section on a research question like in Chapter 4A, the research team intentionally focused on each interracial couple/family, their background, the story their art piece tells, and the research team's collective response. These stories represent an integration of stock, concealed, resistance, and emerging freedom stories to build narrative resilience to address communication regarding race and gender, navigating daily violence, and how we can collectively find peacebuilding and resilience tools through the stories we share with each other.

Interracial Family 1: Tess and Her Biracial Children

Background

During the very first interview, when we were brainstorming the art piece, Tess invited me to write it with her as an act of peacebuilding and resilience (RQ3) and more specifically, healing from childhood sexual abuse, rape in adulthood, and domestic violence (RQ2). Many of our stories intersected and we felt connection and belonging, and her invitation represented this sisterhood to me (RQ1, RQ3). She also thought it was important for all of us to write it together so each voice could be represented and heard. I thought it would be important for Don, the only male voice in the interviews, to have a response as an ally to what we wrote as an act of peacebuilding (RQ3). Tess and I met via zoom to talk about the framing of the poem. She really wanted it to be what she called a *story poem* and be similar stylistically to, Maya Angelou's

"And Still I Rise*"* (1978). I offered to take the coding of the first and second interviews and begin to frame the poem based on this feedback. Then, I shared it with her before the third interview to get additional feedback. Tess, Don, and I met to go over the framing of the poem and minor changes were made – one being that Tess wanted to intensify the feeling of the leaves and the sound of the ocean, both of which were ways that she and Don connected with themselves and brought about self-care and healing in times of distress related to encountering gender and racially-based violence. We agreed that repeating and combining these two voices would intensify the feeling of peacebuilding and resilience (RQ3).

Tess shared that there was not a time when she did not feel heard during the research process. She felt that the research team "had an open heart and wanting to understand and wanting to connect," so she didn't feel like her stories weren't being truly listened to. Don shared his process which illustrates how he was utilizing critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility as he defined his role from the genesis of the storytelling process:

> ...allowing you two to talk...and share and feel secure and safe in sharing...because it is your story. And you're being vulnerable, and you're sharing and you're being honest. And I think to me that's where we need to stop putting um predetermined thoughts, and just be present and listen. You know, like I think that's as a male like that should be our role and not try to define what is right or wrong because we all have different levels of tolerance for what is what you know, what is violent to you or me, or to someone else. So is to listen and understand and try to be a safe place for the person to be able to...communicate...their experience...that's as a male, me sitting here is like that was my role. It's to to listen and hopefully create like a safe environment where we can share our experiences.

That gender-based intentionality really spoke to me as we three completed this art piece together. We finalized the poem by talking about our own individual shadow work and how important it was for all of us to continue to partake in healing from childhood trauma and violence individually and in community so that our children would not have to bear this generational curse (RQ3).

Here We Are

We met such a long time ago
Before all of this
We were just kids.
And now, we meet again, two women with children and families
"Hey, how are you?"
Girlfriend, you and I both know-
We don't really have the time to do this work
To uncover these concealed stories
Just trying to survive
But we have to because there is something burning inside us
These stories have to be felt, have to be told, they're inside of us.

Our stories are about violence-
Physical, emotional, medical, or systemic acts
Intentionally or unintentionally causing fear or harm in another person
Using power and privilege to assert space and dominance
Racism, sexism – It's all that.

Because he doesn't care if I'm a single mom trying to survive.
I have to wear a skirt with heels and pantyhose At. All. Times.
No matter that the men always got the raises, promotions, and kudos.
No matter that my baby was asthmatic, taken to the hospital.

He came and told me I could choose between being a mom or my career.
This was intentional. It was pre-meditated.
It didn't matter if I was a single mom - There was no gray area, no in between.
So I headed to the hospital and lost my job.

He came and told me that I must feel guilty
To not be at home with them.
Never asked me how I really feel.
Just puts words in my mouth.
Suffocating me.
He's made up his mind that I am guilty-as-charged.
I'm NOT a stay-at-home mom.
I have a life outside of taking care of my kids.
These stories have to be felt, have to be told, they're inside of us.

He came to tell me that my body should be used
As he deemed fit
Objectified – Mistreated – Misused - Abused
Cellular memory of a childhood lost
"Oh yeah? #METOO. It was like that for me."
He didn't care about my innocence
He knew I wouldn't tell
So I acted like it didn't happen.
I was really good at playing make believe.
But the body remembers.
Trauma compounded
The shark can smell an open wound
We were just kids.
These stories have to be felt, have to be told, they're burning inside of us.

Have you done your shadow work?

You know, you don't have to pass it down to your children.
"What does shadow work mean?"
Trauma – trickle down – generational curse
You gotta dig deep – deep into the negative traits you've learned to hold about yourself
Anger – trauma – fear
Addressing the things you don't want to address, even forgotten things
Killing everything at the root
You can move forward with more positive light, more peace
Family unity – they can access freedom and peace
The shadow is the ying and yang of your spirit

Sometimes the journey is harder than the actual event.
He came and told me I was worthless
I lost my voice as a child
And this suffocated my voice as an adult
My boundaries and self-worth were warped
But now – I don't care anymore. This is my story.
Unapologetically me
I'm going to talk for people (like you) that haven't found their voice yet.
I'm going to speak my story as you find your voice
Maybe if I speak, maybe you can start to speak too.

"I don't have a lot of words right now."
This feeling of connection is so strong. I'm overcome with emotion.
I love you
"I love you too."

Let go of the shame that is holding you back
Embrace the healing that needs to happen.
"As a child, he told me I had done something wrong."
Predators know how to find hurt children

Play on their weaknesses
“I have this open wound and they can smell the blood.”
We were just kids. I just didn’t know it was happening to you too.
When you do your shadow work, you discard these traumas
Get rid of all the untruths, all the shame our spirit has taken on

When I acknowledge my pain and our collective pain, I accept the healing.
When I acknowledge that this is not my fault, I accept the healing.

I watch the leaves fall gently to the ground
The positive leaves flowing through my body
The negative leaves out my toes
The cycle of accepting the positive
Letting go of the negative
Feeling the embrace of Creator.
This is self-love.

Our stories are about healing.
Peacebuilding is connection
It’s belonging
It’s me as a resilient woman being able to share my story with you
It’s this way that you listen that makes me feel heard
I don’t ever have to explain myself
You just know that my tears tell a story
Maybe we don’t have the exact same story
But we share similar feelings
A collaborative discussion of unity, a genuine experience

It empowered me to see you
Speaking your truth, sharing – leading – facilitating
I felt like I belonged –

I've never gotten to listen and speak my truth with another woman
That knows what it's like to be beaten down
It took me a long time to let those walls come down
I had to find my voice, celebrate my recovery
You can't have one foot in and one foot out
When you do that – you revert back to the same anger, the same guilt
You hear his voice in your ear that you are worthless
You have to listen to your own voice and confront who and what you are afraid of
Part of recognizing your healing is also recognizing your triggers
Triggers let us know what we have to work on
Sometimes the journey is harder than the actual event

These stories have to be felt, have to be told, they're burning inside of us.
I think it's beautiful that you were touched
I could see your emotions and feel your emotions
Such a pure conversation – we could feel each other's emotions
And offer our stories to each other
Connection and belonging are a recipe for peacebuilding, resilience
"Your story touched my soul."

So what is it like being the only man here to hear our stories?

It's kind of sad
To me, it's sad like that
Males are supposed to be protectors
That's how we're brought up to be
And then we turn around and do the opposite
Our strength puts fear in other people
I mean, I'm guilty of that too, to a certain degree
It's this contradiction to be a protector and to cause fear
All at the same time

But then from my perspective
That's someone's mom, someone's sister, that's someone's daughter
How can you do that?
How can we as males do that?
It's just hard.
It's hard to explain.
I never sat down and looked at things that way.
It opens my eyes – knowing what men are capable of
Unbelievable things
Entitlement
Men feeling like they can treat women and girls a certain way
It takes men breaking down the barrier they created

When you tell me your story
I just don't question that. That's not my life experience.
If you are saying that's what happened, that's what happened
I'm here to support and help you heal.
I want to climb out of the river of cruelty
Intentionally and with great care
That so many boys have been dragged into
Another transgenerational curse
And then those boys become men
Instead of continuing the cycle, I am getting to know my own shadow
Feelings of failure, of worthlessness
I allow the pain to be taken by the waves of the ocean.
Let the water just take it away
As I release this burden, I release generations of pain
That I replace with a future of hope.

Our stories are about violence.

Sometimes the journey is harder than the actual event.

I watch the leaves fall gently to the ground
The positive leaves flowing through my body
The negative leaves out my toes
The cycle of accepting the positive
Letting go of the negative
Feeling the embrace of Creator.
This is self-love.

Instead of continuing the cycle, I am getting to know my own shadow
Feelings of failure, of worthlessness
I allow the pain to be taken by the waves of the ocean.
Let the water just take it away
As I release this burden, I release generations of pain
That I replace with a future of hope.

These stories have to be felt, have to be told, they're burning inside of us.
Our stories are healing.

Response from the Research Team

We want to respond as a couple to this collective poem that we three created together and how it impacted our family as we navigated communication about race and gender, daily violence, and peacebuilding and tools for resilience. Many times, Don and I connected to each other in times of trauma overlap, both feeling worthless unable to acknowledge or process our shadow message. We had not found the peacebuilding tools individually or as a family so our arguments would often end as hurtful chaos – a train wreck. These encounters were shadows of the traumatic events we had experienced as children and would shake us to our core as we simply replayed the same trauma cycle. It is hard to be a couple when we haven't learned to appreciate our individual human worth.

Through the development of the art piece, Tess, Don and, I began to outline an individual and collective consciousness through the use of stories. Stories were a catalyst for individual and collective peacebuilding and our resilience strategies stemmed from the depth of the stories we told. We shared these stories first to talk about self-love – and all of the shadow work that we had committed to. Self-love is a tool for resilience, and it leads us to be able to share our stories in community as we connect to the healing process. Self-love is a response to the initial violence we encountered as children – in our most vulnerable state. Self-love is a resilience strategy and the connecting factor to be able to successfully do shadow work – the negative message we hold of ourselves through our past that we act out on ourselves and others in the present. Self-love is intercultural listening at its most fundamental form – when we first listen and value our inner voice – we listen so deeply that we become the act of deep listening with ourselves, listening to the voice of our inner child.

As a male, I had a very particular role in the listening process during the creation of the art piece. My role was to not have an agenda and not come with predetermined ideas. I wanted to be a part of the healing process and also take responsibility for how people from my gender, myself included, have a capacity for violence. In doing so, I am doing my part to climb out of the river of cruelty as quickly as I can and also provide a safe space for these women to be able to share about their experiences with violence without being afraid that their stories will be minimized or compared to mine. Instead, I want to create a holding space for them. This also benefits my children, my family, and my own community when I come to this conversation and want to engage in peacebuilding. It benefits me because I am intentionally responding to gender-based violence and making a commitment to bring in my sword to cut ties with this part of myself and my life.

This storytelling process is told from the inside out from self-love to positively impact our family and then to heal as we tell our stories in community together. And then there's a moment when our stories are ready to be told and we are ready to listen to others and that is an important part of the peacebuilding and resilience process. This artwork exemplifies this very phenomenon of peacebuilding and resilience. We have found it is hard to separate the two – peacebuilding and resilience – one flows right into the other. So, we find ourselves with other

humans that have been hurt too, that are finding ways to fight this generational curse – first working on our shadow message and then in community, we find our way out so that our children, and our children's children may not carry this burden with them. As we find our way, we share resources and our hopes and dreams with each other. Our hope for our children is that they are emotionally intelligent, empathetic, and kind, and that they can live a life of peace in action and hope for a better future without the burdens we've carried. This is our now what.

Interracial Family 2: Mariya and Jeremiya

Background

Mariya and Jeremiya decided to write a story about their gendered and racial experiences together (RQ1). They wrote it as a story that spoke back and forth to each other with prime experiences that had happened during their long- term committed relationship as an interracial couple They described their writing process as organic and hadn't planned a pre-determined structure before they began writing it as they sat on Zoom, living in two different cities, both on the same document. They felt that it was important to write it together to make sure that their voices and stories were authentically theirs and Jeremiya put it "I don't think anybody would be able to kind of put the emotion into it...it was important that we made time to do this." I asked them what kind of feelings and sensations happened as they were writing and if there were moments where they felt or didn't feel heard in their lived experience. Jeremiya explained that his central emotion was one of fear of the unknown and terror of something happening to someone that he loves: everything he wrote tied back to these two embodied emotions. Mariya expressed feeling compassion for Jeremiya and his racialized experiences she could not access as a light-skinned person and frustration as a reaction to Jeremiya's story because their value systems around gender culturally clashed often. As a result, they worked through these differences in values and beliefs related to gender and experiences with race throughout the story

as an act of peace building and resilience (RQ3). Even though the couple both expressed feelings of frustration due to the cultural clashing of values and beliefs that occurred in their partnership, they also shared that they felt heard by their partner. Through feeling heard, they felt that it was easier to transform how they thought and felt about the other in times of tension.

They decided to depict the story with two different voices indicated stylistically by Mariya's being the bold italics and Jeremiya's being the regular font. We started experiencing the art piece together by Mariya reading the entire story during Interview 3. Jeremiya asked her to read it so he could hear his own thoughts so-to-speak and finalize the draft of the section he had written. Don and I got to experience the art piece as an oral experience first even before we read it. Then, we provided some feedback about the feel and flow and even pushed back about the order of the story based on how we had experienced the first two interviews with the couple and how we had built trust and gotten to know them. It was a powerful experience to be able to provide feedback to their story and we incorporated this feedback into the researcher response at the end of their story about their interracial relationship.

Puzzle Pieces

One of my favorite books is Becoming by Michelle Obama. In it, she describes her upbringing as well as a thought-provoking reflection of how her intersectional identity has guided her life. I think that I resonate so strongly with this book because, in many ways, it mirrors my own worldview. I think that women should pursue their path limitlessly no matter what identities they hold. This is something that was ingrained in me throughout my life by my mother. I believe that I am capable of everything a man is capable of, and I will go out of my way to prove it.

This can be a challenge when it comes to my relationship with Jeremiyah. It often frustrates me when he insists on doing small things for me- carrying shopping bags, opening doors, paying for things, etc. I like these things in moderation, but when he is adamant on doing all the things all the time, it makes me question his perceptions of my abilities. Does he think I'm not strong enough to carry my own groceries? Why would I let him pay for everything when our

relationship is supposed to be equal? Me insisting on my independence often leads to arguments- unfortunately, we both have stubborn streaks.

There is a quote from an old movie that describes having three types of people in this world, sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs. There are people who choose to believe that evil does not exist in the world, and if any evil comes across their path, they aren't able to protect themselves. These people are described as the sheep. Then there are the predators that prey upon the weak and use violence to cause chaos within the world. These are the wolves. Then there are the people who are blessed with the skills and knowledge to protect those that cannot defend themselves and live to confront the wolf in order to protect their flock. These are the sheepdogs.

Ever since I was of the age where I began to understand how cruel the world is, my biggest fear was getting a phone call that one of my sisters had been hurt by a man. I was raised to be the sheepdog of the family just as my father had been for his, and hearing that something happened would mean I wasn't able to protect them. In preparation to confront the evil in this world, my mother had always pointed out the instances in which people would blatantly or indirectly choose to inflict negativity on us. Whether that be directed towards her as a woman, her as a black woman, or her as an independent black woman, I was equipped with the knowledge to recognize when that was taking place. In my relationship, I realize that Mariya wasn't raised to recognize the harm as I was and that she isn't able to defend herself if she doesn't know it's happening. This causes a conflict between us as she has moved to another city for school. Not only can I not be there to show her that someone is being harmful, I can't be there to protect her from that harm. I can't be the sheepdog to our flock to protect the sheep from the wolves of the world.

Having a strong, breadwinning, white mother has shaped me in so many ways, both positively and negatively. My mom instilled in us an idea of the self as ever changing and indestructible. Whatever we wanted to do was possible with hard work and determination and no one could tell us differently. I think that in many ways, this is integral to who and where I am today. This sense of determination is undoubtedly a product of my mother's hardwiring. One thing that my mom will never understand is that sometimes this invincibility complex can be dangerous, especially for someone with the intersecting minority identities that I hold (*mixed race, Arab American, Muslim and a woman****).***

Jeremiya always tells me that my sense of entitlement will bite me in the ass one day. This came true while he was in the car with me one night a few years

ago. I was bragging about how I would go the wrong way down a one way and never get pulled over for it. It saved me several minutes on my short commute to his house and I loved the feeling of getting away with it. To prove my point, I went down the one way with him in the car with me. Soon after, I saw lights and heard sirens getting closer. I was bummed that Jeremiya proved me wrong and really didn't want to get a ticket- other than that, I didn't feel scared in the slightest. When the cop came up to my window, I lied and said I wasn't familiar with the streets and got lost due to the construction. I got away with a warning, and the encounter lasted about five minutes. I saw this situation as funny and inconvenient at most. After speaking to Jeremiya about it later, I realized his experience was entirely different. My avoidable recklessness had put him at risk, and it was all my fault. This memory has been very telling in terms of the manifestation of my understanding of the limitations Jeremiya faces simply because of his race.

As a black man growing up in this world I was taught by my parents that I'm not able to act like the rest of the world. Black people as a whole are under more scrutiny and judgment than other races in America. I always have to be conscious of the things I say, the things I do, and what rules I choose to follow for my own safety. Something as small as coming to a complete stop when driving is something I think about every time I get behind a wheel. Since the light skinned woman that I am in a relationship with wasn't raised to think this way, I am constantly trying to get her to think about how things will affect me not as a man, but as a black man. When she's driving, not coming to a complete stop puts us at risk to be pulled over. With how black men have been treated by the police in the past, putting myself in that position could be dangerous.

It's easy not to compare our relationship to other interracial couples. We don't know many our age and we are so different from those that we do know. We are unique due to a combination of intersecting identities that we both hold (Black and light-skinned, Muslim, and multiethnic). I think we've done a lot of work to create a respectful, compassionate, and intuitive relationship that works for both of us. When my parents first started dating, my maternal grandparents wouldn't let my dad in their house. My mom's father called my dad the n-word behind closed doors and made it clear that he wasn't welcome in their family. My dad didn't really have a family, so this wasn't as upsetting for him as it was for my mom. In a lot of ways, they created their own family between the two of them. This story makes me feel grateful that Jeremiya and I have the freedom to create our own interpretations of resilience, and be okay with making mistakes along the way.

Despite all of the things that were instilled into me and that helped shape me into the resilient man I strive to be, nothing can really prepare me for the world other than experience. Being in an interracial relationship means that I am able to experience things alongside someone that wants nothing but the best for me. Being able to communicate and express how different situations affect me as both a man and a black man is the best strategy I've found to navigate through the wolves of the world. Being able to speak to my parents about how they've gotten through tough situations with different races within their professions as well as everyday life makes it much easier to address issues within my personal life, including my love life. One of the best things they've been able to teach me is that there will always be someone with something to say that I can apply to my life. My sister is in an interracial marriage as well and being able to speak with her about how she deals with some of the same issues is a resource that I've found to be crucial in navigating my own relationships. As she is older than me, many of the issues that I face she has dealt with, and she's able to provide perspective and guidance to help solve issues I have.

As we both try to navigate down the road of being in an interracial relationship, it almost becomes easy when both of us have each other's best interests at heart. ***We're both extremely grateful to have been raised in an environment that promotes both change as well as open and free thinking.*** Being able to deal with tough times with all of the tools we were taught from loved ones or from our own personal experiences has created a unique opportunity for us to experience new things together. ***As we continue down the current road we're on we never forget to stop and think about how grateful we are to have each other and have the resilience we have in order to let our love carry us the rest of the way.***

Response of the Research Team

We want to respond as a couple to the work we have all done together and specifically to your art piece. We acknowledge the stream of emotions that were felt by you both as your wrote your individual and collective story – one of the terror of understanding the violence of the world, frustration for the societal oppression experienced daily and how to navigate gendered relationships, and the compassion that comes with stopping to listen and understand the different experiences of violence and fear experienced by your loved one. With this stream of emotions, we witnessed the opening of both of your hearts and minds and it became less about being right or proving your point and more about feeling gratitude for each other's company and the support of your families. Emotions carry us – this experience of cross-racial and gendered partnerships bring us so close to the lived experiences of our partners that we feel like we can almost relate to what it's like to be them but in reality, we cannot ever know what it's like to be them. One thing that was noteworthy to us as an interracial couple was how you both shared your stories and appreciated the authentic voice of your partner. Respecting the story our partner tells especially

if it is drastically different than our own can be personally very challenging. The story of this stream of emotions is in all the stories we tell each other and we can find it if we stop long enough to listen to our partner: what are they really saying under the anger, frustration, or fear? When we listen under the surface of those emotions, we find ways to connect at a deeper more intimate level and feel compassion more easily.

Stories carry us and from them, we learn about ourselves and each other and through this self and other awareness, we develop so many resilience strategies that you've shared with us – learning through your personal experiences, your families, each other, taking the time to listen to each other, understanding that words hold meaning and weight and to choose your words with sensitivity and compassion. As we reflect on this art piece and think about the now what? one theme that emerged together through our storytelling process is the beauty of the clashes that you have vulnerably brought to the table – knowing that you are not two perfectly molded puzzle pieces that fit perfectly together is beautiful to us. Because we are like that too. Your stories bring us feelings of connection and belonging. We understand what that's like. Through all these years together, we know that long-term relationships are tough and interracial relationships are even tougher. There are so many differences to navigate. We've learned that demanding our partner to be someone else breaks down the peacebuilding and resilience process. It's up to us to reframe our own expectations of the other. Reframing this is hard and can even go against our socialization process but you're both right – it can create a whole new way of being together – this reframing process creates an opportunity for transformation and freedom to create new experiences and a life together. Your puzzle pieces don't have to fit for your relationship to be beautiful.

Acceptance is in our words, our actions, how we connect with ourselves and each other. We can learn from each other through our storytelling process and widen the circle of our understanding of the world and even our worldview. Acceptance of the other is a peacebuilding tool of resilience. Finding a way to celebrate these cross-cultural differences is another step because it is possible to coexist and talk about our racial and gendered experiences in the same space without negating the other person's lived experience. It can be hard but it is possible to do this without giving up who you are. When the puzzle pieces don't fit exactly, that is ok because you can choose to more intentionally navigate your relationship and cherish your partner than if they fit "perfectly". You don't even have to justify your point – you can just be next to one another and respect and celebrate how these differences make you the people you are today. We've found through many a struggle that yielding is a tool for resilience and a foundational aspect of peacebuilding. When you yield, you don't have to give up who you are – you can just let your partner know that how they navigate the world matters to you even if you don't have the same values or beliefs. It is an incredible feeling when that authentically happens in an interracial relationship. Sometimes all it takes is pausing for 5-10 seconds to allow this yielding process to sink in and then compassionately act on it. This is you deeply listening to the heart of the other.

There has been many a time when we have been in a rural part of Kansas with our boys and have been looking for a place to stop and eat. I would ask Don to go into the restaurant to get a table or check out the wait while taking care of our younger child in the car. The more I have gotten to know Don's racialized reality daily, the more I have realized what an unsafe situation I have put him in time and time again. My whiteness was blinding my view. What seemed like a cozy country restaurant to me was a threatening environment for him where he has been on high alert for himself and his family. Once I witnessed racially-based violence in a rural restaurant this first hand with my husband and children as a target, I realized how much I would have to change how I related in these situations to lean into my own power and privilege in environments that could be emotionally or physically unsafe for my family. Even though Don never asked me to, I realized how important it was for me to go into the restaurant first and check out the overall environment and see it was potentially unsafe for my family.

So we have found new ways to be together that isn't what we have known before – a new way of being and knowing by years of cultural clashing that ended up resulting in opening our hearts and minds and widening the circle of our mutual understanding of ourselves and each other. This is a continual process to deepen the stories we tell each other, acknowledge the violence around, between, and within us, and to find these tools for resilience individually and together. This is our 'now what' and the message we leave you with. We wish you both the very best in your beautiful journey together.

Interracial Family 3: Houston and Heidi

Background

Houston and Heidi decided early in the research process that they wanted me to write a poem about their lived experiences together and that they would respond to this poem with a visual art piece. Heidi had a minor in Art and Houston liked the idea of supporting her in taking the lead on the second part of the arts-based narrative process. Of all the couple's, Houston and Heidi's relationship most resembled my own relationship with Don and the constant communication and conflict challenges we had had over the years because our upbringings represented the East versus the West in almost every aspect of our lives together. At one point

during the interview, Houston likened our relationships like two sides of the same coin or looking at us as mirror images of themselves 20 years from now. There were so many similarities, we were relieved and excited to know that we weren't as unique as we thought we were, and these struggles were a normal part of our cultural worlds clashing together to form a family. We had never had the opportunity to talk to someone else like us before and we all agreed that it was very comforting.

As I was writing the poem, I often checked in with myself and wondered, "Where does their story end and then ours overlap or begin?" because the goal was to take the coding from the first two interviews and write a poem that represented their relationship and how our interactions together responded to the three research questions. Then, as I allowed the artistic process to unfold and the story to reveal and tell itself to me, I realized that I didn't need to answer that question anymore. The story was powerful, and it told itself the way it needed to be told. I became a silent observer of the storytelling process: I embodied the story, and it embodied me, and finally it represented the connection and belonging that we four shared. I did not know that this experience would be transcendent and reflective of Heidi and Houston's art piece in which similar embodied feelings emerged. Through sitting with this dialogic process, I could feel Houston and Heidi's story, but I could also feel my own love story over the past ten plus years. Sometimes these stories were both on the page as I wrote the poem as one did not negate the other but added to the richness of the art-based narrative experience. Little did I know, that in writing the poem this way, Don would be able to share his own artwork and hence, his story with us in a spontaneous, serendipitous, almost mystical way during the final interview as we unpacked the art pieces as an emancipatory process of collaborative discovery.

As I wrote the poem, I relied on the in vivo and affective coding methods and also the embodiment of the stories on the page during the interviews. I wanted to preserve the voices of the interracial couple in the poem as much as possible. Heidi and Houston also sat with the poem once it was written and reviewed the video and written summaries of the interviews and reviewed the coding as well. Heidi had a very methodical way of going through the artistic process and Houston accompanied her as it was his first-time doing art and exploring poetry that represented his lived experience with race and gender. When asked if they had any edits before we unpacked their visual art piece, they did not feel there were any edits to be made but they did want to share about the embodied process of reading the poem. Houston said,

> It's an experience because I'm not very like artistic, or like have that kind of mind, and so like being able to hear my own voice within like words is kind of just like super interesting to like see and feel and... just like like I was part of the poems like my identity was part of it. It's pretty cool.

Heidi had a similar experience when she heard the poem for the first time,

> I felt like I could really hear myself in it. It felt really good to hear Houston's side because it felt like it solidified even more that I was like 'Yes, these are the things he's said to me,' and it just made some of them click and go like a little further for me, because my brain goes towards more of the artistic side. So it was really easy for my brain to almost understand it more in that light.

Heidi was exploring an overall picture for the couple's art piece and the koi fish towards the end of the poem really spoke to her. Then, they both picked a piece of the poem they really liked to write on the canvas in pencil before Heidi painted on top of it. This intention allowed the artistic process to flow and Heidi could continue to read the words while she was painting. Houston chose the quote, "Here we are, you and I. Let's build something together. We've got our

whole life ahead to build peace instead of war." Houston felt that this signaled the opportunity to be the generation in both of their families to change habits within their family systems and be a pioneer of change instead of falling into bad habits. Disrupting these entrenched cultural dynamics and transgenerational patterns creates a space for new things to emerge.

Heidi chose, "I'll be here by your side, even if I don't have something to say. Your presence is enough for me. I want to love you as you are, not something I want you to be." Heidi shared that this has been the couple's biggest struggle because of the different cultural communication styles and ways of being. She shared her interest in Houston not changing to fit the dominant cultural norm just to ease her own anxiety about the differences in communication. She realized that they could both be exactly as they are, very different, yet still be compatible. Both people were deeply touched by the quote chosen from the other person – they felt loved, heard, and accepted for who they were and for their cultural differences. Houston felt that these quotes resonated like wedding vows, "...kind of like our unity, and the like the promises we make to each other." Storytelling is a healing mystical process. I had not shared this with the couple ahead of time, but as I was engaging with the poem using head, heard, and gut analysis and anticipating the third interview, I had a spontaneous visualization of Houston and Heidi smiling at each other on their wedding day as part of my artistic process.

Don was deeply moved by the painting and began to share the connection he felt between the painting and his own tattoo he had sketched himself. I then shared that the inspiration I had at the end of the poem of the koi fish was from Don's tattoo. I had not shared that before the interview. So, in that moment, all three art pieces: the poem, the painting, and the tattoo were interconnected and told the story of both interracial couples both individually and as a collective story as they communicated about race and gender, daily violence, and peacebuilding and tools

for resilience. The following is an excerpt from the third interview in which Heidi shares the story of, “The Waters that Made Us,” an acrylic painting of four koi fish making their way upstream.

Aliah: What story is it telling you?

Heidi: So ummm...It's a highly textured painting. Um. It's highly textured because I was trying to communicate through not only the like look of it, but also like the feel, almost so like um. So...these four koi fish in this like...so this all like water, but it’s um, it’s all like, black and red and green, and it's really like highly textured, and waves and stuff.

Houson: I don’t know if you can see it.

Aliah: Oh, yeah, definitely can see the texture.

Heidi: Um, yeah, which I've never done before. So it was fun. Um, that's kind of like the idea of the kind of violence around us. So when fish move in the water, they aren't, necessarily thinking about the waves that they create. They're thinking about getting from Point A to Point B. And so that was kind of the idea behind. Like we all create these waves and our intent maybe isn’t the violence but that is what it creates.

Aliah: Whoa: Yeah. Intent versus impact. And so the intent is fish moving from Point A to Point B.

Heidi: But the water is impacted regardless of that intent. So that's kind of like the idea of the violence. And how like a big piece of our definition was that intent didn't matter. It was impact And then we have the four fish, and that was kind of to like represent, like all of our conversations together, and like the way that communicating with another couple that has some similarities to us has just been like a really good experience, and it's helped us see a lot of things, and it's felt like an act of peace building between us in itself. And so that's kind of like the fish, four fish interacting with each other. And then um in part of Houston’s 's piece. He kind of um I know he spoke about kind of how I've been kind of like protective um, but the impact of that hasn't always been great, you know the intent for me there was to protect him, and so that's like this is like sort of my fish. It's like kind of like swimming around his. Oh, in like an attempt to kind of protect it, Um And then, like you two are further up here because I feel like you guys are like we're like coming up behind you, and we've learned a lot from you through these conversations and things. So that'skind of a lot of thethoughts that kind of went behind it.

Aliah: Wow, that’s incredible. What you don’t know part of the story of this art piece is um, when I met Don um, I was very interested um by his art piece that he created. He has two koi fish on his arm that he actually like drew and um. Would you share about that? Because the poem I wrote that thinking of you all but I was also thinking of that story which you don’t know.

But now you're going to know and I didn't know this was gonna come up. Can you share about your...?

Don: Well you know what koi fish symbolize right? like perseverance and resilience and stuff like that. So you know, I was married before, and I was going through a lot um a pretty big struggle after my divorce. So I just came up with, like you know, like I was in a dark place and a good place. It's like, okay, I don't need to hold on to this. It's almost like a ying and yang. So when you guys did that symbol, it just reminded me so much of my tattoo, because the way I drew, you know, is kinda good and evil, you know just part of who I am. But I'm gonna see my way out of it. So you know the whole perseverance, you know. Uh, we all have our good and bad side, and you know, but we have control who or what can come out on top, you know. So, yeah.

Aliah: It's just our stories were intersecting, and I remember writing that part and thinking of you all, and what I wish for you all. But I was also thinking of all the struggles we've had, and how we have wanted to create peace building, resilience. And so that's basically, yeah, it's towards the end of the poem. But, it's kind of crazy how this is represented in yours, and then in his.

After all this had been shared, Houston and I shared that we noticed the dark part of the fish and that this represented the violence in all of us as part of who we all are in our oppressor identities. Even though we cannot escape who we are, this violence is something we can respond to and work on. Heidi had not intended that as she painted but saw the relevance and appreciated the interpretation.

Mirror Images

Here we are
You and I
Trying to make meaning of what's happening inside, between, and all around us
Violence is real
It's there and here and everyone
Ubiquitous microaggressions
Within and between and around us
It's physical, mental, financial, social-
And it doesn't really matter if it's unintentional
If it holds you down

Because if I hurt you, I wanna know
If I've perpetuated an act of violence against you,
Even if I didn't mean it
Then I need to take action to fix it
Whiteness blinds my view
And then – at the same time - I feel so protective of you
I wish my dad would stop talking about Vietnam-
All the threats
Our different identities intersect
Multiplicity
Race – ethnicity – religion – gender
"He's not the same religion"
So – my uncle threatened to kill you
My mom told me you weren't the one
My best friend didn't come to our wedding
And at that moment religion and race intersect
Again and again
Perpetual violence
Different origins, values, beliefs, and upbringings-
So I don't go to church
Speaking the truth in love when it oppresses you, doesn't make sense
And I told my dad to stop talking about Vietnam
Because of me
And I wish you'd just let it go – don't draw so much attention to me
I feel like I'm the landmine – now people have to be different around me
If we had never met that probably wouldn't have ever happened
I feel like a big part of it is me
I feel a lot of guilt about it
There's nothing I can really do about it – so much hostility
The way I look
Where my family comes from
My parents are Buddhist
I guess it affects who you can and can't talk to
Whether you feel safe or not
Parents told their children not to talk to me
Violence is real
It's impact, not just intent that makes the difference
It's hard to tell between a good and bad religious person
They almost look the same in my eyes
So I'm atheist. That's what I chose for myself.
But they still look at me with judging eyes and hearts.
He's the weird quiet guy over there – he eats weird foods
Didn't you know? I grew up in Kansas City.
Yeah, that's where I'm from.

There are all these intersections in my mind
It's overwhelming to me
Wondering how to make sense of all these
Blurred lines, information overload
Cultural cross over – clashing inside my brain
Either you're too fat or I'm too skinny
I'm just a white girl from Kansas
My parents didn't talk to me about race
So, I didn't learn this before
And now I have to learn it all at once
And I feel this pressure to conceive
Boys are more valuable than girls
I wonder what our baby will look like…
Will strangers know I'm their mother?
How do I make meaning of all these things?
My mother screamed at me to take your name
I don't go to church anymore
Violence is real

When we look at you
We see a mirror image of one another
It's comforting because
You don't really see an Asian man and a white woman every day
It's unique
Because I haven't seen relationships like ours
Even though we're happy
It feels like there's things telling us we shouldn't be
Violence is real
It's impact, not just intent that makes the difference

Telling stories together

It feels like old friends

Even though we just met you both

Connection, belonging

Being able to feel heard

You just get it

You've been there

You know what it's like

When I listen to your story

I can feel mine resonate within

Because violence is real

And we want to do something about that

Here we are

You and I

Let's build something together

We've got our whole life ahead

To build peace instead of war

Love instead of hate

Commitment, intentionality

Cross-cultural conflict styles give way to understanding

For now and the next generation

To widen the circle of understanding

Unity

So I can learn to say "I love you"

I can understand when you don't

I can open up my heart and mind a little more

I can understand that since you aren't me, you won't show emotion like I do

Sometimes you gotta feel uncomfortable to reap the benefits of growing together

I can say I'm sorry, sometimes, and be vulnerable to you

And I can stop waiting for an apology every time because it's just not gonna happen
I can learn to share my feelings even though I wasn't brought up that way
And I can learn that it's ok to walk away and regroup before we talk again

It's ok to walk away.

Words of affirmation - Acts of service
I'll be here by your side even if I don't have something to say
Your presence is enough for me

I want to love you as you are, not something I want you to be.

East and west, yin and yang –
Two different sides of the same coin,
You and me

We can push back on the status quo
Acknowledge our blind spots as oppressors
Lean into humility, empathy, patience, and understanding
Because the hate and violence in our world doesn't have to stay that way
Let's build something together – you and me and humanity

So when I tell my story, I know you'll listen even if you can't really understand
Storytelling is an act of peacebuilding between you and me.
And it makes me feel like we can weather any storm together.
Even if the world has shown us differently.
Because violence is a real thing.
But peacebuilding is a story that is richer to tell.
Like the koi fish swimming upstream.
Again and again.
Persistence.

Resilience.

To start again.

Figure 6. *The Waters That Made Us*

Figure 7. *The Good and Evil Inside Me*

After we viewed the art pieces together, Heidi and Houston talked about why it was important to do the art piece together as a couple. They felt that this put the idea of peacebuilding into action, doing something together to be able to build more connection around their lived experience together navigating race and gender dynamics daily. Houston felt that the act of doing was more powerful than just talking about it. Heidi felt that choosing a phrase from the poem to reflect on made her think more critically about her part in the interracial relationship and it was also an opportunity to hear things from her partner that she was not sure she would have heard so early in their relationship if they hadn't don't this project together. "I think it allowed us to internalize a little bit more and connect with it more." There were emotional moments in this third interview where we felt the power behind the stories, we had told each other. It was challenging to have discussions about race and gender in the same space without one Oppressed group feeling minimized by the other Oppressed group. In this case, these stories opened our hearts and minds to hear the other person. Heidi shared how important it was to feel like it was truly illustrated in the poem that men hold more value than women in society and that oftentimes, the conversations about whiteness seem to "eclipse" her struggles due to gender. Houston felt that having words on paper about his lived experiences represented his own vulnerability which has been something he has struggled showing in his relationship and with others. After having these conversations, Houston felt like it was easier to be vulnerable.

Finally, the research team discussed the embodied experience with the couple and asked them what types of sensations they experienced as they created the art piece. Both Heidi and Houston felt a feeling of deep connection with the artistic process. For Houston, he experienced a tightness in his chest and a feeling of personal connection to a piece of artwork that he had not experienced before. Heidi felt a sense of connection and freedom to do art again as it had been

several years since she had done artwork in college. She also felt a feeling of protection of the art piece and the story that was being told and fear that she would somehow "mess it up". I had similar fears that involved not wanting to mess up their creative process by asking the wrong questions. Objectively speaking and as artists, we knew that was not possible because you can't do art wrongly, just like you can't tell your story in the wrong way, but these fears still plagued us at times. The couple's now what? Involved thinking about how this cross-cultural peacebuilding and resilience experience would help them when they had biracial children, the importance of continuing to work on their own transformation individually and together as they create a cultural hybrid for their family system that will support a peacebuilding and resilience process and reminding themselves that just because they don't fit the dominant cultural norm does not mean that something is wrong with them. In essence, they will remind each other that they are ok, and they don't need to change who they are for the world around them that says otherwise.

Response of the Research Team

We would like to respond as a couple to this collective storytelling experience that we were able to share with you. Don and I have often said that we wish we had met earlier in our life so we would have had more time. More time to go through these traumatic interracial experiences to have more time to discover and implement peacebuilding earlier on. When we look at you, we see that possibility and it makes us glad to think that you have this opportunity to transform your current reality to go beyond what your families of origin could go – to create and transform your reality to something that actively addresses the black part of the koi fish and the movement of the water as you swim upstream together.

We are so happy to know you in this way as this experience was not just a growing experience for you both but it was for us as well. It was comforting to know that we aren't alone; we aren't as unique as we thought we were, that maybe your children will learn to embrace both parts of who they are as biracial beings because you are modeling deep love and acceptance of

each other as you constantly remind yourself of the impact that you make in your family with the violence you hold just by being you. Just as we innately hold this violence, we have discovered together that we have a great capacity for peacebuilding– individually, as a couple, and the four of us in community as we create connection and belonging through a storytelling experience that builds resilience and fortifies the very vows you shared on your wedding day. It's comforting to know this after this time together sharing stories.

When I see you both in my mind's eye, I see you smiling 50 years from now with more love, more understanding, more loving kindness in your eyes for each other created from a lifetime of focusing on the impact you make on one another, your family, and society and also getting up each day with the commitment to try again with humility, flexibility, adaptiveness, empathy, and compassion. Your cross-cultural journey has just begun and you are on the right track because as you attempt to speak the other person's communication and conflict style, you take steps to create a cultural communication hybrid that sets a fertile ground for more of the same: peacebuilding and resilience.

The two sections of the poem you chose for the art piece represent who you both are. And you are headed in the right direction. Have the painting up so you can see it daily. Not to evoke guilt, but to serve as a reminder that you can always persevere together. Be resilient. And in doing so, you are renewing those vows you took each and every day. Thank you for going on this journey with us. We are here whenever you want to check in. You are wonderful humans. Take care of yourselves and each other.

Interracial Family 4: Brittany and Jeff

Background

Brittany and Jeff were the only interracial couple we interviewed with a bi-racial child and so we spent a lot of time talking about our own experiences with coparenting. They decided that they wanted to do a visual art piece without any literary elements. Jeff shared that he trusted Brittany and did not need to be involved in every detail but would provide feedback to complete the art

piece before we unpacked it together during the third interview. As a researcher, I struggled the most relinquishing control of my involvement with this particular art piece. As I engaged in critical reflexivity, I identified that a lot of my feelings of panic came from the couple feeling empowered to create a visual art piece with no literary elements. The digital art piece was personally outside of my comfort zone as a qualitative researcher using primarily literary art-based narratives as data. This couple was also very independent in the making of their art piece and so I had a lot less points of communication throughout the art-making process than with other couples/families who ended up collaborating with me and the research team more. I had to explore my feelings of discomfort with visual narrative pieces and lean into that discomfort so that I could support this interracial couple in being the peacemakers of their story. I noticed that my partner who is a videographer, photographer, and graphic designer by trade, was very comfortable working with the couple on the initial design of their art piece. Brittany had the initial idea for the art piece and shared it with Don, Jeff, and I and we provided her with feedback about the colors involved and the layout. She wanted to make sure that the art piece told their interracial family's story fundamentals that had been shared during the first two interviews but also didn't want it to become too "busy". She also was exploring the use of the color red which could symbolize a lot of different things such as passion or intensity. We supported her in going with this color as it seemed representative of their interracial family experience with racism and the intensity of the struggles they had had adjusting to intentionally living in a multicultural world once they had their daughter.

Figure 8. *The Path Forward*

Brittany decided to start the digital art piece depicting their two families, marriage and relationship at the macro level. This art piece has a lot of movement (their footprints and journey) in it and shows the families of origin of both Jeff and Brittany. Brittany comes from a two-parent white household whereas Jeff was mostly raised by his mother and grandmother. Jeff talked about if there was one thing he could change or add to the art piece, it would be to add a silhouette of his grandmother since she had taken a great part in raising him. We talked about collectivist cultures and how this resonated with both Jeff and Don that a village raised them, not just a single mom or two parents. Footprints are shown headed down to silhouettes of Jeff and Brittany. There are gray thought bubbles representing their internal dialogues/ “voices in our

heads" and even conflict and cultural clashing that occurred with each other over the years as they navigated the complexities of their cross-racial relationship. Then, in the center, is a heart symbolizing their love for each other and out of that love came a child. The thought bubbles about the child are gray and take precedence over their individual or couple thought bubbles representing their newfound responsibilities parenting a biracial child. The footsteps then go back towards their families of origin symbolizing the importance of their family and their extended family relationships. The checkerboard pieces all over the art piece give it a multidimensional feel and signify the ever-changing experiences they have as an interracial family. The worlds depict Jeff living in a white world as an African American man and Brittany integrating into Jeff's Black family as a white woman. They also talked about how their monoracial families connect across cultural worlds because they are in an interracial marriage and have a biracial child. The couple acknowledged that bringing a child into the world changed the dynamic of their relationship and how they saw the world around them. The gray footprints depict the interracial couple/family going back into the world together as a family unit. They are also going back to their families of origin together as an interracial family unit – indicated by the gray footprints. The whole system is working because everyone is connected and supporting each other. The world is also greyed out and this portrays their interracial family having multicultural connections, understanding, and support.

As we all viewed the digital art piece together for the first time, Brittany and Jeff shared about how the art piece represented daily communication about race and gender, daily experiences with violence, as well as peacebuilding and tools for resilience. As Brittany and Jeff responded to RQ1, their conversations about race and gender often centered around their families of origin and their own socialization and how that socialization and value system impacted their

communication as an interracial couple. As portrayed in the digital drawing, these stories ended up connecting to their nuclear family system and how they are now impacted by racial and gender-based violence and how this impacts their family and specifically, their daughter who has witnessed her father being treated differently by a white police officer in a rural area and her mother leveraging her privilege as a white woman to try to avoid further violence. Some of Brittany's family members did not understand their union or even thought that their child would come out half Black and half white. Some family members thought Jeff would not be a present father because he was Black. This is one example of many daily experiences with violence that the family shared with us as a response to RQ2. As we view the digital art piece, it was easy for the eye to go directly to the male and female silhouettes in the lower center of the art and then to the child. It is as if their cross-cultural story and how they navigated daily violence, peacebuilding, and resilience all went back to how this could impact their daughter: they always had her in mind. They spoke of how adaptive they had to be in order to raise their child in a multicultural environment and model the right thing as they co-parented her, coming from very different backgrounds.

In response to RQ3, Brittany and Jeff's peacebuilding and resilience strategies involved the couple's debrief and specifically when they were not in conflict. They felt that this research had given them a chance to experience debriefing in a neutral space when they were not already emotionally charged. The art piece also reflects this space and unpacking these racial and gender-based dynamics together. They felt that their mindfulness about raising their daughter with intentionality of co-parenting and finding ways to communicate across cultures and sharing what they had learned with others was another way to enact peacebuilding in their family and the world. Before doing this research, Brittany said she would have been less likely to share that they

had sought out couples counseling to specifically work through cross-cultural issues. Now, she is more likely to share the resources they found and the tools they have used to come together and help co-parent a biracial child, live in a multicultural world, appreciate their differences, and provide support and help to others that may be struggling. They said they have also learned that yielding during a conflict and expecting non-disclosure is another form of peace building.

Response from the Research Team

We would like to respond together to the time we spent with you, learning about your joys and struggles and also the fears you've had walking through life together and raising your child. We see you and we hear you.

Jeff, since we both came from backgrounds in which we experienced abuse as children, your stories about your family of origin deeply resonated with us. It is hard to find ways to transform ourselves into peacemakers when we have a stamp from the beginning of our lives that reminds us that there was an adult that treated us like we were worthless. It makes it hard to raise a child with these shadows of the past that seem so real in the present. But you're totally doing it! You're raising your daughter to not experience what you did. You are breaking the family cycle. That's what we are trying to do too. We believe we can give our children more emotional and physical safety than what we experienced.

Brittany, there were so many times I saw myself as you were trying to navigate Jeff's family. Thanks for telling me what it was really like for you in the beginning – feeling anxious, wondering if you'd offend them, needing space but not knowing how to ask. It helped me to hear you say these things because I have felt alone and misunderstood as the only white woman in my husband's family. Seeing that you have survived and are now close with his family gives me a lot of hope for the future because I know this will positively impact my children. I hope that can happen.

What I think was most powerful to us was when we listened to how you both responded to racial violence together and how you explained it to your daughter so she could understand. As she navigates being a Girl of Color, you are both navigating how to respond to her when she has questions about her own identity. Sometimes she draws herself as Black, white, or biracial and you accept and support her expressions of herself. And when she comes home and says

racism doesn't exist because there isn't slavery anymore, you sit down and talk to her about implicit bias and things a lot of white adults cannot comprehend or minimize because of their own discomfort. You are years ahead of us as our children are still pretty young but you give us a lot of hope. We see you and we hear you and we are so grateful for the intentional time we got to spend together. You helped us see that these family dynamics are normal when I come from apples and Don comes from oranges. Sharing stories together created a feeling of connection and belonging we have never experienced before and we also felt seen and heard. Thank you.

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

Each interview ended with the open-ended question "Now what?" As such, this chapter will be concluded with a collective poem that illustrates a response to this question across interviews with interracial families including my own family as we navigate and respond peacefully to violence that has been inflicted upon us.

OUR NOW WHAT?!

We keep moving down this path of compassion, understanding, and self-love
Our children are shining stars in the heavens above
They have more kindness in their hearts than we could have ever dreamed of
Emotionally intelligent -
They don't have to swim in that river of cruelty
They are flying high above in the sky.
And I'm down below, trying not to get pulled back into the river
Even that is all that I ever known
I found a way to get out so that cycle doesn't continue
So I'm gonna just keep going, keep movin along
Working on my shadow message
Making it my daily song
I bring in the sword and cut through that generational curse
That's my now what?!

Yeah I wanna protect them from becoming me
I give them the opportunity to move forward more than I ever did
To be further along emotionally, spiritually, and intelligently
That's opportunity
That's self-love
That's working on my shadow message
Letting my voice be heard so I can be a voice for others that haven't found theirs yet
That's my now what?!

In community, I rise.
I listened to my inner voice. I found my shadow message.
I know, I can articulate how I really feel about myself.
And in the depths of my worthlessness, comes a spring of love.
I've accepted what happened, but I won't let it define me.
Now, I put both feet in
Going forward, shifting my perspective
Connection and belonging are my heart song
I can see other people like me
I'm going to read more, find community resources
And continue to heal
That's my now what?!

It's ok for you to be you
And for me to be me
I can't change you
And I wouldn't want to even if I could
Because you make me better
When I have to go deep inside
And explore my own values and beliefs
So different from yours.

I can’t change you.
I have to reframe how I think about it.
How we interact will take work
But it’s not so hard when I just accept that
These differences don’t negate you or me
They are just who we are and that’s ok
So I’m going to yield
And love you for what you bring
Peacebuilding comes with intentionality, humility, and commitment
To show up and let my listening deepen, my frustration be heard
That’s our now what!

We’ve got all these signs from outside
Saying we’re doing it wrong.
And we’re happy when they’re telling us we shouldn’t be
We get pushed and shoved into this mold
That wasn’t meant for us.
But we’re tired of that shit.
Because instead of trying to fit into that mold.
We need another mold.
Maybe we’ll create it for ourselves.
From the stories we tell.
The stories we’ll tell our children.
Because they’ll have to create their own mold too.
That’s different than ours.
There’s a beautiful peaceful family we’re creating
Based on disrupting that stock story that we can’t be together
Because of the color of our skin, the religion we grew up with,
And on and on and on.
We’re going to shut them down
And let our love blossom

No need to second guess ourselves
That's our now what!

Marriage is tough
Raising a biracial child is even tougher
But we've got the tenacity to carry on
Because we've learned to pause, reflect, give it our all
Expect non-disclosure
Tolerate discomfort for growth
Create a neutral space to have courageous conversations
With love at the center of it all- this path forward is worth it
Even though it's tougher than anything I've ever done
Doing this with you
Sharing what we've learned with others
We heal the world
This is our now what!

Summary of Chapter 4

Research Question 1: Communication about Race and Gender

In response to Research Question 1 (RQ1), gendered and racial communication in interracial families centered thematically around (1) not escaping the white racial frame as well as sexism and misogyny, (2) the creative tension and transformative potential of talking about race and gender intentionally for the first time, (3) the unveiling of stock and concealed stories, (4) parenting biracial children through a lens of critical hope, and (5) storytelling as an act of peacebuilding and resilience.

The narrative thread of responding to RQ1 begins with a critical consciousness that erupted through the interracial narratives during the interview process that we could not escape the white racial frame. Ironically, though we are purposed to dismantle oppressive

systems and address our oppressor/Oppressed identities, we could not escape the sexist, racist, and misogynistic aspects of our social conditioning. In other words, we also could not escape our own oppressor identities regarding both race and gender. Instead, we leaned into a critical consciousness, engaging in individual and collective reflexivity realizing that we could communicate differently cross-culturally and create opportunities to unpack critical intercultural communication. My autoethnographic approach to peacebuilding involved working from peace within to peace between, and then peace among allowing me to navigate challenging cross-racial and gendered tension with my fellow research team member and other interracial families. As I worked towards peace within, I utilized listening being to find my center and emotionally regulate, intercultural listening as an operationalized approach to peacebuilding to create opportunities for peace between my partner and me, and finally, aspects of fostering intercultural humility and resilience through narrative restructuring. This allowed us to imagine what our cross-cultural communication could be like through a lens of critical hope. As a result, through the discomfort of exploring not being able to escape the white racial frame as a couple first (peace between), we were able to enter cross-cultural communicative space with other interracial couples and co-facilitate more easily so that we could all unpack motivational interviewing techniques such as rolling with resistance, narrative therapy techniques, and having courageous conversations about race.

For many interracial couples, these interviews were the first time they intentionally took time to talk to each other about race and gender in their relationship. This naturally was a place of creative tension and opportunities to work with conscious and unconscious resistance, implicit biases, our racist and sexist social conditioning, and many other communicative psycho-social phenomena. As an interracial family communication facilitator, using the conceptual framework

of fostering intercultural humility and resilience with interracial couples/families allowed me to be purposeful about helping couples/families bring out toxic family cycles that needed to be unearthed for intersectional healing to take place. Narrative therapy techniques assisted my co-facilitation process in finding new ways to restructure the interracial couple/family communication so that positive change could occur. Reminding the couples/families to expect resistance as part of the process helped them move from communicating about race and gender to having courageous conversations about race, to finally finding localized approaches to peacebuilding and resilience. Additionally, couples/families indicated that the experience of intentionally talking about race had been transformative and healing. Stock and concealed stories were constantly being told through the oppressor/Oppressed lenses of the interracial couples/families. Shifting from stock to concealed story successfully and unpacking the learning opportunity required commitment, intentionality and trust between the interracial couple/family and the research team. Even though all parts of the conceptual framework of interracial couple/family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation are important in the shift from stock to concealed storytelling, the research team identified how important critical empathy was in the launching of this cross-cultural communicative process. The shift from perspective taking which can feel dismissive to the lived experiences of the Other, to the practice of critical empathy opened an emotional portal and communicative framework to then engage in intercultural listening and develop intercultural humility and resilience when discussing race and gender.

All interracial families/couples discussed what it was like to co-parent the biracial children they already had or explored their hopes and dreams for their biracial children whether they had them or not yet. All researcher/participants espoused a critical hope of a better future

for their children and shared a collective desire for their children to integrate a positive and whole sense of biracial identity development. Some of the conversations about bi-racial children were the hardest to have as children are an extension of us. It can be triggering to discuss co-parenting and differences in values and belief systems in detail. Even though all aspects of the fostering intercultural humility and resilience are important when having cross-cultural conversations about race and gender, specifically having courageous conversations about race and gender when discussing biracial children and expecting non-closure were important parts of these conversations centered in co-parenting bi-racial children.

An overarching major theme was storytelling as an act of peacebuilding and resilience that originated from having conversations about race and gender. This also overlaps with RQ3 as an act of peacebuilding and resilience. In this study, I specifically interrogated how the act of storytelling allowed me to having communication with my husband about race and gender that I had never had before and moved me from a place of fear to a place of empowerment. Being able to talk about gender and race is developmental in nature and it happens on a continuum of building cultural self and other awareness and sensitivity to shifting the paradigm from the myth of competence to one of fostering intercultural humility and resilience. Then, as we share our stories, we move into an embodied process of intercultural humility in which we utilize critical empathy, and elements of intercultural listening with ourselves and others as indicated in the Conceptual Framework for Critical Evocative Autoethnography as a Cross-Racial Gendered Coinquiry in Chapter 3 (Figure 3). As we move from the inside out from inner peace to peace between to peace among, we begin to have intentional conversations about race and gender allowing us to find ways to narratively restructure our current state of oppression to new possibilities for cross-cultural potential. Peace within, peace between, and peace among take

place the more we share stories. Storytelling is the gateway for intercultural humility and resilience to take place. As we share our stories of race and gender, the more we tap into narrative resilience and our trauma story, and through this communicative framework transformative healing can occur.

Research Question 2: Experiences with Daily Violence

The three emergent themes for RQ2 were (1) personal experiences with violence on a spectrum, (2) the interconnectedness of childhood abuse, rape, and domestic violence in adulthood and (3) violence is ubiquitous.

Researcher/participants defined for themselves what violence meant to them both individually, as a couple, and finally, with the research team. The initial interview process involved brainstorming the couple/family's definition of violence. Many started their definitions with physical violence and then explored emotional, verbal, sexual violence, the difference between intent versus impact, and daily microaggressions. Finally, couples/families explored the dual experience of holding both oppressor and Oppressed identities and how cross-cultural communication based on these identities surfaced in family, educational, and other societal systems. Couples/families extensively discussed their formative years and socialization about race and gender in their youth and how that still impacts their communication and understanding of race and gender today. Part of the co-construction of meaning included the couples/families and the research team sharing their individual definitions of violence and then creating a collective definition or definitions together. Researcher/participants intentionality worked on their own critical empathy and intercultural listening skills to operationalize intercultural humility and resilience to explore their contributions to gender and racially based violence and how they were socialized to have these oppressor identities.

Trauma and narrative resilience were explored in the second theme of daily experiences with violence (childhood abuse, rape, and domestic violence) that specifically related to the research team's childhood trauma and that of the white female researcher/participant. One major takeaway from working through different aspects of addressing this type of violence related to childhood trauma was acknowledging how this trauma was cyclical and presented itself in adulthood through the shadow self. The shadow self is the negative meaning we make of ourselves based on how we have been treated over the course of our lifetime, specifically in childhood, even at a cellular level as a part of our cellular memory. The shadow self amplifies the trauma story in such a way that victims stay victims unless they intentionally find a path to healing. The research team and Tess, worked on examining the shadow self, the impact of violence on our psyche and communication within our interracial family, and learning how to reframe the trauma narrative using intercultural humility and resilience and specifically narrative reframing through the implementation of arts-based narratives.

Just as we experience the phenomenon of peace within, peace between, and peace among (Galtung, 1969), violence is also all around us and inside of us. Violence is present in the relationships we have with our significant others and within our family system, system of education, and society at large. One of the antidots of working successfully across cultures is for oppressors to engage in intercultural listening as Oppressed family members share the stories of violence they have been subjected to. When the oppressor acknowledges with intercultural humility, the power they hold in the interracial relationship, a mutually emancipatory process can unfold. As a family communication facilitator, I utilized the conceptual framework of developing intercultural humility and resilience as a peacebuilding tool that allowed intersectional stories of violence to be shared and acknowledged in a safe environment to have courageous

conversations. Having courageous conversations about race and gender naturally caused discomfort in both the listener and the storyteller but we rolled with resistance as a motivational interviewing technique. As a result, we moved communicatively from stock to concealed stories, to stories of resistance, to freedom stories. Acknowledging violence with humility and how we, as oppressors, are the source of violence, creates a plan for peace within the interracial family system.

RQ3: Experience with Peacebuilding and Resilience

Many tools for peacebuilding and resilience were explored from conceptual frameworks illustrated in the literature review. The conceptual frameworks of interracial family communication for intersectional healing and reconciliation (critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility) as well as the development of intercultural humility and resilience (courageous conversations about race and gender, motivational interviewing, and narrative therapy techniques). Three new tools (couples debrief, cross-culturally congruent listening, and hybrid culture) were also identified because of the research conducted.

Critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility were examined dialogically throughout the interview process as the research team worked with interracial couples and debriefed the experiences about race and gender with each other. Even though the researcher/participants were not aware of these communication frameworks, many of them used critical empathy and intercultural listening techniques that went beyond an evaluative form of listening. They leaned into discomfort and acknowledged their inability to fully understand cross-cultural dynamics. In this way, the narratives explored throughout the study illustrated the conceptual framework of family communication about intersectional healing and reconciliation. Additionally, the more these frameworks were in place, the easier it seemed to develop

intercultural humility and resilience through the second conceptual framework of having courageous conversations about race and gender, expecting and experiencing discomfort for growth through motivational interviewing techniques, and engaging in critical hope through narrative therapy techniques. In other words, these conceptual frameworks worked hand in hand to create opportunities for peace building and resilience.

Three tools that emerged from the data beyond the literature review were the couple's debrief, cross-culturally congruent listening, and hybrid culture. Researcher/participants often indicated how important it was to have a neutral place to have courageous conversations about race and gender and try out different cross-cultural communication skills in a safe environment to make mistakes and lean into discomfort for growth. Oftentimes, the debrief started with tense conversations about race and gender, moved on to exploring value differences, and finally emotional catharsis. This rhythm of storytelling seemed to allow for the greatest sharing and the most benefit to the interracial couple/family which also allowed for trust and connection to build between the interracial couples/families and the research team as well. As a result of collective storytelling, the research team and researcher/participants experienced a phenomenon called cross-culturally congruent listening during which they felt connected to the other interracial couple/family and did not feel the need to explain themselves to each other. This phenomenon occurred naturally when the interracial families shared their lived experiences with each other which resulted in a positive experience for all based on the similarities and hardships that were shared.

Finally, hybrid culture was an experience interracial families shared when incorporating the values and beliefs of both partners into the framework of the interracial family/couple unit. Additionally, part of creating a hybrid culture was deciding what toxic cycles they wanted to

break and what values and beliefs they wanted to hold on to so that they could impart this learning and transformation to their children. Couples/families had a continual commitment to work on issues of inequity (motivational interviewing) and to create transformative hybrid frameworks of values and belief systems that worked well for their couple/family.

Chapter 5 - Discussion of Findings and Implications

Introduction

This critical evocative autoethnography as an intersectional coinquiry tests out and builds upon conceptual frameworks involving interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation (critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility) as well as the conceptual framework of fostering intercultural humility and resilience through motivational interviewing, narrative therapy techniques and courageous conversations. These conceptual frameworks were explored to respond to the three research questions:

1. How does gendered and racialized communication manifest in my own family? In others?
2. How does my intercultural experience with daily violence manifest in my own family? In others?
3. How do I implement peacebuilding and resilience strategies within myself and my interracial family? How do I make meaning of how other couples/families explore peacebuilding and resilience strategies?

Many different methods and methodologies informed this study. Evocative autoethnography was utilized to connect the intellectual and the emotional parts of myself. As a result, I engaged the researcher/participants in a way to explore their narratives as embodied truth about their daily experiences with race and gender. It was important that the research team and the researcher/participants approached the coinquiry with a critical lens due to the nature of the research questions and the power differentials involved with operationalizing intercultural listening as a practice. Critical arts-based narrative inquiry was a methodological framework that

supported an appreciation of diverse ways of being and knowing. This honored and respected how the interracial couples/families wanted to share their stories of oppressor and Oppressed identities and the fight to survive the dominant culture as a marginalized community through both literary and visual arts-based means. The research design involved participatory frameworks with three semi-structured interviews following a critical incident framework with four interracial couples/families over a 6-month period. Data analysis included a hybrid coding method of affective (versus, emotive, and value) and in vivo coding methods (Saldaña, 2021) accompanied by the head, heart, and gut analysis (Ellingston, 2017).

As a critical evocative autoethnographer, throughout this manuscript, I balanced my identity as both oppressor (white person) and Oppressed (woman) and explored my understanding of different systems: myself as a system of violence, peace, and resilience, my interracial family system, other interracial families and larger societal systems such as systems of education as we communicated about race, gender, daily violence, as well as peacebuilding and resilience. In other words, how do different systems create experiences that further violence and oppression and how can we dismantle oppressive systems and engage in intentional peacebuilding? Further, I explored what cross-cultural communicative potential could be uncovered as we reflected on race and gender dynamics, daily violence in the form of racism, sexism, and misogyny, peacebuilding and tools for intercultural resilience within these systems. Finally, the research team and researcher/participants addressed how we communicate critically within these systems to help create a peaceful path forward in committed and intentional interracial relationships.

This chapter highlights several notable theoretical, methodological, and practice/engagement contributions to the field of leadership communication. The theoretical

contributions include listening as a recognized form of communication: Intercultural listening and cross-culturally congruent listening are frameworks that attribute more to listening than to speaking in critical intercultural communication. Intercultural listening attends to self and other awareness, power dynamics, and supporting the voices of marginalized peoples. Cross-culturally congruent listening creates opportunities to further peacebuilding in cross-cultural communication by creating feelings of connection and belonging as interracial families collectively engage in storytelling and narrative resilience. Additionally, successfully navigating critical intercultural communication takes place first within, between, and finally among people following a similar framework as peace within, peace between, and peace among (Galtung, 1969). Finally, fostering interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation showcases the interracial family system to dismantle systemic oppression and daily violence that has the potential to impact larger educational and societal systems. Second, methodological contributions to the field include positioning art as emancipatory and community engaged. Arts-based narratives create a freedom of expression which are culturally responsive and support cross-cultural storytelling thus creating emerging freedom stories. Finally, practice/engagement contributions involve intentionality and commitment regarding communication about race and gender naturally leading to intersectional healing: interracial couples/families organically practiced the peacebuilding tools of critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility. Additionally, community engagement and service contributed to intersectional healing and reconciliation and were defined by a desire to give back and provide support to the community and others struggling with daily violence, racialized and gender-based trauma, and cross-cultural communication.

Theoretical Contributions

Lipari (2010) asserts that there are many ways to communicate that go beyond discourse and dialogue. With the nuances, tensions, and disorientation that come from cross-cultural relationships (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022), intentionality in the field of intercultural communication is necessary to further critical intercultural communication. In the western world, people often place more importance on what is shared by the speaker whereas there are many other ways to communicate meaning that contribute to peacebuilding and resilience which go beyond discourse and dialogue. The following are the implications for practice of this research:

Listening as a Form of Communication

This research is significant because it does not negate the role of the listener in cross-cultural communication: it intentionally amplifies it. With speaking being often synonymous with communication, we often minimize the role of listening in Westernized contexts (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). Intercultural listening (Mestrovich Seay et al., 2022) was presented as a conceptual framework incorporating listening being, active listening, as well as narrative and constructivist listening to develop the ability to develop self and other awareness in cross-cultural communication, attend to power differentials in a cross-cultural relationship, and support the storytelling of marginalized peoples such as interracial couples/families. Intercultural listening supports listening practitioners in accessing other forms of communication that are non-evaluative and go beyond discourse and dialogue and as a result, have the potential of being more cross-culturally responsive.

With the conceptual framework of intercultural listening being presented and explored at the heart of the interracial couple's, families' and research team's cross-cultural communication, another phenomenon occurred which further illustrates the undeniable role of listening as

communication. Cross-culturally congruent listening was a peacebuilding tool of resilience for interracial couples/families addressing violence at all levels and within all systems from family to society at large. This research is significant because interracial families found refuge in each other that they had never experienced before. It was comforting to know that we were not alone anymore and that we had resources and support in the connections we had made intentionally with each other through this research. Finding connection and belonging with other interracial families contributed to intercultural humility and intercultural narrative resilience.

Navigating Critical Intercultural Communication: Peace Within, Between, and Among

Galtung (1969) provides a conceptualization of peace within, peace between, and peace among. Similarly, to this framework, as an autoethnographer, I found my path towards healing from intersectional trauma as both oppressor and Oppressed by working from the inside outward. First, I worked on my own understanding of race and gender, how I navigated the world, and the biases I held including how my whiteness impacted the People of Color around me. As I worked, lived, and interacted with People of Color, and utilized intercultural listening techniques to hear their concealed and resistance stories, I began to interrogate not only my own role as oppressor but also my role as Oppressed. I worked through these worlds of peace within, peace between, and peace among simultaneously at times and with the acknowledgment of the design's permeability while also valuing the process of working on my critical intercultural communication from the inside out. Once I had practiced this conceptual framework/autoethnographic mapping through lived experience, I began working on this research study which allowed me to experiment with supporting the facilitation of this process for others. All the researcher/participants had experiences with peace within, peace between, and peace among as they went through the interview process and created their art pieces. Similarly,

the research team and researcher/participants employed critical empathy, intercultural humility, and resilience with themselves and others as they created pathways towards peace. In this way, the research holds significance as there is a framework to navigate critical intercultural communication as a peacebuilding tool.

Conceptual Framework for Fostering Interracial Family Communication towards Intersectional Healing and Reconciliation

This research presents how critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience work collectively and synergistically to foster interracial family communication towards intersectional healing and reconciliation. This conceptual framework positions interracial couples/families in intentional cross-cultural relationships who are purposing to be intentional in their commitment to explore race and gender and the dualistic tension of their oppressor/Oppressed identities. While there are many ways to acknowledge systemic inequities, dismantle oppressive systems, and achieve social justice, this research reveals the importance of the interracial family system as a place of both daily violence and peacebuilding coexisting and communicative means to create opportunities for intersectional healing and reconciliation that can be extended to positively impact larger educational and societal systems.

Conceptual Framework for Fostering Intercultural Humility and Resilience

This research is significant because it demonstrates that interracial couples/families do not have to be trained therapists to learn how to reframe the violence and oppression that has negatively impacted them. Instead, interracial families develop emotional adaptiveness and intercultural acuity as they learn how to foster intercultural humility and resilience using narrative therapy techniques, motivational interviewing, and courageous conversations about

race and gender. Narrative therapy has already been utilized in the field of psychology to work with multicultural perspectives (Biever, 1998). This research showcases the consistent and needed importance of practically operationalizing narrative therapy techniques with interracial families. As a result, interracial families were able to reframe personal and traumatic stories about race and gender to support the storyteller and in this case, the interracial family/couple to move to a place of empowerment to un-cover our concealed, resistance, and emerging freedom stories. Rolling with resistance, which has primarily been used with couples practicing motivational interviewing, has been expanded in this study to include interracial couples/families. Interracial couples/families and the research team experienced resistance within ourselves and with each other and the creative tension that comes with discomfort for developmental growth opportunities. Another aspect of this study explores using the tenets of courageous conversation about race and extending these concepts to gender as well. Even though intersectional dialogue is complex, it also has the potential to be transformative and healing in cross-cultural relationships. Couples and families were able to talk about both race and gender, daily violence, and peacebuilding and resilience tools through this conceptual framework. This research has explored the conceptual framework of developing intercultural humility and resilience through these communication strategies as one way to have effective intersectional dialogue involving race and gender.

Methodological Contributions

Art-Based Research as Emancipatory & Community Engaged

One aspect of this research was to incorporate underrepresented voices of interracial families that often are unheard, unavailable in research, and lie on the margins of society with our concealed stories dismissed by dominant culture. Arts-based research provides new avenues

for qualitative inquiry to re-examine social issues in the daily life of marginalized communities and to create a greater concept for language and storytelling (Barone & Eisner, 2012). I often asked myself how we could move from concealed stories to freedom stories as this manuscript was the beginning of how we tapped into resistance stories just by telling our stories together and healing together. There were many times when the interracial couples, families, and research team sought out non-traditional means to explore race and gender, daily violence, as well as peacebuilding and resilience tools in a way that resonated with our daily lives and interracial gendered experiences. We engaged in literary and visual art-based storytelling to not just find a structure for our concealed stories to be heard but to harness a critical hope with a trajectory towards resistance and freedom stories. Arts-based narratives create a freedom of expression which is culturally responsive and supports cross-cultural storytelling thus creating our emerging freedom stories. It is possible that the more interracial couples/families and other marginalized communities engage with arts-based research, the more our emerging freedom stories could be less about a response or reaction to oppression but instead, a celebration of our wholeness as an interracial family and our critical hope for our children to embrace their whole selves.

There are many ways to write autoethnography as method. It was decided early in the writing process that the some of the limitations of autoethnography such as being self-centered or writing in a vacuum could be somewhat remedied by creating a cross-cultural space for coinquiry focusing on intersectional healing. This method allowed for me to go through the autoethnographic process authentically and engage with critical and evocative frameworks while exploring racialized and gendered communication within myself, between me and my spouse, and with other interracial families, creating a new form of transformative systems change and community engagement through the stories we told each other. Art was a way to access

holistically, the daily lived experiences of interracial families/couples as they navigated daily violence, peacebuilding and resilience and allowed for a collective creative process of peacebuilding. Even though much of the dissertation centered on stock, concealed, and resistance stories, emerging freedom stories were the most prevalent when we co-constructed literary and visual art together.

Practice/Community Engagement Contributions

All researcher/participants including the research team, demonstrated intentionality and commitment specifically to their cross-cultural relationship in such a way that we openly opted to answer all three research questions through the stories we told and the art pieces we created. As a result, the findings support different types of critical intercultural communication through heightened awareness and changed behaviors that further transformative peacebuilding and resilience in interracial families.

Intentionally and Commitment Naturally Lead to Development of Intersectional Healing

Intercultural development models such as the DMIS discuss the importance of intentionality and commitment when engaging in cross-cultural communication in order to create developmental opportunities for growth (Bennett, 2004). The dynamic dyad of interracial families who are conscious of their oppressor and Oppressed identities and intentionally communicating about race and gender created an ecosystem for critical intercultural communication to be transformative. Commitment built trust and trust created transformative cross-cultural healing.

Interracial families and couples were not trained to practice critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility and resilience. Instead, their intentionality and commitment brought forth these peacebuilding tools organically throughout the interview process. The

research team opened discussed and modeled their oppressor/Oppressed identities during the interviews and supported the researcher/participants as they unpacked their own intersectional healing narratives individually, together, and with the research team. The intersection of acknowledging the innate violence we hold as oppressors and intentionally and collectively working on peacebuilding and resilience tools naturally brought forth the development of interracial family communication for intersectional healing and resilience fostering intercultural humility through having courageous conversations about race, enacting narrative therapy and motivational interview techniques. Finally, we sought to develop new peacebuilding and resilience skills accepting that intersectional healing is a process of becoming and is never fully done. Expecting non-closure is part of the peacebuilding process.

Community Engagement and Service Emerge from Critical Hope

A marker of healing from trauma is prosocial behavior (Frazier et al., 2013). Whether it is a lifetime trauma or a recent trauma, individuals engaging in helping or altruistic behaviors experience greater levels of well-being and healing. Stidham et al. (2012), report that survivors of sexual violence after having a period to heal, engaged in many ways of helping others such as choosing a helping profession, providing guidance and advocacy support to other victims, stopping perpetrators, and speaking publicly. As such, interracial couples/families discussed less feelings of shame and embarrassment regarding the struggles they had traversed which were directly related to race and gender. The research team was able to share about racial and gender-based violence that had been present in their relationship and the tools and community resources they had used to cultivate more peace in their family system. Researcher/participants shared about leadership roles they had in the community to promote community-based healing from violence, their encouragement of others to share their concealed stories with their family and/or

community, and an openness and confidence to be more forthcoming with others about their racially and gender-based struggles and resources they find helpful to them. Researcher/participants exemplified this by sharing their stories in this manuscript, acknowledging the trauma of racism, sexism, and misogyny, and creating new transformative pathways for their interracial families and biracial children to thrive. It is important to note that the implications of this research centered around how we all harnessed a critical hope that our interracial relationships with family members was worth the challenge and that our children would experience a better tomorrow based on the peacebuilding and resilience skills we had learned to implement in our own families and relationships. In fact, sharing our stories was a way to foster narrative resilience and give back to our families, our children, our communities, and ourselves.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, this research was conducted with researcher/participants that had some type of higher education degree in the form of a bachelor's or master's degree. Researcher/participants were actively involved in the coding and data analysis and were able to create literary and visual representations to answer the research questions based on their understanding of the study. As a researcher, I did not have to simplify the coding process or findings due to the socio-educational level of the participants. If I had been working with participants with a different socio-economic status, I may have had to reframe the coding, data analysis and other parts of the study to actively engage them in the critical arts-based narrative process. Second, the researcher/participants were individuals that my husband and /or I knew well and with whom we had established a level of trust before starting the interview and data collection process. The findings may be different based on how the researcher knows the researcher/participants and the level of trust that has or has not been developed.

Additionally, doing this research involved me and my husband sharing deeply personal experiences with the researcher/participants and implicating ourselves and our lives in the study. Some researchers would not want to share personal experiences or have the same amount of emotional investment. Similarly, the researcher/participants had a great deal of emotional investment in the study, shared personal information with the research team, and were vulnerable with us. As a result, we all felt some level of discomfort participating in this study even though there were many positive trade-offs. Finally, doing cross-cultural work involving working with couples and families necessitated a research team with strong co-facilitation skills. It is one thing to write about critical empathy, intercultural listening, and intercultural humility but it is another model for these cross-cultural communication skills and support researcher/participants in developing critical intercultural communication as a pathway to peacebuilding and resilience. For these reasons, some research teams may feel that the cons outweigh the pros and not choose to conduct a study like this one.

Recommendations for Research

As a result of the findings of this study, future research potential has emerged:

Biracial Children Identity Development

This research was centered in interracial couples/families. However, the thread that connected our stories was our critical hope for our biracial children. The number of biracial and multiracial children in the United States continues to increase as there are more interracial partnerships (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008). Just as interracial families are absent from literature, so are biracial children and their identity development. There are different biracial identity development models that speak to how biracial and multiracial individuals can make sense of themselves and their physical and cultural ambiguity (Sue & al., 2022). Conducting

research with multiracial individuals within the context of their family system can provide more ways to further interracial family communication research from the point of view of biracial or multiracial children. Documenting the stories of multiracial children provides a unique avenue to explore more understanding about communication about race and gender, daily violence and microaggressions targeted at this population, and peacebuilding and tools for resilience.

Conflict Resolution and Cross-Cultural Conflict Coaching

This study focused on a type of coaching: motivational interviewing which was operationalized to incorporate the unique experiences of interracial couples/families. Oftentimes, conflict resolution and coaching methods do not account for cross-cultural differences and can be whitewashed for the dominant culture. Further research on conflict resolution and cross-cultural conflict coaching in cross-cultural communication would provide helpful contributions to the field as an extension of this research on interracial families. Expanding conflict resolution and coaching models to incorporate the dynamic needs of interracial families and other marginalized communities is a needed contribution to the field of qualitative inquiry that needs to be explored further (Atkin & Yoo, 2019).

Listening as an Engaged Form of Communication

Listening continues to be minimized in communication research (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). Intercultural listening was a core component to this study because it was a way to extend communication to a place that dialogue may not be able to reach in cross-cultural contexts while keeping in mind power dynamics (Lipari, 2010). Language has many limitations for survivors of trauma – it can overwhelm, re-traumatize when our stories are rejected by those around us that we love and trust, and talking about our trauma can trigger PTSD symptoms (Van Der Kolk, 2014). It is important to continue to further research regarding listening and specifically

intercultural listening as a conceptual framework in this manuscript in the fields of communication to provide more cross-cultural experiences and to support the stories of marginalized voices who have experienced trauma.

Resilience as a Neoliberal Construct

An emerging area of research problematizes resilience as a neoliberal construct (Humbert & Joseph, 2019). Resilience literature could be responsible for sustaining and perpetuating certain hegemonic practices and maintaining societal inequities. As resilience has surfaced as both a problematic and political issue, it is important for future directions of research to continue to develop around further defining the relevance and importance of resilience.

Recommendations for Practice

Utilizing the interracial family system as a catalyst for developing critical intercultural communication could be used to inform numerous fields including but not limited to education/teaching, therapy, civic and community development, and organizational leadership. Race and gender impact our daily experiences no matter what field we are in however, some professionals are expected to have a certain level of understanding of cross-cultural communication and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of their service to students, therapy clients, and historically underrepresented underserved populations. Educators and therapists alike have the desire to support students and community members in achieving their goals and to do no harm. Not understanding power differentials related to race and gender in schools and in therapy sessions can create unnecessary barriers to serving students and clients. It is challenging at best to authentically partake in civic and community development if we do not support all voices to be heard and acknowledged in the communities where we live, work, and serve. Understanding critical intercultural communication by practicing intercultural

humility and resilience creates opportunities for civic engagement and community development beyond the dominant narrative.

Cox (2006) likened family systems thinking to organizational systems and there is still a lot that can be gleaned from this analogy in the form critical intercultural communication from an organizational leadership perspective. Organizations, like families, have a hierarchy, tend to maintain a state of homeostasis, even if the system is dysfunctional, and the members of the organization are emotionally tied to each other and impact each other's wellbeing just like members of a family (Cox, 2006). Therefore, working through resistance as a natural part of tolerating discomfort for growth is an important aspect of applying family systems and critical intercultural communication to organizational leadership theory to allow organizational systems to be healthy and thrive.

Epilogue

The research team thought it was important to finish what we started together as we look into our children's eyes. Even though there is a beginning and an end to this manuscript, we acknowledge that healing is never linear. This study brought forth a needed platform for us to share our experiences with violence that started long before we knew each other but extended into our relationship with each other and created transgenerational baggage for our children to bear. We wanted to break that cycle and we found that the best way to do that was to heal ourselves individually, in our couple and family, and then in community. We were tired of carrying the shame of trauma, but we didn't know how to disentangle ourselves from the treacherous waters of the river of cruelty that had always suffocated us as we drowned in our own sorrows.

This research is a point in time when we decided that healing was more important than the comfort of keeping the toxic family cycles and secrets. Healing was more important than keeping our stories muffled and silenced within us: they were begging to come up for air. When we chose healing individually and as a collective, we chose to hold the torch of peace, model it, let our stories burn inside us, and pass on the fiery and brilliant story of peace to our children. We invited them to a new future where they might not have to carry this transgenerational curse of shame on their shoulders and in their hearts for as long as we had.

We also found out that our story is not unique in every sense and that made us glad: our struggles with cross-cultural communication and conflict styles and the cultural clashing of the East and West were normal. Replaying our cycles of trauma within our own family and relationship again, was normal. What was not normal was to have survived these trauma stories and emerged with a new fire burning instead of us. It was a fire that destroyed the residual

traumatic impact of years of feeling the cellular memory of abuse. As we told our stories and took accountability for our own healing, the trauma stories became more and more of a distant memory as the brain began to associate them with the past and therefore, the past could stay in the past. Instead, these stories were replaced with concealed stories of our survival, our resistance to continue to succumb to the oppressive and coercive nature of violence, and then and only then did we begin to access new stories together in community.

It is important to note that freedom stories happen in community with others who have been outcast, marginalized, and their very existence, dismissed. We could not have done this transformative work without the intentionality and commitment of the other interracial families/couples. Additionally, we would like to urge you, the reader, to explore how you can contribute to our emerging freedom stories as interracial families. Maybe you are a biracial child, and you have stories to contribute about your childhood to the field of leadership communication. Maybe you are from the dominant culture and/or in a monoracial relationship and purpose, with intention, to hold space and de-center yourself so that our interracial family stories can be more seen and heard. Maybe you are the survivor of childhood abuse or domestic violence and you have never shared your story yet and realize now, that your story is worthy of being told: you are worth it. Or maybe you are like us and yearn to share your stories with other interracial families to create an insular and protective experience that exists within the framework of narrative resilience. Whoever you may be, we appreciate the time you took to read part of our journey of intersectional healing and resilience. We believe that even though healing is non-linear, our future as an interracial family is bright because we expect to have setbacks, face the inner demons of our oppressor identities and blind spots, and still rise together, with critical hope, intercultural humility and resilience to create more opportunities for peacebuilding.

We believe that transformative systems change has and will continue to happen if our collective stories continue to be listened to, told, and retold.

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Appendix A - IRB Materials

A.1. IRB Application

A.2. Kansas State University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement

A.3. Informed Consent

A.4. IRB Approval

A.1. IRB Application

View xForm - IRB Application for Approval

IRB Application for Approval

Data Entry
- Submitted 05/17/2022 8:35 AM ET by Aliah Mestrovich Seay

Administrative Information

Instructions

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at comply@ksu.edu.

Form Creator: Aliah Mestrovich Seay

Email: aliah@k-state.edu

Title of Project/Course

Interracial Family Leadership Communication: Exploring Daily Violence, Peacebuilding, and Intercultural Humility and Resilience: Constructing an Evocative Autoethnography through the Lens of Gendered Cross-Racial Coinquiry

Principal Investigator: Sean Eddington

Principal investigator must be a K-State faculty member. *If the PI's name does not appear, they will need to log into the system once to become a contact.*

Email: seaneddington@k-state.edu

Degree/Title: Assistant Professor

Department: *Communication Studies*

Campus/Cell Phone Number: 785-532-6875

Select/Provide College: College of Arts & Sciences

Responsible Graduate Student (Person to contact for questions/problems with the form)

Aliah Mestrovich Seay

Email: aliah@k-state.edu

Project Classification: Dissertation

Short form criteria

*(**By clicking None of the Above, you will proceed to the full application.** If you are doing data analysis plus another form of data collection, do not select "existing data analysis only".)*

None of the Above

Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU? (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals): Yes

Funding Source: N/A

Please provide a copy of the sponsor's grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency, if applicable.
No answer provided.

Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html, I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review: No

Study Information

Non-Technical Synopsis

(Please provide a brief narrative description of proposal. This should typically be less than 75 words and be easily understood by nonscientists):

Narratives and storytelling are a way to glimpse into the daily lives of average people and as they tell their stories, the aspect of daily life is one of the extraordinary (Kim, 2015). Throughout this dissertation, I will weave in my own daily experiences of oppressed and oppressor to bring the daily impact of these experiences of social location into the direct view of the reader. Many of these stories involve the people I interact with on a daily basis at work and at home. Evocative autoethnography is one of the methods by which stories can be told that urges the reader to critically examine the cognitive and emotional aspects of narrative and meaning making (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In essence, the evocative autoethnographic process is way for the researcher/participant to make meaning of their daily experiences with all of their senses to bring about the embodiment of their story on a deeper level (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

As a society, we seem to lack understanding of how to navigate these racial gendered tensions to be effective parents, partners, and community members. As such, the interracial family is a place where there is the potential and possibility to negotiate and experiment with different modes of communication as we engage around inevitable conversations about race and gender with loved ones. In this case, interracial families have a unique position to play by engaging in intercultural communication as we explore violence, peacebuilding, and how we adapt to encompass resilience strategies into our daily life. My story is about navigating systems: my desire to achieve inner peace, peace between, and peace among (Galtung, 1969) with those who are vastly different from me as I identify how daily violence is experienced, peacebuilding approaches, and tools for intercultural humility and resilience.

Background

(concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study):

From a socio-historical perspective, the construction of interracial families in the United States was forbidden until legislation preventing antimiscengenation was revoked in 1967 (Sue & Sue, 2013). As a result, the bi-racial baby boom started in the late 1960's. According to the 2010 US Census, around nine million people reported more than one race accounting for 3% of the United States (U.S.) population (Census Bureau, 2010h). This data can be a misrepresentation of current numbers because many multiracial individuals choose to identify as only one race for a variety of socio-cultural historical and political reasons. As the U.S. becomes increasingly diverse and complex, so do our questions and tensions about race and racial dynamics in our country, community, and family. Brummett and Afifi (2019) indicate that interracial romantic partners (IRP's) experience additional relational struggles in comparison to partners of the same race.

Societal pressures and social norms that impact dominant/non-dominant racial identity groups can also have negative impacts on interracial relationships (Lewis, 2013). Examining the interpersonal communication within interracial relationships can provide more information about conceptualizing American racial relationships in general (Lewis, 2013). When provided with the right familial support, interracial families can provide a safe space to navigate different socio-cultural, political, and historical climates from an intercultural context (Moriizumi, 2011).

Data from the National Alliance for Caregiving (2009) indicate that around 66 percent of the population of caregivers within a family unit are women.What is more surprising is that 45 percent of these 66 percent feel that there was no choice involved in taking on this role. More recently, the COVID-19 caregiving crisis brought to light the oppressive norms impacting women (Htun, 2021). The pandemic brought with it the closing of schools, daycares, as well as less accessibility to care workers as women from many diverse backgrounds and perspectives shared commonality in the caregiving challenges they faced (Alon et al, 2020). The economic backlash of the pandemic resulted in more unemployment for women due to different female-dominant fields being out of commission such as closure of daycares, food service, personal care service, and sales (Alon et al., 2020; Dua et al., 2021; Petts et al., 2021). In fact, one in four women explored quitting or minimizing their career because of pandemic-related stress (Coury et al., 2020). Gender microaggressions are just one way society makes it obvious that patriarchal ways of knowing are privileged and oppressive (Sue & Sue, 2010).

Even though women make up over half of the US population, they are considered a special and marginalized population due to a patriarchal system structure supporting prejudice, discrimination, and disadvantaged status (Sue & Sue, 2010). Feminists respond to systemic oppression and have made historical gain shifting from voting and property rights to reproductive rights, psychosocial safety (domestic violence and sexual assault), workplace and other forms of discrimination. Even though gender microassaults expressed as blatant, explicit, and intentional ways to target women are on the decline in the workplace, scholars note that discriminatory behavior is not decreasing but it is becoming more covert and ambiguous (Basford et al. 2013).

In this evocative autoethnography I explore and balance of the multiplicity of identities that make up my social location as a white woman in an interracial family. In addition to bringing my inner voice to the surface, I share the platform with other interracial couples and my interracial family as our stories talk back and forth across the page.

One way that I navigate everyday violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience is through the role of being a listening practitioner and storyteller. As I lean into my own story, I can more deeply understand the stories of Others and develop my ability to adapt and employ different leadership communication frameworks. Even though I am constructing an autoethnography, my story will encompass committed and intentional co-inquiry with other interracial couples and families. Co-constructing meaning together across shared, yet different experiences, allow for collaborative critical reflexivity which will enhance professional research ethics, methods, and community-engaged scholarship (Banks et al., 2014). Co-inquiry brings to light and appreciates different ontological and epistemological frameworks (Banks et al., 2014). As I reflect on my own racialized and gendered experiences, I will work with interracial couples and support them as they share their own stories. Co-inquiry is one way to surface systems of oppression that are often invisible in mainstream culture to dismantle and transform these systems to more equitable lived experiences. Co-inquiry is an area of research that needs more scrutiny and development as critical reflexivity is becoming more prevalent in literature and scholarship (Davey & Ham, 2009). Narrative inquiry and counterstorytelling allow society to understand the daily life of culturally different Others and catalyze an emancipatory process that is co-constructed. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Researchers often make use of collective experiences during a self-study but seldom are these experiences the focus of the study (Davey & Ham, 2009).Kim (2015) discusses how when we tell stories, stories end up telling us. Bell (2020) identifies different types of stories that are told about racism and can also be framed to discuss sexism and other isms. For example, stock, concealed, and resistance stories align with racial and gender-based oppression and liberation (Bell, 2020) as they may serve to fortify oppressive systems or dismantle them. Stock stories perpetuate racism and sexism and originate from a place of power and privilege. They are told by individuals from the dominant group and these stories are fortified through historical and literary documents, and celebrated through public rituals, law, the arts, education, and media representations to name a few (Bell, 2020). Stock stories tell what the dominant cultural narrative considers to be important and can provide a lot of information about how racism operates.Concealed stories are told by individuals that hold marginalized identities that the dominant culture does not value or is seen as invisible in mainstream culture. Concealed stories unpack how power and privilege work, make the invisible visible, and demonstrate how people in positions of power benefit from systems of oppression (Bell, 2020). Communities of Color and women tell concealed stories about their daily challenges with oppression and how they have survived living in the United States. These stories demonstrate how white people have benefited from racism and how men have benefited from sexism. Finally, resistance stories have a foundation which is grounded in anti-racism to set the stage for the future (Bell, 2020). Resistance stories also illuminate the plight of women in their continual fight towards equal treatment, non-violence and humanization, reproductive rights, and gender-based equity in the workplace. Interracial families serve as a microcosm for racial and gender dynamics at play in our society at large. The family unit is an exemplar for different social, political, historical and cultural phenomena. As such, exploring storytelling and intercultural listening within interracial families may be one of the first steps towards shifting towards a more socially just way to engage and respond to create more equitable partnerships as stock, concealed, and resistance stories are brought to the forefront of our understanding regarding race and gender dynamics within the family and societal systems at large.

Research has typically not focused on exploring how listening can be different in different cultures even though there is research backing that culture does in fact influence our thinking (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). When individuals coming from different cultural backgrounds come together, interact, and engage in listening, implicit assumptions of how listening behavior is communicated could end up producing significant lapses in understanding which can be disorienting and confusing in intercultural contexts (Janusik & Imhof, 2017). Intercultural awareness is an essential part of how we communicate with culturally different others as cultural misunderstandings are an unavoidable aspect of communication (Zhu, 2011). As such, Zhu (2011) regards intercultural awareness as the most important aspect of communication. In this study, I will be employing different listening strategies within my own inner world from an intrapsychic point of view as well as with my family and other interracial families to interrogate and dismantle systems of oppression. I would like to explore how these findings can create greater awareness in larger societal systems like systems of education.

I will provide insight into how I navigate intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective as a resilience strategy towards anti- racism work and my own marginalization and survival. I will also explore my own lifelong gender-based oppression at the hands of men more than I ever have before because that voice needs to speak and to be heard. I need to hear Her. This evocative autoethnography is designed as a cross-racial co-inquiry that involves developing recommendations as a practice that leads towards working through racial and sexist tension, conflict, and misunderstandings in gendered interracial relationships.

Project/Study Description

(Please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about the proposal).

This evocative autoethnographic study will be conducted and aligned with 4- 6 semi-structured interviews with 4-6 interracial couples over a? 4-6 month? period (May-August 2022) as I engage in critical reflexivity before, during, and after the interviews with interracial families. Each interview will last approximately 90-120 minutes. At least one family member in the interracial families invited to participate in the interviews will be connected to a system of K-12 or higher education as a faculty, staff, administrator, student, or parent of children in the school system to reflect on various micro and macro level systems that reflect racialized and gender dynamics of violence and oppression and can also incorporate methods for peacebuilding and tools for intercultural humility and resilience. As a white academic, woman, and listening practitioner, I will utilize intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective to interview the interracial couple or family member about a critical incident or critical incident(s) related to racialization And gendered violence in their personal relationships, nuclear, or, extended family, and community system including the systems of education which they navigate individually and/or as a family (Crotty, 2015).

This study draws from literature centered in Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Morales, 2016) which supports co-constructed research design with participants and Communication Activism Research (CAR) (Carragee & Frey, 2016) adaptively addressing systemic inequities, oppression, and marginalization. As such, the research questions and interview protocol may be modified or adapted once the research process begins based on interactions with participants and researcher/participant feedback.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH INTERRACIAL COUPLES:

Meet with my interracial family. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity as part of the peacebuilding process.

FIRST INTERVIEW:

For the interview component of this study, I will use the critical incident technique (Demarrais & Lapan, 2014) to unpack how interracial families make meaning of daily violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience strategies. While there will be a pre-determined interview protocol, the semi-structured interview process is designed to be more fluid to invite participants to steer the conversation as they see fit. Additionally,interracial families will be invited to co-construct the critical incident that will be unpacked in their interviews.

Vande Berg's (2017) 5-Step Process Critical Incident will be utilized in a semi-structured manner based on the preferences of the interracial family.

The interracial couple/family will define violence and the act of peacebuilding internally, within their family, and systems of education through the lens of race and gender. More specifically, they will describe a critical incident related to their racialization and gendered experiences, what they did, what meaning they were making within that cultural context, and the consequences involved resulting from the critical incident. This critical incident will be viewed from two angles by describing a time there was a conflict in a cross-cultural experience and it did not end well and describing a time when it did end well. The interracial couple/family will detail their tools for resilience through these cross-cultural experiences internally, within their family, and/or systems of education.

Meet with my interracial family. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity as part of the peacebuilding process.

SECOND INTERVIEW:

In the second interview, the interracial couple/family and I will critically reflect on the experience of intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective that occurred during the first interview as well as opportunities to explore the interviewers and interviewees utilization of critical empathy and intercultural humility in the narrative process. The interracial couple/family will have opportunities to submit cultural artifacts during the interview process that align with their lived experiences and further their storytelling process. There is potential for stock, concealed, and resistance stories to be discussed and aligned with daily violence and peacebuilding as well as intercultural humility and tools for resilience.

After the second interview, I will construct a critical literary arts-based narrative of the lived experience of the interracial couple/family that was explored during the previous critical incident interview process and send it to the couple/family for review. This is an opportunity for me to reflect my understanding of what was shared by the couple during the interview and practice intercultural listening. By examining this literary arts-based narrative that has been written about their lived experience, the interracial couple can reflect on how heard or not heard they felt in the interview and how heard or not heard they feel reading the first-person narrative.

Meet with my interracial family. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity as part of the peacebuilding process.

THIRD INTERVIEW:

During the third interview, the interracial couple/family and I will unpack and finalize the first-person narrative so that it accurately represents their lived experiences and identify how the first draft did or did not represent the listening experience for the interracial couple/family.

Meet with my interracial family. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity as part of the peacebuilding process.

FOURTH INTERVIEW:

Finally, during the fourth interview, the experience of intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective and the process of peacebuilding and tools for

intercultural resilience will be discussed. Interviewer will work with her own interracial family to provide a response to the narrative created by the interracial couple/family and share it with the interviewees.

Meet with my interracial family. Engage in critical collaborative reflexivity as part of the peacebuilding process.

For this autoethnographic coinquiry, data collection will come from a variety of sources such as my critical reflexivity journal, potential of journaling/processing of the interracial family in between interview sessions, and transcriptions of recorded video interviews, and the final critical literary arts-based narrative co-constructed by the interracial couple and me. I will keep a researcher journal throughout and note any hunches, reactions, and reflexive moments that occur. I intend the data representation process to be co-created with the researcher/participants and not follow a traditional format. As I aim to represent the data and show instead of tell (Kim, 2016), I will choose significant events, turning points in the narrative, ah- ha! moments, as well as points of tension to be showcased within various forms of written and visual representation. Of equal importance, I will represent my researcher journal/analytic memos and bring to light hunches, deepened awareness, and critical insights(Bhattacharya, 2017).

In Vivo coding focuses on the actual language taken from the participants and preserves the unique language used. One of the main reasons I am choosing to use In Vivo coding is to uphold and show respect towards the unique voices of the interracial couple. Oftentimes, interracial couples and families develop their own vocabulary to explain their interracial experiences of being part of a marginalized community (Socha & Diggs, 1999) and this type of coding can capture the couple's authentic voice. Affective coding explores the subjectivity of humanity with the acknowledgement of emotions and values (Saldaña, 2013). I would eventually like to create a more hybrid coding approach incorporating In Vivo and affective (emotion, value, and versus) coding methods to explore the interracial couple/family's affective experiences related to feeling or not feeling listened to during an interview with a white-identifying and the Person of Color in the interracial couple experiencing or not experiencing intercultural listening by their white- identifying partner. My ability "to read nonverbal cues, to infer underlying affects, and to sympathize and empathize" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 106) with my participants is a significant part of effective emotion coding. Another affective coding method to be employed is Value coding which is reflective of the participants' values, beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions that encompass their worldview (Saldaña, 2013). Since this study revolves around intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective, the authentic voice of the interracial couple/family, and the co-constructed process of peacebuilding, value coding allows me to explore the participants' cultural identities, values, and experiences within a critical scope and lens.

Finally, due to the critical studies framework of this research methodology which is focused on cross-cultural and intercultural conflict and reconciliation, versus coding will be employed to focus on finding themes and patterns that bring injustice to the surface of our understanding (Saldaña, 2013). I will conclude my data management and inductive analysis by mapping out the emergent categories, patterns, and themes (Bhattacharya (2017). Utilizing this hybrid approach allows me to implement a multi-dimensional first run of the data before regrouping with code mapping, reorganization of the data, and analytic memoing before second cycle coding.

WHITENESS DEBRIEFS: CENTER TO DECENTER

It is important to articulate the process of intense self-reflexivity as it interacts with data being collected from my researcher/participants. In addition to the interviews with interracial families, I would like to engage in interactive whiteness debriefs by collaborating with a white-identifying critical whiteness scholar. These collaborative co-constructed, whiteness debriefs are positioned to deepen critical reflexivity and ability to decenter whiteness for the white-identifying researcher. The purpose of these whiteness debriefs would be to create spaces for white-identifying people in the study to work on their own developmental process of social un-conditioning, engage in critical reflexivity, reflect on decentering whiteness, speak about the unspoken/invisible whiteness, and explore taking up space (Cabrera et al, 2017; Coleman et al., In Press). Additionally, this is a place for white people to hold each other accountable, participate in transparency, vulnerability, and discomfort. In this way, we can build community with each other as we challenge our perceptions and beliefs about whiteness and provide a sounding board to unpack our own preconditioned racist ideologies. This is another way to build intercultural humility and resilience by engaging in individual and collective critical reflexivity involving the racial dynamics at play in the interracial relationship and unpacking the role we play in the centering of whiteness in academia.

Objective

(Briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study).

The purpose of the study is to explore how I explore daily violence, peacebuilding approaches and cultivating tools for intercultural humility and resilience within my gendered experience and interracial family as I interface and personally reflect upon the experiences of other interracial couples and families who have a connection to the field of education.

Design and Procedures

List all sites where this research will be conducted:

Zoom, on campus, or any location (such as home environment) where interviewees would choose to have the interview.

List all Variables to be Studied:

Intercultural listening, violence, peacebuilding, and tools for resilience, intercultural humility, lived experiences of interracial couples and families, my gendered and racialized experiences as an autoethnographer, my family's lived experiences.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews

Supporting Documents for Data Collection

(surveys, instruments, etc.)

List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing from a study.

(These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.)

There may be some level of emotional stress or discomfort for interracial couples and families sharing their lived experiences. There also may be unknown family dynamics such as separation or divorce that could impact the participation.

Will Biological Samples be Collected/Taken? No

Debriefing procedures for participants:

•Interracial families/couples experience unique challenges in our world today. Can you share more about this and how it relates to this research project?
•How has your definition of violence and peacebuilding changed or not changed through the critical incident exercise?
•What is your definition of reconciliation? Do you think that reconciliation is possible?
•What ah-ha moments have you taken away from the first interview that you will apply to your internal or cross-cultural experiences with your family and within systems of education?
•What are the most important tools you use for acts of peacebuilding and resilience through close cross-cultural experiences?
•As a lifelong learner, what do you hope to learn now and in the future about cross-cultural experiences related to gender and race?

Research Subjects

Provide the source of Subject Population used in the research activity:

Interracial families/couples with a connection to K-State or another system of education. These participants are students in systems of higher education, faculty, staff, or parents of students in K-12 educational system.

Number of Subjects

(provide the number of subjects to be used and a brief rationale for your sample size)

4-6 interracial families/couples in a qualitative study. Small sample size due to qualitative research and focusing on personal narratives of participants.

Inclusion Criteria

(List any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation)

People who identify as being part of an interracial family identifying as white, having light skin privilege, People of Color, single parents with bi-racial or multi-racial children, interracial couples in a long-term committed partnerships.

Exclusion Criteria

(list any unique disqualifiers for research subject participation)

mono-racial identifying families and couples.

How will subjects be identified?

(Members of a professional organization, Screening tools, etc..)

Interracial families/couples with whom the researcher has a relationship of trust built with at least one of the members and family/couple. One family member or person in the couple will be connected to a system of education.

How will subjects be recruited?

(advertisement, associates, etc.)

Interracial familes/couples with whom the researcher has a close working or personal relationship will be invited to participate in this study. Subjects will be recruited by personal invitation or by the subjects requesting to be part of the study.

How will subjects be enrolled in the study?

N/A

Describe any follow-up recruitment procedures:

(reminder emails, mailings, etc.)

Reminder emails (email, text, and/or phone calls) will be sent prior to each phase of the study.

Risk-Protection-Benefits

Risk-Protection-Benefit:

The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

Risk for Subjects (check all that apply)

(If this is records based research, indicate the risk for subjects during the original study.)

N/A

In your opinion, does the research involve more than minimal risk to subjects?

("Minimal risk" means that "the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

No

Minimizing Risk:

(Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.)

Participants will be informed of counseling services and community resources at the university and within the Manhattan community.

Provide Study Benefits:

(Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.)

Research participants will examine interpersonal dynamics that could lead to a better understanding of racial and gender-based peacebuilding approaches, cross-cultural communication, as well as an understanding of their own power and privilege. We hope to learn more about how to create more equitable systems within the family and within systems of education by engaging in the practice of intercultural listening and bringing forth the authentic voice of interracial families/couples.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations.

Explain the type of data that will be collected:

(electronic, hard copy, video, specimens, etc.)

Electronic audio and video recordings will be collected.

Explain where, and how, the data will be stored:

Data will be stored within different private Kansas State Microsoft Teams accounts established for this research project. Files within each account can only be accessed by the researchers with whom the interview was conducted. Each researcher/participant is giving feedback and data analysis only on their experiences.

Explain the time frame of the data storage, to include how data will be destroyed:

Data will be kept for 3 years from the end of the project to allow time for ongoing analysis and writing towards publication; upon completion all electronic data files will be removed/erased and hard copies of transcripts or artifacts will be shredded.

Explain who will have access to the data, and privacy/security provisions:

(password protection, encryption, etc.)

PI (Eddington) and Co-PI (Mestrovich Seay) and the rest of the research team will be the only people who will have permission to access the private Microsoft teams (via K-State) folder and associated files. Internal communication related to the project will also happen through the teams account. Interracial families/couples participants will have access to all of the data relevant to their participation.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research - it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what their potential role is.
(There may be projects where some forms of "deception" of the subject is necessary for the execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html#c10)

Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc.

Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project.
See informed consent example on the URCO website. It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.

Are you using a written informed consent form? Yes

Attach a copy of the informed consent form here.

Informed Consent

Consent Form

In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (see section VIII above). No

Are you using the Consent Form template provided by the URCO? Yes

Are your research subjects anonymous?

(If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, and the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person.) No

Please explain why subjects will be identifiable.

I will be conducting interviews in a qualitative study with subjects that I know well and with whom I have already formed a relationship of trust.

Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research?

(Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over.) Yes

Please attach a copy of the Debriefing Statement

Debriefing Statement Debriefing Statement

Describe the Informed Consent Process:

Who is Obtaining the Consent?

(i.e. Principle Investigator, Graduate Student, etc.)

Graduate Student will obtain the consent.

When and where will consent be obtained?
Consent will be obtained prior to the initial interview.

If assent (for minors) is required, please describe who will obtain the assent?

(Assent means a child's affirmative agreement to participate in research) N/A

If assent (for minors) is required, when and where will assent be obtained? N/A

How will consent be obtained from non-English speaking participants?

(a translated written form, orally, identify the name and qualifications of the individual providing the translation) N/A

Informed Consent Checklist

	Select the correct response:
Does the title appear at the top of the consent/assent form?	Yes
Is the consent/assent form written toward the subject?	
Is there a statement that explains that the study is research?	Yes
Is there a statement that explains the purpose of the	
Are the procedures to be followed explained clearly and adequately?	Yes
Does the consent document describe risks or discomforts to	
Is the consent/assent form written in the native language of the potential subject?	Yes
Are participants compensated?	
If the subjects' identity is known to the PI, does the form detail how confidentiality of records will be maintained?	Yes
Is contact information for both the PI and the URCO/IRB	
Does the consent document indicate to the participant that they can withdraw at any time from the project without penalty or loss of benefit?	Yes
Are there probable circumstances which would require the PI to terminate a subject's participation regardless of their consent?	
A statement that identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens and that, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent?	Yes
A statement that the subject's information or biospecimens	

collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

A statement that biospecimens (even after identifiers are removed) may (or may not) be used for commercial profit and whether subjects will or will not share in the profit.	N/A
A statement indicating whether or not the research project will or will not include whole genome sequencing.	N/A
A statement that clinically relevant research results will or will not be provided to subjects.	N/A

Project Information

Project Information:

(If you answer "yes" to any of the questions below, you should explain them in the appropriate section on a previous page)

Will deception of Subjects be used in the research?

No

Will shock or other forms of punishment be used in the research?

No

Will sexually explicit materials or sexual experience be used or collected as part of the research?

No

Will information about sexual orientation be part of the research?

No

Will information about sexual abuse be part of the research?

No

Will there be handling of money or other valuable commodities as part of this research?

This does not include incentives for participation.

No

Will there be extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues in this research?

(if "yes', you must comply with facility and handling protections detailed in the 5th Edition of the Biosafety in Biomedical Laboratories (BMBL))

No

Will questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity be a part of the research?

No

Will questions about protected health information as defined by HIPAA be part of the research?

No

Will there be purposeful creation of anxiety as part of the research?

No

Will any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy be used in the research?

No

Will physical exercise or stress be part of the research?

No

Will there be administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects as part of the research?

No

Will any procedure that might place subjects at risk be part of the research?

No

Will there be any use of Radioactive materials and/or use of Radioactive producing machines as part of the research?

No

Will any form of potential abuse; (i.e., psychological, physical, sexual) be used in the research?

No

Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc?

Yes

Will data be collected using surveys, questionnaires, or interviews?

No

Is this a Clinical Trial?

(one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions, which may include placebo or other control, to evaluate the effects of the interventions on biomedical or behavioral health-related outcomes.)

No

Subject Information

Subject Information:

The below questions refer to intentional targeting of these groups as a study population, not an incidental chance that a member of one of the below populations may take part in your study.

If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain in the appropriate section on a previous page of the application).

Will individuals under 18 years of age be part of the research?

(these subjects require parental or guardian consent)

No

Will individuals over 65 years of age be part of the research?

No

Will minorities be the target population used in the research?

Yes

Will physically or mentally disabled individuals be part of the research?

No

Will economically or educationally disadvantaged individuals be part of the research?

No

Will any individual be unable to provide their own legal informed consent?

No

Will pregnant females be the target population?

No

Will the target population be victims?

No

Are subjects in institutions?

(e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses)

No

Are subjects likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence?

No

Is this international research?

No

Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools?

No

Is audio from the subjects recorded?

Yes

How do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?

Audio recordings will be stored on a shared folder in the researchers' password protected K-State Microsoft Teams. Audio data will be transcribed and researcher will use pseudonyms for the transcriptions of the participant audio information.

Are research subjects' images being recorded (video taped, digitally recorded, photographed)?

Yes

How do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?

Video recordings will be stored on a shared folder in the researchers' password protected K-State Microsoft Teams and zoom account.

FDA Activities and Conflict of Interest

FDA Activities:

Answer the following questions about potential FDA regulated activities

Is this a Clinical Trial?

No

Are you using an FDA approved drug/device/diagnostic test?

No

Does this activity involve the use of FDA-Regulated products?

(biological products, color additives, food additives, human drugs, etc.)

No

Have you submitted an FDA form 3454 or 3455 (conflict of interest)?

No

Conflict of Interest

Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects. Financial interests are not in themselves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRBs, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects. Please answer the following questions:

Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements?

No

Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor?

(publicly held or a non-publicly held company)

No

Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, (eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria) from the sponsor of this research?

No

Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?

No

Project Collaborators

KSU Collaborator

List anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data: (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students). If the individual's name does not appear, they will need to log into the system once to become a contact.

Name	Role	Department	Campus Phone
Aliah Mestrovich Seay **Email:** aliah@k-state.edu	Graduate Student	Leadership Studies	9493156116

Non-KSU Collaborator

List all collaborators on your human subjects research project not affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects.

***Note**: If you answered "yes" on Page 1 (administrative information) to the inclusion of non-KSU collaborators, this section will appear. If this was in error, please go to back to administrative information and change your answer to "no".*

Name	Organization	Phone	Institutional E-Mail
Noppadon Sae Kang	DKangDesign	626-782-2439	dkangdesign@hotmail.com

Does your Non-KSU collaborator's organization have an Assurance with OHRP?

(for Federalwide Assurance listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search).

No

Describe the Non-KSU collaborator's role in the research activity. My interracial family is involved in collaborative critical reflexivity about the cross-cultural research process as a crossp-racial gendered co-inquiry and may be involved in the collaborative interview and rapport building process with interracial families.

Attach Your Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement Attachment Here

An unaffiliated investigator agreement form is required for individuals who are at institutions that do not have their own FWA number with OHRP.

Unaffiliated Investigator Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement

Additional Attachments

Additional Attachments:

Please attach any supporting document not requested at earlier points within the application. Examples; letters of support, recruitment emails or fliers, charts/diagrams, photos of devices to be used.

No answer provided.

Online Training

Online Training

The IRB has mandatory training requirements prior to protocol approval. Training is now offered through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program. Instructions for registration and access to training are on the URCO website http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/.

Use the check boxes below to select the training courses that apply to this application. If you have any questions about training, contact URCO at comply@ksu.edu, or (785) 532-3224.

Mandatory Training

Required for all Principal Investigators, research staff and students

Responsible Conduct of Research
IRB core modules (IRB Researchers and personnel on IRB protocols)

Required (Provost-mandated) for all full-time K-State employees

Export Compliance

Required procedure-specific training (check all that apply to this protocol):

All new personnel or personnel with expired training are required to register for CITI and take the new training requirements. If you previously completed online IRB modules, your training status will remain current until it expires.
URCO will verify training from the previous system as well as the new system prior to approval of any protocol.

N/A

INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE

Please click next and submit, in order to send to PI for signature.

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/2022.9.6861.0/Release/14c41c2 | GCWAWS1 | 2023-01-16 18:28:51Z

A.2. Kansas State University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement

Kansas State University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB)

Name of Principle Investigator: Sean Eddington

Department of Principle Investigator: Communication Studies

Principle Investigator Phone Number: 317-459-6950

Name of Unaffiliated Investigator: Noppadon Sae kang

Name of Institution Providing IRB Oversight: Kansas State University

KSU OHRP Assurance Number: FWA00000865

Title of Research Proposal Covered by this Agr eement:

Interracial Family Leadership Communication: Exploring Daily Violence, Peacebuilding, and Intercultural Humility and Resilience: Constructing an Evocative Autoethnography through the Lens of Gendered Cross-Racial Coinquiry

(1) The above-named unaffiliated investigator has reviewed *the Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research* (or other internationally recognized equivalent; see B1 of FWA Terms for institutions outside the United States); the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects at 45 CFR 46 (or other internationally recognized equivalent; see B3 of FWA Terms for institutions outside the United States), the Assurance referenced above, and the relevant institutional policies and procedures for the protection of human subjects.

(2) The unaffiliated investigator understands and hereby accepts the responsibility to comply with the standards and requirements stipulated in the above documents and to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research conducted under this Agreement.

(3) The unaffiliated investigator will comply with all other National, State, or local laws or regulations that may provide additional protection for human subjects.

(4) The unaffiliated investigator will abide by all determinations of the KSU Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) designated under the above Assurance and will accept the final authority and decisions of the IRB, including but not limited to directives to terminate participation in designated research activities.

(5) The unaffiliated investigator will complete any training required by the IRB prior to initiating research covered under this Agreement.

(6) The unaffiliated investigator will report promptly to the IRB proposed changes in the research conducted under this Agreement. The unaffiliated investigator will not initiate changes in the research without prior IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects.

(7) The unaffiliated investigator will report immediately to the IRB any unanticipated problems in research covered under this Agreement that involve risks to subjects or others.

(8) The unaffiliated investigator will seek, document, and maintain records of informed consent from each subject or the subject's legally authorized representative as required under HHS regulations (or other international or national equivalent) and stipulated by the IRB.

(9) The unaffiliated investigator acknowledges and agrees to cooperate in the IRB responsibility for initial and continuing review, record keeping, reporting, and certification. The Unaffiliated Investigator will provide all information requested by the IRB in a timely fashion.

(10) In conducting research involving FDA-regulated products, the unaffiliated investigator will comply with all applicable FDA regulations and fulfill all investigator responsibilities (or investigator-sponsor responsibilities, where appropriate), including those described at 21 CFR 312 and 812.

(11) The unaffiliated investigator will not enroll subjects in research under this Agreement prior to its review and approval by the IRB.

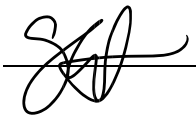
(12) Emergency medical care may be delivered without IRB review and approval to the extent permitted under applicable Federal regulations and State law. However, such medical care may not be included as part of Federally-supported research.

(13) This Agreement does not preclude the unaffiliated investigator from taking part in research not covered under the Agreement

(14) The unaffiliated investigator acknowledges that her/his primary responsibility is to safeguard the rights and welfare of each research subject, and that the subject's rights and welfare must take precedence over the goals and requirements of the research.

Signatures

Unaffiliated Investigator: _____ Date: _____

KSU Principal Investigator:  Date: _____

KSU IRB Institutional Official: _____ _____

Date:

A.3. Informed Consent

Informed Consent

PROJECT TITLE: Interracial Family Leadership Communication: Exploring Daily Violence, Peacebuilding, and Intercultural Humility and Resilience: Constructing an Evocative Autoethnography through the Lens of Gendered Cross-Racial Coinquiry

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Sean Eddington, seaneddington@ksu.edu

CO-INVESTIGATORS: Aliah Mestrovich Seay (aliah@ksu.edu), Noppadon Sae Kang (dkangdesign@gmail.com)

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION*:*
Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of the study is to explore how I explore daily violence, peacebuilding approaches and cultivating tools for intercultural humility and resilience within my gendered experience and interracial family as I interface and personally reflect upon the experiences of other interracial couples and families who have a connection to the field of education. The total amount of hours of participation for participants will not exceed 8 hours.

BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH: Research participants will examine interpersonal dynamics that could lead to a better understanding of racial and gender-based peacebuilding approaches, cross-cultural communication, as well as an understanding of their own power and privilege. We hope to learn more about how to create more equitable systems within the family and within systems of education by engaging in the practice of intercultural listening and bringing forth the authentic voice of interracial families/couples.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that research participants have disclosed to the researcher in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Electronic audio and video recordings will be collected. Data will be stored within different private Kansas State Microsoft Teams accounts established for this research project. Files within each account can only be accessed by the researchers with whom the interview was conducted. Each researcher/participant is giving feedback and data analysis only on their experiences. Data will be kept for 3 years from the end of the project to allow time for ongoing analysis and writing towards publication; upon completion all electronic data files will be removed/erased and hard copies of transcripts or artifacts will be shredded. PI (Eddington) and Co-PI (Mestrovich Seay) and the rest of the research team will be the only people who will have permission to access the private Microsoft teams (via K-State) folder and associated files. Internal communication related to the project will also happen through the teams account.

Interracial families/couples participants will have access to all of the data relevant to their participation. Data will be de-identified during the coding process and a separate key will be used that will allow for the research team to identify subjects. Once the coding is complete, the key will be destroyed.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

FIRST INTERVIEW:

For the interview component of this study, I will use the critical incident technique (Demarrais & Lapan, 2014) to unpack how interracial families make meaning of daily violence, peacebuilding, and intercultural humility and resilience strategies. While there will be a pre-determined interview protocol, the semi-structured interview process is designed to be more fluid to invite participants to steer the conversation as they see fit. Additionally, interracial families will be invited to co-construct the critical incident that will be unpacked in their interviews.

Vande Berg's (2017) 5-Step Process Critical Incident will be utilized in a semi-structured manner based on the preferences of the interracial family. The interracial couple/family will define violence and the act of peacebuilding internally, within their family, and systems of education through the lens of race and gender. More specifically, they will describe a critical incident related to their racialization and gendered experiences, what they did, what meaning they were making within that cultural context, and the consequences involved resulting from the critical incident. This critical incident will be viewed from two angles first, by describing a time there was a conflict in a cross-cultural experience and it did not end well and second, describing a time when it did end well. The interracial couple/family will detail their tools for resilience through these cross-cultural experiences internally, within their family, and/or systems of education.

SECOND INTERVIEW:

In the second interview, the interracial couple/family and I will critically reflect on the experience of intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective that occurred during the first interview as well as opportunities to explore the interviewers and interviewees utilization of critical empathy and intercultural humility in the narrative process. The interracial couple/family will have opportunities to submit cultural artifacts during the interview process that align with their lived experiences with race and gender that further their storytelling process. There is potential for stock, concealed, and resistance stories to be discussed and aligned with daily violence and peacebuilding as well as intercultural humility and tools for resilience.

After the second interview, I will construct a critical literary arts-based narrative of the lived experience of the interracial couple/family that was explored during the previous critical incident interview process and send it to the couple/family for review. This is an opportunity for me to reflect my understanding of what was shared by the couple during the interview and practice intercultural listening and reflect on resilience tools. By examining this literary arts-based narrative that has been written about their lived experience, the interracial couple can reflect on how heard or not heard they felt in the interview and how heard or not heard they feel reading the first-person narrative.

THIRD INTERVIEW:

During the third interview, the interracial couple/family and I will unpack and finalize the first-person narrative so that it accurately represents their lived experiences and identify how the first draft did or did not represent the listening experience for the interracial couple/family.

FOURTH INTERVIEW:

Finally, during the fourth interview, the experience of intercultural listening from a critical whiteness and feminist perspective and the process of peacebuilding and tools for intercultural resilience will be discussed. I will work with my own interracial family to provide a response to the narrative created by the interracial couple/family and share it with the interviewees.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: There are no foreseeable physical, psychological, social, or employment-related risks. However, you may experience some level of emotional stress or discomfort due to the critical reflection involved in unpacking your lived experiences with whiteness, race, and gender. At each meeting, I will provide you with information about mental health resources. Also, it is important to note that I am a trained licensed marriage and family therapist. Even though the I will not be acting in the role of a therapist to interview participants, I will make use of my extensive training and experience with families in my role as a family communication facilitator. The family communication facilitator makes use of communication strategies to support and facilitate interracial families as they share cross-cultural/intercultural experiences related to gender and race and other differences. Even though this research is participant-centered, the family communication facilitator adheres to a research agenda that focuses on exploring peacebuilding, violence, and tools for resilience from a gendered and racialized perspective.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: I am requesting to video and audio record the four interviews. You may choose for elements of the discussion not to be recorded. To clarify, the recorded information that will be collected as part of this research will not be shared with anyone outside the research team.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

Do you agree for the sessions to be video/audio-recorded? (Please circle one) Yes No

Do you agree to allow research activities? (Please circle one) Yes No

Do you agree to participate in an interview? (Please circle one) Yes No

_____ _____

Signed Name Date

Printed Name_____

A.4. IRB Approval

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | University Research Compliance Office

TO: Sean Eddington
Communication Studies
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number IRB-11194

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 05/17/2022

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Interracial Family Leadership Communication: Exploring Daily Violence, Peacebuilding, and Intercultural Humility and Resilience: Constructing an Evocative Autoethnography through the Lens of Gendered Cross-Racial Coinquiry."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 05/17/2022

EXPIRATION DATE: 05/16/2025

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Rick Scheidt on 05/18/2022 9:54 AM ET

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Appendix B - Interview Protocol & Summaries

B.1. Brittany and Jeff Sample Interview Questions
B.2. Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Brittany and Jeff
B.3. Houston and Heidi Sample Interview Questions
B.4. Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Houston and Heidi
B.5. Tess Sample Interview Questions
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B.1. Brittany and Jeff Sample Interview Questions

Brittany and Jeff Sample Interview Questions

Any questions or feedback about the summaries and coding process? How did you use the research data? What was that like?

How was the piece created? How did you go through the process of working on it together? Tell us about your stylist choices. How did you negotiate or communicate about race and gender?

What story is it telling?

Why was it important to do this art piece together?

Did you feel heard in your lived experience through your storytelling process? Why or why not? What made you feel listened to/heard?

What kinds of sensations happened in your body as you wrote this art piece – your individual process and together? Can you describe the embodiment of this process as you wrote and as you listened?

Data indicated that the overall theme was the very ACT of storytelling is an act of peacebuilding that fosters the development of tools for resilience. It is hard to separate the two. They go hand in hand. This was pattern coding – across all interviews.

What is it like for us to listen to this collective story?

Have we answered all the research questions?

Remember to focus on the data/stories that has already been coded as a foundation for writing your art piece. In this way, you will easily be able to answer the research questions. Please make sure your definition of violence is embedded in the art piece as well.

1.How do gendered and racialized communication manifest in my own interracial couple/family experience? In others?

2.How does my intercultural experience with daily violence and peacebuilding manifest in my own interracial couple/family? In others?

B.2. Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Brittany and Jeff

Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Brittany and Jeff

As we navigated the ebb and flow of interracial gendered experiences within our couples/families and society at large, we also dialogically, partook in racialized and gender dynamics that perpetuated dominant culture dynamics known as "stock stories" as well as racialized and gendered oppression. As we moved through these dominant culture stories, we began to unpack "concealed stories" – the stories that lie below the surface of the dominant culture narrative that interrogate gendered and racial violence. Additionally, these interviews illustrated how interracial couples/families respond to daily violence together by acts of peacebuilding and tools for resilience.

Here are some examples of this throughout the interviews:

- White females had a tendency to speak more then the Men of Color. They took up more dialogic space in this way even though the Males of Color were engaged nonverbally in the interview process. Men of Color often responded to each other with nonverbal body language or with small affirmations to show agreement and that they were listening to each other.
- White women took up more dialogic space than Man of Color (whiteness as expansiveness).
- Exploration of individualism vs collectivism and cultural clashes that can occur; parenting biracial children especially when conflict and perceived disrespect happens; having the race talk with children.
- Couples discussed connection and belonging with shared intercultural experiences in which interracial marriage is still seen by society as taboo or forbidden (Culturally relevant listening).
- Discussion of intersectionality – race/size/socio-economic status – power dynamics and parenting/intersectionality of national origin/ethnicity and parenting biracial children
- White females both expressed difficulty exploring and connecting to partners' families due to crippling anxiety related to cross-cultural dynamics they had never experienced. Challenges with cross-cultural communication and cultural adaptability. Feelings of disorientation.
- Interracial couples intentionally explored and brought to the surface major life events, formative years, and daily violence resulting from gendered and racial microaggressions impacting them personally and as a couple. Men of Color shared a desire to parent differently than they were parented and to provide a safer space for their children to grow up in.
- The flow of the conversation tended to go from discussing power dynamics to value differences to opening up about feelings.

B.3. Houston and Heidi Sample Interview Questions

Houston and Heidi Sample Interview Questions

Any questions or feedback about the summaries and coding process? How did you use the research data? What was that like?

Any edits? What was it like to read the poem?

How was the piece created? How did you go through the process of working on it together? Tell us about your stylist choices. How did you negotiate or communicate about race and gender?

What story is it telling?

Why was it important to do this art piece together?

Did you feel heard in your lived experience through your storytelling process? Why or why not? What made you feel listened to/heard?

What kinds of sensations happened in your body as you wrote this art piece – your individual process and together? Can you describe the embodiment of this process as you wrote and as you listened?

Have we answered all the research questions?

Remember to focus on the data/stories that has already been coded as a foundation for writing your art piece. In this way, you will easily be able to answer the research questions. Please make sure your definition of violence is embedded in the art piece as well.

1.How do gendered and racialized communication manifest in my own interracial couple/family experience? In others?

2.How does my intercultural experience with daily violence and peacebuilding manifest in my own interracial couple/family? In others?

3.How do I implement resilience strategies within myself and my interracial couple/family? How do I make meaning of how other interracial couples/families explore resilience strategies?

Data indicated that the overall theme was the very ACT of storytelling is an act of peacebuilding that fosters the development of tools for resilience. It is hard to separate the two. They go hand in hand. This was pattern coding – across all interviews.

B.4. Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Houston and Heidi

Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Houston and Heidi

As we navigated the ebb and flow of interracial gendered experiences within our couples/families and society at large, we also dialogically, partook in racialized and gender dynamics that perpetuated dominant culture dynamics known as "stock stories" as well as racialized and gendered oppression. As we moved through these dominant culture stories, we began to unpack "concealed stories" – the stories that lie below the surface of the dominant culture narrative that interrogate gendered and racial violence. Additionally, these interviews illustrated how interracial couples/families respond to daily violence together by acts of peacebuilding and tools for resilience.

Here are some examples of this throughout the interviews:

- Violence is impact not intent.
- White partners took up more space in the interview (whiteness as expansiveness)
- White females had a tendency to speak more than the Men of Color. They took up more dialogic space in this way even though the Males of Color were engaged nonverbally in the interview process. Men of Color often responded to each other with nonverbal body language or with small affirmations to show agreement and that they were listening to each other.
- White females both expressed difficulties exploring and connecting to partners' families due to crippling anxiety related to cross-cultural dynamics they had never experienced. Challenges with cross-cultural communication and cultural adaptability. Feelings of exclusion and disorientation (i.e., "when you do something wrong, everyone gets really quiet). Intersection of gender and disability microaggressions with in-laws and partner (both white females have experienced this) leading to feelings of pressure to conceive and feelings of worthlessness (i.e., "I've had the foster to adopt conversation with XXXX a couple of times, he said…he's kind of said the same thing…no".
- Minimization of gender-based violence storytelling and disability microaggressions ("At least your parts are supposed to work and mine don't…" "So, so it's all in her head for me it was like whatever just get it fixed".)
- Interracial couples intentionally explored and brought to the surface major life events, formative years, and daily violence resulting from gendered and racial microaggressions impacting them personally and as a couple. One theme that came out of this was the intersection of religion and race.

- Intersectionality of religion or non-religion and race. Faith systems are rooted in Westernized or Easternized practices so not accepting/trying to convert Man of Color in Christin family due to his family's history of Buddhism is still considered racialized/ethnic violence (exclusionary violence) as Christianity is a predominantly white institution/dominant culture in the US.
- Interracial couples discussed instances of cultural clashing due to differences in cultural traditions, values, and emotional expressiveness (i.e., miscarriage and potential of ovarian cancer)
- Gender based violence in family of origin was discussed by white females (i.e., you can do anything you set your mind to) whereas Males of Color discussed more freedom based on their gender during their childhood – regardless of generational differences.
- The flow of the conversation tended to go from discussing power dynamics to value differences to opening up about feelings. The Male of Color who shared that he was not accustomed to sharing about feelings due to his cultural background actually ended up intentionally focusing on his feelings process more and more during the interview process and exhibited cultural flexibility (i.e., acknowledgement of how difference in emotional expression is hard for partner to process; guilt around not being same religion, etc.).
- Both white females acknowledged their roles as oppressors from a racialized perspective in the interracial couple and the intent to show up as allies, awareness of the impact and harm of whiteness; acknowledgement of whiteness as the go-to cultural norm – whiteness as expansiveness.
- Discussion of the notion of cultural marginality often experienced by bicultural and biracial people – cultural ambiguity and internalized racism.
- Racial microaggressions occurred from both white women during the process of the interview – one example of this is when the white female interviewer felt that she could weigh in on her partner's cultural identification even if that was not her lived racialized/cultural experience. Another example of this was when the white female interviewee shared her concern that people might think that her children might not be hers. Again, these interviews explore how racialized and gender dynamics show up dialogically and both couples/families voiced and intentionality to want to show up as allies to one another and explore impact, not just intent. This interracial dynamic is an act of peacebuilding and resilience.
- Resilience and peacebuilding strategies seemed to originate from recognizing and acknowledging violence in oneself and family members; intercultural awareness and humility, intentionality, and commitment around racialized and gendered dynamics; cultural flexibility regarding cultural communication and conflict styles. Openness to creating a cultural hybrid within their own family that is a mix of spouse's values and beliefs.
- A certain feeling of connection and belonging was felt and occurred during the sharing that no longer felt like a traditional semi-structured interview – this could be a result of culturally relevant listening during which both families/couples felt a sense of connection and belonging and a sense of shared experience – with an absence of judgement or disorientation but rather a lived shared experience.
- Another outcome of these interviews is illustrating the power of cross-cultural storytelling as an act of peacebuilding and resilience against oppression/daily violence. Peacebuilding and resilience come from navigating values, emotions, and power

dynamics related to race and gender in interracial families – belonging and connection come from intentionally sharing stories with each other. (i.e., we seem like we are mirrors of each other "…you really don't see an Asian man and a white woman – like if you see it's generally a white man and an Asian woman." "Because I haven't seen relationships like ours, even though like, I am happy. I almost feel like there's things telling me like I shouldn't be…And so it's so validating to see someone else's relationship that's maybe had similar issues." "But you know as long as you're willing to do it, it's gonna be all worth it in the end and it's hard, I mean you trying to mesh two cultures together.") Offer from older couple to continue to share interracial family support with younger couple.

Please note: I have used three types of coding – feelings (yellow), values and beliefs (blue), and power dynamics at play (pink).

As you are creating the literary art piece, please respond to the following three research questions (please include your interracial gendered couple experience as well as what it was like to connect with Don and Aliah, another interracial family). This is where science becomes art and art becomes science!

1.How do gendered and racialized communication manifest in my own interracial couple/family experience? In others?

2.How does my intercultural experience with daily violence and peacebuilding manifest in my own interracial couple/family? In others?

3.How do I implement resilience strategies within myself and my interracial couple/family? How do I make meaning of how other interracial couples/families explore resilience strategies?

B.5. Tess Sample Interview Questions

Tess Research Questions

Any edits? Now I rise/Repeat leaves and paragraphs style?

Why was it important to write this together?

Do you feel heard in your lived experience through the writing of this poem? Why or why not?

What was it like being a male and hearing our stories and responding to what we have experienced from your people over the course of our lifetime?

How does shadow work impact our children?

Have we answered all the research questions?

What is your/our now what?

B.6. Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Tess

Summary of Interviews 1 & 2 for Tess

As we navigated the ebb and flow of interracial gendered experiences within our couples and society at large, we also dialogically, partook in racialized and gender dynamics that perpetuated dominant culture dynamics known as "stock stories" (i.e., toxic masculinity oppresses women. There is no such thing as reverse sexism). As we moved through these dominant culture stories, we began to unpack "concealed stories" – the stories that lie below the surface of the dominant culture narrative that interrogate gendered and racial violence. Additionally, these interviews illustrated how interracial couples/families respond to daily violence together by acts of peacebuilding and tools for resilience.

Here are some examples of this throughout the interviews:

- The flow of the conversation was centered first in discussing power dynamics but quickly shifted to discussing peacebuilding approaches and tools for resilience that were rooted in processing feelings and the interracial value system of the interviewee and her family.
- White women took up more dialogic space than Man of Color (whiteness as expansiveness).
- Resilience and peacebuilding strategies seemed to originate from intercultural awareness and humility and intentionality around racialized and gender dynamics. Also – having a faith system that involves Celebrate Recovery – (learned, grew, healed) going through a psychosocial recovery process that involves going through the program and then learning how to facilitate the same program for others.
- Recognizing that concealed stories about domestic violence carry deep meaning and are a powerful form of peacebuilding and resilience – inner and societal healing.
- This interview had one Man of Color present that intentionally vocalized his desire to engage in allyship with women. This was an act of peacebuilding. Also – both white mothers of biracial children - having had similar and multiple traumatic violent and oppressive experiences with men over the course of their lifetime and were able to connect and express a desire to work together on the art piece which was another act of peacebuilding and resilience.
- Examples of responding to daily violence with peacebuilding and tools for resilience included but are not limited to: intentionality and commitment to healing process, self-healing leads to transgenerational healing, mindfulness/guided imagery (cognitive behavioral methods), understanding socialized oppression and societal contradictions related to gender and race, understanding triggers, showing up, being present, and advocating for biracial children within the school system (knowing their histories and

struggles, understanding intersectionality, supporting their racial and cultural identity development, creating a cultural hybrid value system within the interracial family), learning healthy boundaries with others, especially domestic partners, knowing one's worth (doing shadow work), giving back and helping others with a similar story, interracial family unity with blended families.

- A certain feeling of connection and belonging was felt and occurred during the sharing that no longer felt like a traditional semi-structured interview – this could be a result of culturally relevant listening during which both families/couples felt a sense of connection and belonging and a sense of shared experience – with an absence of judgement or disorientation but rather a lived shared experience.
- Another outcome of these interviews is illustrating the power of cross-cultural storytelling as an act of peacebuilding and resilience against oppression/daily violence.

Please note: I have used three types of coding, therefore a hybrid coding approach – feelings (yellow), values and beliefs (blue), and power dynamics at play (pink).

As you are creating the literary art piece, please respond to the following three research questions (please include your interracial gendered couple experience as well as what it was like to connect with Don and Aliah, another interracial family). This is where science becomes art and art becomes science!

1.How do gendered and racialized communication manifest in my own interracial couple/family experience? In others?

2.How does my intercultural experience with daily violence and peacebuilding manifest in my own interracial couple/family? In others?

3.How do I implement resilience strategies within myself and my interracial couple/family? How do I make meaning of how other interracial couples/families explore resilience strategies?

Appendix C - White & Light Skinned Women Dialogic Space

C.1. Table depicting the number of times each researcher/participant spoke.

Appendix C1.

Table 7. *Number of times each researcher/participant talked in the interracial communication during Interview 1*

Brianna and Jeff
Brianna - 240
Aliah – 194
Jeff - 104
Don – 81
Austin and Hannah
Aliah – 307
Heidi - 292
Don – 181
Houston - 173
Maryam and Isaiah
Aliah – 879
Mariya – 526
Don – 494
Jeremiya - 305
Tess
Aliah – 283
Tess– 224
Don - 122