The Intersections and Phenomenology of Heterosexual Transnational Interracial and Interethnic Couples Parenting in the United States

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Dedication

Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these broken wings and learn to fly
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to arise
Blackbird fly

-McCartney, 1968

For our young doctor who understood what it meant to be a steadfast healing force in the world, and was taken far too soon, Dr. Mark Shashi Nathan.

Abstract

Over a million people migrate and resettle in the United States every year. Subsequent to the diversification of the US population, is a rising rate in intermarriage. Juxtaposed with the increasing prevalence of intermarriage is historical restrictions and continued antipathy of such marriages and the families that they build. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological design, this study explores how heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples experience their partner and parent roles as they are impacted by their racial/ethnic, national, and gender identities. Six couples were interviewed, with a total of 18 interviews; each partner separately and then together with in-depth questions about how their family and context informed their identities and roles, and how they navigated the intersections of their relationship as transnational interracial, interethnic parents and partners. Two analytical processes were conducted. Within-group analyses resulted in findings uniquely salient for each couple, and across-group analyses resulted in themes that emerged from all the couples' narratives, and the two correlated. Despite the diversity of the couples, there were significant connections between them. The couples spoke of two intersecting processes, one internal and the other external for how they interacted and navigated their different values, each other, and other systems in their lives. The ways in which each partner constructed their identities and roles were interlocked with their partner's identity and role construction process as well. Implications for future research and clinical recommendations and discussed.

Keywords: *transnational, interethnic, interracial, couples, parenting, hermeneutic phenomenology, intersectionality theory*

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Terminology

Race: An individual's race is socially determined by phenotypic characteristics such as skin color, hair type and other physical features. (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009)

Ethnicity: Selected cultural and sometimes physical characteristics used to classify people into groups or categories considered to be significantly different from others. (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009)

Culture: Culture is an individual's belief system and values. These include various identities such as nationality, religion and country of origin. Socioeconomic, historical, and political factors also influence culture. (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009)

Intermarriage/exogamous/heterogeneous marriage: Encompasses interracial, intercultural, interethnic and interfaith unions. Each refers to the marriage between individuals of a different groups. (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009)

Intramarriage/endogamous/homogamous marriage: Refers to people who partner within their group, be it racial, ethnic, cultural, immigrant group, etc. (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009)

Endogamy/Homogamy: People marrying within their group or persons close in social status. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Dominant Discourse/Narrative (through Feminist lens): A value that produces and sustains the status of those who have power against the competing discourses

of those on the margins of society. A value that is widely accepted within society to the detriment of those who do not subscribe to the rules of that value. (Hare-Mustin, 1994)

Assimilation: The linear process of adopting the beliefs and values of a new country and rejecting those of the native country.

Marginalization: The peripheralization of individuals and groups from a dominant, central majority. (Hall, 1999).

Patriarchy: A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, exploit and oppress women. (Walby, 1989)

Analytical categories: Socially constructed organizing categorizations such as gender, race, etc. (Harding, 1986)

Identities: In this study, will include gender identity (woman or man), national/nativity/transnational identity (identity as a US-born or foreign-born person), racial identity (e.g. Chinese, White, etc.), ethnic identity (e.g. Hispanic, Taiwanese), cultural identity (can encompass cultural identity connected with country of origin, racial group, ethnic group or religious group).

Roles/Selves: In this study, refers to role of being a parent or a partner.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

they have no idea what it is like
to lose home at the risk of
never finding home again
have your entire life
split between two lands and
become the bridge between two countries
-rupi kaur

There is very little academic literature that focuses directly on the phenomenon of being intermarried (marriages between two people from different cultural, racial, and/or ethnic groups), and even less on transnational marriage (marriages between two people who were born in different countries). Transnational interracial/interethnic couple's experiences of parenting is virtually an uncharted phenomena. Historically, society has strongly opposed such relationships, citing many risks and drawbacks to these heterogeneous unions. Currently, mainstream messages invalidate and perpetuate societal pressures on these families.

Interracial/Interethnic Parenting

From a strict interpretation of the term, all marriages could be considered 'intermarriages', where two people bring different cultural experiences, familial learnings, and differing expectations into their relationship. Although all marriages require negotiation, cooperation, and compromise, marriages between two people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups, or even two people who grew up in different countries face unique and complex challenges (Killian, 2013; McGoldrick & Preto, 1984; Thomas, Karis, & Wetchler, 2003; Rosenblatt, 2009). This study limits the discussion to

heterosexual transnational interracial and/or interethnic relationships which includes couples in which partners cross a) socially-constructed lines of race and/or ethnicity, b) the social reality of gender, and c) globally-constructed national borders.

For the transnational interracial/interethnic couple, the additional layer of raising children involves the normative negotiation between partners of parenting roles and practices, but also the complexities that arise from differing values, the distance from extended family support, and the societal scrutiny of these parents due to their visible racial differences.

Significance

In the US, interracial marriage has resulted in a steady increase in multiracial families. In 2010, one in ten heterosexual married couples were interracial and 7.4% of marriages were transnational, a 30% increase from 10 years prior (US Census Bureau, 2011). Twenty-one percent of same-sex couples are interracial (Pew Research Center, 2010). The number of babies born to 'mixed-race' couples has grown 26 times faster than in any other group (London, 1999). Statistics on divorce rates show a slightly higher rate for those in interracial marriages versus those who married someone from their own racial or ethnic group (Bramlet & Mosher, 2005; Bratter & King, 2008). However, research that draws directly on the lived experience of interracial and/or interethnic couples is limited. Moreover, studies have been conducted primarily with Black-White couples (Foeman & Nance, 2002; Singla, 2015). To address this gap, the current research examines couples in which one partner is foreign-born, both partners identify as different races or ethnicities, and they parent together. This inquiry is particularly relevant due to

the increasing prevalence of intermarriage and the need to better understand this couple experience.

Contribution to Field

The family science field will benefit from research on interracial/interethnic couple relationships and parenting journeys for the following three reasons: a) to gain a comprehensive view of both the challenges and resiliencies of interracial/interethnic couples parenting, b) to raise awareness of the societal pressures rooted in the dominant discourses faced by interracial/interethnic couples when parenting in US society today, and c) to highlight clinical considerations and potential applications to support interracial/interethnic couples based on their lived experiences. Currently, no published research looking at parenting experiences in transnational interracial/interethnic couples was identified. This research will attempt to fill that gap.

Societal pressures that interracial/interethnic couples face are considerable and may negatively impact their relationship. Society's dominant discourses "impose imbalances of power and privilege" (Killian, 2002, p. 604) and shape lives and relationships whether people are aware of it or not (White & Epston, 1990). In a study of interracial couples, racial minority partners reported their own sensitivity towards negative reactions in social contexts while their partners were less sensitive to these responses (Killian, 2002). When the positions of partner and parent of a multiethnic child in intermarriages intersect, the experience of discrimination can be further compounded. If experiences of microaggression and racism are not acknowledged, are minimized, or are rejected as being hypersensitive, partners experiencing the discrimination may feel unsupported. Therefore, there is a need to examine race/ethnicity- nativity- gender-based

messages that transnational interracial/interethnic couples face in order to better understand, validate, and provide support.

Interracial/interethnic couples have demonstrated that they are resilient in handling societal stressors (Yang & Shin, 2008). However, we have only begun to explore the wealth of wisdom that can be gleaned from these couples that speak to relationship health. Results of this study highlight couples' 'wisdom' that can lead to better conceptualizations of couples' resiliencies and challenges, and inform clinical approaches.

Finally, the study of intermarriage is relevant in the field of family science because of its potential to ignite social change and social justice. Exploring the experiences of these couples will provide an understanding of the impact of societal perceptions and stressors on marginalized families. It can equip family professionals with the knowledge to better advocate for families and push for a shift in the dominant discourse from one that invalidates transnational interracial/interethnic couples to one that affirms and celebrates their strengths.

Purpose

This dissertation describes and explores the experiences of heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples as they parent, with a specific focus on their individual and joint identities, shaped by their engendered experiences, given their intersecting identities, within the larger US societal contexts.

Study Overview

This research describes and explores transnational interracial/interethnic couple's experiences of parenting by utilizing a phenomenological approach. An integration of

Intersectionality Theory and Hermeneutic Phenomenology, resting on the epistemological and ontological assumptions of Social Constructionism, informed and guided this inquiry.

Each partner was interviewed separately and then together. Questions in the individual interviews prompted each partner to think deeply about their families of origin, culture, how they conceptualized their identities, societal pressures that they may have felt, and their parenting experiences. When interviewed together, partners were encouraged to further expound on their experiences in relation to their partner. Questions for the couple interviews explored partners' similarities and differences in cultural values as it pertained to parenting, how they had negotiated their differences, what stories they punctuated, and how they managed perceived pressures from family and society.

CHAPTER TWO

History of Intermarriage

Historical Context of Intermarriage

Through history, the ways that the United States census collects data, specifically the categories they use to describe the population, serves to both reflect and shape societal perceptions of American demographics. Thus, the Census serves as the primary way to trace the phenomenon of intermarriage through U.S. history.

Two data categories in the Census that provides the most insight into ways that the U.S. has conceptualized intermarriage is race and country of birth or nativity. Another related category, ethnicity, has only recently been collected. Ethnicity is different than race and is unique in that it is often considered to be an inherited status. In recent years, the concept of 'race' has differentiated people and groups based on physical characteristics and 'ethnicity' has been used to refer to ones' membership in a social group with a shared history, sense of identity, geography, and cultural roots (James, 2011). The year 2000 was the first year that data about ethnicity was collected; only one distinct category of ethnicity was specified, "Hispanic or Latino", which identified someone as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture of origin regardless of race. Thus, due to its limited conceptualization, considering ethnicity data from the U.S. Census does not allow for a complete picture of interethnic intermarriage. Furthermore, there is evidence that race is a more consistent construct by which people identify themselves versus ethnicity, which is identified with more fluidity by individuals. A study of the Current Population Survey showed that 1 in 3 people reported an ethnicity in one year that was different from the

one they had reported in a previous year (U.S. Department of Commerce's FedWorld, 1995).

Therefore, exploring both categories, race and ethnicity, may be the most inclusive if one were to consider intermarriage in the U.S. However, to do so, it is critical to understand the complexities of how race and ethnicity is conceptualized and measured. In addition, if transnational intermarriage (marriages that span race/ethnicity and country) is the specific type of intermarriage being considered, it is important to understand the concept of nativity or country of origin, which adds another layer of complexity to these types of relationships. Finally, gender provides a crucial analytical category to conceptualize heterosexual transnational intermarriage. The next sub-sections will historically contextualize how race, ethnicity, nativity and gender was conceptualized/institutionalized in regards to intermarriage through the years.

Conceptualizing race & ethnicity in intermarriage

Widely held definitions of any given concept are often established by people in positions of power, and often denote a set of values that perpetuate privilege that is held by the dominant culture or oppression that is experienced by those who are outside of that group. This is apparent in how the concept of race and also ethnicity has been informed by U.S. history, including the ways that racial categories were created and legitimized. So, current ideas of race are contextualized in historic and hegemonic discourses and must be deconstructed to better understand current experiences of interracial/interethnic couples. For the categorization of ethnicity, scholarly writing is lacking any coherent theoretical foundation from which to describe ethnicity (Rodriguez, 2000). Ethnicity is commonly understood as how people identify in groups through a shared ancestry,

cultural heritage, history, home country, and language, and can be a dynamic, constantly changing property of individual identity and group identity (Leets, Giles & Clement, 1996; Nagel, 1994). Ethnicity is almost always linked to race, with some arguing that it cannot be separate and autonomous categories (Grosfoguel, 2011). Because ethnicity is in many ways a new category and understanding of identity, much of the history of interracial marriage in the US pertains directly to interethnic unions, thus it will be explored as such.

In the late 18th century, the United States was the first 'new nation' in the world. It was a nation built by immigrants, where groups of people were conquered and exploited, and others were enslaved and oppressed (Anderson & Fienberg, 2000). It is upon this backdrop of complex historical legacy that controversies surrounding racial definitions and categorization resonate.

Between the years 1790 and 1840, for the stated purposes of political representation and taxation, the federal government categorized people as 'Free White', 'Free Colored Individuals' and 'Slaves' when collecting demographic data (Anderson & Fienberg, 2000; Lee, 1993). After 1840, government appointed census takers to classify individuals into three general categories: White, Black and Mulatto (half Black and half White). In 1890, two additional sub-classifications, Quadroon and Octoroon, were added to specify if one was a quarter or an eighth Black respectively. Three other racial categories were also added - Chinese, Japanese and Indian (Anderson & Fienberg, 2000). From the year 1900 with the recent arrival of immigrant groups to the U.S., the census listed a number of new racial categories such as Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean. In 1920, Hindu was listed as a racial classification to include South East Asian Indian

immigrants in the population. To add to the confusion, census takers recorded different races within families, sometimes classifying siblings differently. This challenged the idea that race could be easily seen or perceived (Farley 1991; Lieberson & Santi, 1985). To increase the accuracy of the census, in the 1960 data collection, people were allowed to self-classify. A further refinement of the racial category option occurred in 1970, when people were allowed to select 'Other' for their race (Gibson & Lennon, 1999).

Currently, in accordance with guidelines of the U. S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the racial categories "reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically" and include "racial and national origin or sociocultural groups" (US Census Bureau, 2015). The 2000 census was the first to allow respondents to check off multiple "race" boxes or categories including White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawai'ian or other Pacific Islander, and Asian.

Why a history of categorizing race matters for intermarriage is because the majority of transnational intermarriage is between two people of different races. What appears to be most intriguing about the history of intermarriage is that although such marriages were rare in the US before the twentieth century, an enormous effort was made to prevent them from happening. From the colonial period on, state legislators passed laws that prohibited what they ultimately by the 1860's called 'miscegenation' which referred to the mixing of races (Pascoe, 1991). The laws were enacted first and rejected last in the South, which is a fair gauge of conservative attitudes about race in those states that intermarried couples continue to experience now (Herman & Campbell, 2012).

Legislation prohibiting immigrants, especially from Asia, from intermarrying was common in the mid 1900's. Marriages were prohibited between Whites and Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Hawai'ians, Hindus, and Native Americans, as well as between Whites and Blacks (Pascoe, 1991). Many northern states repealed these laws after the Civil War, yet in the South and the West, anti-miscegenation laws continued through much of the twentieth century.

Probably the most famous couple who unknowingly brought the issue of intermarriage into the federal courts and the collective consciousness of the American people was Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving. After marrying in Washington D.C. and returning to their home state of Virginia, they were sentenced to a year in prison if they did not leave Virginia. When the case was brought before the Virginia Supreme Court, in upholding the statute's constitutionality, the court provided the rationale: "For the legitimate purpose to preserve the racial integrity of its citizens, and to prevent the corruption of blood, a mongrel breed of citizens, and the obliteration of racial pride" (Oh, 2005, p. 1330). In 1967, ten years after Mildred and Richard were married, the US Supreme Court ruled that Virginia's anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional. Pascoe has noted that "the legal system does more than reflect social or scientific ideas about race, it also produces and reproduces them" (1996, p. 47).

It took a long time, but states slowly moved to abolish their anti-miscegenation laws. As one of the final states to do so in 2000, Alabama removed a ban on interracial marriages from their constitution, much to the dismay of 40% of their voters (Crary, 2007). Recent well-publicized experiences of resistance to intermarriage were when Louisiana Justice of Peace refused to issue a marriage license to an interracial couple in

2010, out of "concern for the children". In another instance in 2011, the Gulnare Freewill Baptist Church in Kentucky banned interracial couples from membership in 2011. As recent as 2012, over 20% of self-identified Republicans in Mississippi and Alabama responded to a poll, indicating they wanted intermarriage to be illegal (Foster, 2010).

The concept of race and ethnicity and how it has evolved over time is highlighted in this manuscript because race and ethnicity matters when studying interracial/interethnic couples. The ways race has been conceptualized, as something that can be physically identified, as a construct that is important to classify and categorize people, as a way to divide people into groups where they are privileged or oppressed - is integral to the discussion of interracial couples. This study focuses on ethnic and racial minority, foreign-born partners because their experiences are often different and more conflated than their dominant culture partners, specifically because of the visibility of their race.

Conceptualizing nativity in intermarriage

Throughout U.S. history, measuring nativity has been inextricably connected to political interests such as migration policies and citizenship granting. This is evident in how information about native and foreign-born, citizenship, parentage and ancestry, and language has been collected. In many instances, nativity, in tandem with race or ethnicity, was used politically. For example, in the year 1940, President Roosevelt 'good neighbor' policy that encouraged better relations with Mexico, influenced the Census Bureau and other government agencies to uniformly classify people of Mexican descent as White in order to make them eligible for citizenship since those categorized as White were eligible for citizenship and there were quotas on all minority groups for citizenship eligibility as

well (Lukens, 2012). Another policy example was when the 1920 census was used to inform The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 which revised the quotas to control immigration from various countries, which by default meant races and ethnicities (Bennet, 1966). Another much darker example in history was when the US census data was used to identify people from Japan, both those who identified their race as Japanese or their native country as Japan, who were globally suspected of being 'enemies' at the time of WWII, and were then targeted, seized, and interred in camps (Grodzins, 2011). While the US Census Board denied providing information to the CIA in order to locate the addresses of Japanese Americans, the truth about them doing so was revealed in 2000, with the Census Bureau director issuing a public apology for releasing identifying data (Minkel, 2007). This incident created deep suspicion about the US Census Bureau and subsequently compliance with data collection requests was drastically reduced (Hirschman, Alba, & Farley, 2000).

Nativity is an important concept to understand when studying transnational intermarriage. To understand the idea of nativity, it is best to review why and how citizenship has been granted; it is within these policies that essential aspects of economic interest, foreign policy, racial values, and a sense of national identity are found (LeMay & Barken, 1999).

In 1787, the United States Constitution was adopted and provided Congress the power to establish a uniform rule of naturalization. At that time, the prevailing sentiment was that America was a brave and bold experiment in freedom to be shared by any who desired to be free as evident in the future first president, George Washington's statement "The bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable stranger,

but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment" (LeMay & Barken, 1999, p. xxx). However, the privilege of such a reception to this new country as evidenced by the granting of citizenship, was limited. Laws were written to enable all "free white persons" of "good moral character" (Jacobson, 1999, p. 8) who had resided in the country for two years to be able to apply for citizenship and it wouldn't be until 1952 that broad-based laws were written that allowed non-White immigrants the privilege of becoming naturalized citizens (Barrett & Roediger, 1997; Neuman, 1994). Back in the early 1800's, the rising number of European immigrants, inspired fears of colonial foreign influence which led Congress under the Federalist Party to raise the required residency length to fourteen years (LeMay & Barken, 1999). The wave of Catholic immigrants during the 1830's instigated an intense anti-foreign reaction and immigration policy was blamed for allowing the importation of crime, poverty, and drunkenness (LeMay & Barken, 1999). In the early1900's, over 20 million immigrants arrived from South, Central, and Eastern Europe, and Asia (Pascoe, 1996). These immigrants were more 'visible' by virtue of their physical appearance, customs, and language, and this "set off a renewed xenophobic reaction" which fueled more restrictive immigration laws directed at specific groups of immigrants deemed undesirable, namely from Asia (LeMay & Barken, 1999, p. xxxi). The Chinese Exclusion Act, enacted in 1882 was revised and made stricter, justifying harsh measures designed to suppress Chinese immigrants. Between 1910 and 1940, the San Francisco Bay port of entry where most of the Chinese immigrants arrived, became a place of lengthy confinement in which immigrants were separated by gender and lived in

shared, crowded spaces. They faced detailed interrogations, were medically examined, and waited years for their hearings that would grant them permission to enter the country (LeMay & Barken, 1999).

A new citizenship requirement, English literacy, was proposed by Congress in 1895; it was vetoed by President Cleveland. In 1915, Congress revisited the literacy requirement and passed the law; President Wilson vetoed it. Finally, in 1917, enough support was garnered, Congress overrode a presidential veto, and an English literacy requirement was added as an immigrant admission requirement (Leibowitz, 1969).

The US participation in World War I and II saw a rise in xenophobic reactions which encouraged the "Americanization" movement, aimed at educating immigrants on the English language and US customs (LeMay, 1987). The years 1920 to 1965 saw national immigration laws governed by elaborate quota systems, which were based on immigrants' country of origin, and changed depending on the need for labor and wartime alliances with certain countries (LeMay, 1987; LeMay & Barken, 1999). In 1924 the link between immigration and citizenship was finally connected when Congress added a clause into the Johnson-Reed Act barring immigration of aliens' ineligible for citizenship (Sohoni, 2007). Through President Truman's urging for a more liberalized approach to immigration and naturalization policies and the inspiration of the Civil Rights movement, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was enacted. This finally ended the country of origin quota system (Gabaccia, 2002; LeMay & Barken, 1999).[1]

[1] *For a thorough chronological account of immigration and naturalization policies in the US, please refer to LeMay & Barken, 1999*

Immigration and intermarriage. Immigrants and foreign-born groups were treated much like racial minority groups when it came to prohibiting their ability to marry White, native-born individuals. The passing of anti-miscegenation laws against Asian groups was driven by a concern that more Asian immigrants would gain citizenship. These states wanted to prevent the "incorporation of male immigrant labor force and the creation of a subsequent generation of US born citizen" (Koshy, 2004, p. 6). Later miscegenation laws included a more exhaustive lists of races, such as in the case of Georgia that made it unlawful for a White person to marry someone who has any "ascertainable trace of either Negro, African, West Indian, Asiatic Indian, Mongolian, Japanese or Chinese blood in their veins" (Sohoni, 2007; Ga. Code Ann., sec 53 [106 & 312] 1927). The creation of these laws were driven by fear about racial integration following the Civil Rights Act of April 9, 1866 that provided that all persons born in the United States were declared citizens (Sohoni, 2007).

Counting transnational intermarriage and mixed parenting rates. It is quite challenging to identify intermarriages between foreign-born and US-born partners using the US census data. Currently, they are found in US Census Bureau marriage partner data for those who are 'foreign-born' as including "naturalized U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (immigrants), temporary migrants (such as foreign students), humanitarian migrants (such as refugees and asylees), and persons illegally present in the United States" (US Census Bureau, 2013, p. 59).

Further, it is also important to be able to identify transnational interracial/interethnic couples who are also parents. US Census questions ask about where parents were born. In earlier years, when one parent is native US-born and the

other parent is foreign-born, they were considered “mixed parents”. Then in 1980, the question was changed to asking about ancestry, based on self-identification, instead of the question of the birthplace of one’s parent (Gibson & Lennon, 1999). Currently, there are several questions on the US census that are used to identify transnational interracial/interethnic parents: what country an individual and both of her parents were born, what year she came to live in the US, whether she is a citizen, and how she became a citizen, and what race and ethnicity they identify (US Census Bureau, 2011).

Accuracy of these data is questionable, considering the varied ways defining foreign-born and the transient nature of migration. Furthermore, it is safe to say that these couple and family arrangements are underreported due to individuals’ fears of being identified if they or any family members are undocumented immigrants. In addition, mixed messages about the purpose of the US Census and who should participate has led to foreign-born individuals not submitting their information (The Leadership Conference, 2015).

There are a range of attitudes and perceptions held about those who are foreign-born, which does impact and shape how immigrants create meaning out of their identities in relation to others and their journey in a new land. Often immigrant research has focused on understanding the immigrant experience without acknowledging the integrated effects of race, ethnicity, or gender (Berg, 2010).

Conceptualizing Gender in Intermarriage

It is evident in the former sections on race (the first US Census not collecting data on White Females under the age of 16 while doing so for White Males, and neglecting to accurately identify any number of females from other races) and nativity (where there

were multiple efforts to prevent specifically male immigrants from joining the labor market) that gender is an interrelated category in this discussion. Gender is a fundamental organizing principle of human experience and social relations and often labeled an 'analytical category' (Avis, 1996). It is problematic to discuss the historical context of gender relations in intermarriage without understanding the norms of patriarchy in the US as it relates to transnational intermarriage. Subsequently, a nuanced discussion about the differing perceptions of intermarriage based on the gender and race of the partners in the relationship is needed.

Patriarchy is defined as the "organization of society that elevates men along with their defining attributes and tasks as more important, more valued, and therefore more privileged and powerful than women" (Silverstein & Goodrich, 2003, p. 31). One of the ways in which this has perpetuated in history is in the ways women's marriages have been controlled and restricted.

The very first prohibition on interracial marriage, passed in Maryland in 1664, was gender-specific: it prohibited marriages between "freeborn English women" and Black slaves (Pascoe, 1996). New Mexico in 1857, framed their laws similarly, forbidding marriage between "any woman of the White race" and any free Black or mulatto (Irwin & Brooks, 2004). As has already been evident, anti-miscegenation laws often included not just native people of color but foreign-born and immigrant populations. Pascoe's research shows that laws were applied most stringently to groups like the Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos, whose men were thought to fancy marrying White women (1996). This sentiment of prohibiting White women from marrying men of color appears to perpetuate. In 1962, when asked about the types of intermarriage that

most disturbed them, a sample of Southern White men ranked marriages that involved White women, at the top of their list (Myrdal, 1962). In Rosenblatt's study, the most frequent reaction of African American men towards African American and White intermarriages, was resentment (Rosenblatt, Karis & Powell, 1995).

When gender is reversed in terms of intermarriage, historically, there was less enforcement of anti-miscegenation law. Court cases, however, were commonly filed ex post facto, after the death of a White male spouse in order to take away the property of the surviving spouse- a woman of color.

In many ways, it was the social perceptions of men and women of color, rooted in patriarchy that supported the enactments of such laws. Castaneda (1992) documents these pernicious stereotypes that have existed in the history of the US, where women of color have been identified in two dichotomous images: "good women of color are light-skinned, civilized, and virgins, and the White men marry them" and the "bad women are dark-skinned…White men do not marry them" (p. 517). According to this mythology, women will reject their own in favor of their White saviors. Within these narratives, it is implied that women who are moral will submit in servitude. Discussions about gendered power and roles need also to include "racialized hierarchies of masculinity (and femininity) and their global–local and transnational contexts" (Kim, 2006, p. 519).

Consistent with feminist critiques of discussions of women and people of color, there is such deficit in exploring gender apart for race, or inserting the concept of race as an analytic category to gender in an additive way (Crenshaw, 1991). Attending to the interrelatedness of analytic categories –such as nativity, race, ethnicity and gender- allow for a greater understanding of how these identities affect one another (Berg, 2010).

Epistemology, Identities and Roles

The identities of race, ethnicity and gender, along with how one may be identified or identify with their nativity or as an immigrant, are relevant to this study. In exploring these different identities, I also aim to understand how they shape, influence, and impact individuals as partners and parents. It appears that these identities are variable, they change through time and context, sometimes depending upon political interest, economic needs, and societal pressure, and yet also can be determined and understood differently on an individual level. If one's core personhood and thus reality is constructed by how one identifies, it begs the question of how and what constructs these identities.

Epistemology relates to knowledge and the way we come about knowing, while ontology relates to reality and how we define reality. To know how one goes about knowing themselves, and to understand how reality is defined by them, is the crux of this study of the lived experiences of heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples who parent. The foundation of this inquiry is in the epistemological and ontological assumptions of Social Constructionism.

Social Constructionism, an ontological and epistemological theory, can be said to have been a reflection of social movements and a response to critiques of positivism in the 1960's (Houston, 2001). While positivism subscribes that knowledge is knowable and external and reality is objective, postmodernism holds that reality is not separate from the individual and that there are multiple realities. Social Constructionism is a postmodern genus, linking a number of diverse theorists and those who influence them (Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Edmund Husserl, Jurgen Habermas, Martin Heidegger, Lev

Vygotsky, Michel Foucault, Gregory Bateson, and many more).[2] However, there are a number of assumptions that link those who call themselves Social Constructionists (Houston, 2001). First, the 'social world' is socially manufactured via human interaction and the use of language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In essence, society is not a pre-existing reality but a product of people engaging with each other, (Durkheim, 1964) and where such interactions go through the process of being externalized, objectified and internalized (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Secondly, people's understanding of the world is historical and contextual, that is specific to the time and place one finds themselves in (Garfinkle, 1964). Thirdly, the notion that there are essential structures within society or within an individual is rejected. Therefore, people are asked to consider the relative and subjective nature of the social world because all knowledge is a matter of perspective and is contingent upon something and/or many things (Lyotard, 1984). Finally, how people view the world and make meaning of the world will shape their response to it (Thomas & Thomas, 1928). Social constructionist inquiry is concerned with delineating the processes by which people come to describe and explain the world and themselves.

Berger and Luckmann delineated three processes which are useful to understand the way that social groups construct and maintain their knowledge of 'reality': typification, institutionalization, and legitimation (1966). Typification is the process by which one sorts their perceptions into types or classes, often a learned way of organizing the world, from families of origin and communities. Institutionalization arise around sets of typifications and helps families and societies maintain and disseminate knowledge, for

[2] *Please see Lock and Strong, 2010 for a comprehensive history of Social Constructionism.*

example the institution of motherhood. Finally, legitimization is the culmination of all the former processes added with means for legitimacy, for example through professional licensure (Freedman & Combs, 1996). With legitimization, "institutions are experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact" (Berger & Luckmann, 1996, p. 89).

Social constructivism and social constructionism, while related, are different concepts. Social constructionism refers to the development of phenomena relative to social contexts while social constructivism refers to an individual's making meaning of knowledge within a social context (Vygotsky 1978). Social constructionist focus on social interpretations and the intersubjective influence of language and culture, and not so much on the biology of perception, cognition, and operations of the nervous system.

This research is informed by the epistemological and ontological assumptions of Social Constructionism in that it aimed to acquire the subjective awareness of the social phenomenon of partnership and parenting while being in a heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic relationship, via the interaction between, and the languaging by each partner and the couple together.

Conceptualizing Identity and Self

People commonly think of themselves in terms of multiple identities (Rosenberg 1997). The focus of this study was to understand transnational interracial/interethnic couples' social, self and relational identities. More specifically it considers how the participants thought about themselves in relation to group memberships (e.g. male, foreign-born) and how they perceived their identities in roles and relationships (e.g. husband, mother) (Stirratt, Meyer, Ouellette, & Gara, 2008).

Social identities can include identities that are defined in relation with "people whom one has not even met but with whom some common attribute, such as gender, nationality, or occupation, is shared" (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004, p. 84). Ashmore and Jussim (1997) further clarify the definition of 'social self' and 'social identity' to mean individual-level identities where broad social categories are used to describe 'who I am' for the former, and collective-level identities where broad social categories describe 'who we are' for the latter (p. 5). Social self speaks of the self as a certain kind of person and social identity identifies the self with a group as a whole.

Relational identities speak to the identifications that derive from connections to people with whom there is emotional investment and influence, such as spouses and children (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Social selves and identities, and relational identities can be defined as "socially constructed and socially meaningful categories that are accepted by individuals as descriptive of themselves or their group" (Thoits & Virshup, 1997, p. 106). Please refer to Figure 1 for description of conceptualization of selves.

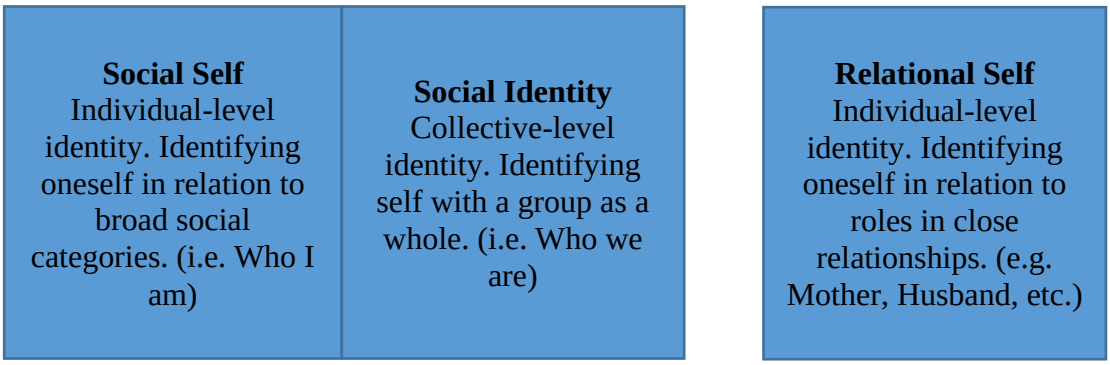


Figure 1. Conceptualization of selves.

It is important to explore both the social self and the social identity, even while there is some overlap in the way one identifies (e.g. I am a Chinese American, We are Chinese American), because the distinction between both provides the foundation to

explore broader discourses of race, gender and nativity. For example, it is the difference between conversations about how one views perceptions of themselves as a Chinese mother, versus conversations about how one views perceptions of their group as Asian parents. While they are not mutually exclusive, it expands the dialogue to include larger social implications.

This research study specifically attends to racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, national or transnational identity, and gender identity. I believe that all these identities are socially constructed and thus connected to one's social identity. A constructionist conceptualization of identity includes four elements: "elements of continuity (being the same person over time), integration (being a whole person, not fragments), identification (being like others), and differentiation (being unique and bounded)" (Ebaugh, 2003, p. 210). As aspects of one's social identity, ethnic, racial, cultural, gender, or transnational identity can be thought of as a subjective sense of belonging to a group and all that comes with this sense of group membership (Phinney, 1990; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Belongingness to one group is not an absolute way of self-identifying. It is in social contexts that individuals identify their social categorizations, thus the salience of one or another or a combination of identities shift depending on situational pragmatics. Consistent with the social constructionism, identities are thus constructed and mutually defined through interactions with others.

Present State of Intermarriage

The Numbers

In the 2010 census, 10% of heterosexual married couples were interracial, an approximate 30% increase from 2000, and 21% of same-sex couples were interracial

(Pew Research Center, 2010). Although it is not possible to identify what percentage of these interracial marriages were also transnational, the significant proportion of foreign-born people in racial minority groups is considerable. For example, in 1997, 61% of Asians and 38% of Hispanics were foreign born (Waters, 2000). There was a higher percentage of unmarried interracial or interethnic couples than there were married interracial or interethnic couples in 2010 (US Census Bureau, 2012). Notably in the 2010 Census, states with high rates of interracial or interethnic legal same-sex marriages were Hawai'i (53%), California (33%), New Mexico (31%), and Nevada (30%), which are in the top ten states with the highest immigrant population (Krogstad & Keegan, 2014).

In the American Community survey, 7.4% of marriages were transnational, those between foreign-born and US-born partners (US Census Bureau, 2011). This is a somewhat smaller number than for transnational marriages in which both partners are foreign-born (13.2%), of all immigrant persons who choose to marry, over one third of them marry US-born partners (US Census Bureau, 2011).

While White Americans were least likely to marry outside of their race, 70% of all interracial marriages in the US in 2010, involved a White partner with a significant number married to Hispanic and Asian partners. Intermarriages between White and Asian partners were most prevalent (45%) (US Census, 2000). Of all interracial/interethnic couples in 2010, 22% of interracial couples composed of one of both partners identifying as multiracial (Johnson & Kreider, 2013). Unsurprisingly, the number of babies born to 'mixed-race' parents has grown from less than one million in 1970 to two million in 1990 (London, 1999).

The trends

Much research has pointed to heterogeneity in social context as allowing for strong and positive association with intermarriage (Blau, Blum & Schwartz, 1982; Blau & Schwartz 1984; Blum 1984; Sampson 1984). Neighborhood diversity and the length of stay in the US correlates with propensity for intermarriage (Hawkins, 2014). A common contention is that non-whites who are more acculturated to American mainstream society, are more likely to marry outside of their race or ethnic group (Hwang, Saenz, & Aguirre, 1997). Furthermore, research has shown that interracial marriage is more common in middle class partners and those who are more educated (holding a college degree or higher) (Qian & Lichter, 2001). Since 1960, women generally have been more likely to intermarry than males (except for black women) (Jacobs & Labov, 2002).

In attempts to explain the phenomenon of intermarriage, social scientists have generated multiple hypotheses about how these couple relationships are formed. Unfortunately, most of them are linked to "ulterior motives and pathology" (Killian, 2013, p. 46), where hypotheses generated to 'explain' heterogeneous relationships like intermarriage have centered on personal insecurities, self-loathing, sexual curiosity, moral deviance, liberalness, and internalized racism (Aldridge, 1978; Berry & Blassingame, 1982; Spaights & Dixon, 1984; Staples, 1999). It is not surprising that this deficit-based perspective in research has been influenced by the U.S. history of ethnic and racial marginalization, and policy that legally defined intermarriage as deviance from dominant culture norms.

Intermarriage has also hypothesized that an immigrant's or personal of color's level of 'assimilation' or 'acculturation' and thus more 'Americanized' is more desirable

and has a stronger desire to be in a relationship with US-born individuals (Alba & Nee, 2009; Qian & Lichter, 2001). This speaks to the dominant discourse of both homogamy and majority ethnocentric monoculturalism which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Divorces

Although society is slowly moving toward more acceptance of intermarriage, there are still unique and complex challenges for these couples. The data on the rate of divorce in intermarried marriages is inconsistent at best. A 2005 report from the Federal Center for Health Statistics showed that the rate of divorce from first marriages is marginally higher for interracial/interethnic couples than those who married within-group partners. This includes foreign-born married couples that divorce less frequently than US-born couples (Bramlet & Mosher, 2005; US Census, 2010). Kreider (2000) surveyed interracial first marriages and found that they were 1.4 years shorter on average than endogamous (within group) first marriages; interracial couples were 50% more likely to divorce than endogamous couples.

Specific combinations of race, ethnicity, and sex, namely White females and Black males, and White females and Asian males, put couples at a higher risk for divorce. In contrast, non-White females coupled with White males and White males partnered with Black females tend to show lower divorce rates than White/White couples (Brattter & King, 2008).

Conventional perceptions suggest that racial intermarriages are more at risk of failing than homogamous marriages (Killian, 2013). Researchers have also been pessimistic about successful intermarriages, pointing to higher risks of communication difficulties, marital dissatisfaction, and incompatible parenting behaviors (Bratter &

King, 2008; Fu, Tora, & Kendall, 2001; Usita & Poulson, 2003). However, more recent studies have countered long-held assumptions about intermarriage as being riskier. Zhang and Van Hook (2009) studied over 23,000 couples and found no evidence that interracial marriages were at an elevated risk for divorce.

As the body of research on intermarriage has matured, researchers have hypothesized that religion, class, and education differences are more likely to have a negative effect than racial or cultural differences (Killian, 2013; Ho, Rasheed & Rasheed, 2003). This was consistent with Killian's (2001) findings that religious and class differences significantly reduced couple satisfaction and stability, but race and culture factors did not. Studies have also concluded that interracial relationships do not significantly differ in satisfaction and quality from homogenous relationships, and in fact have found higher levels of satisfaction in intermarried couples (Garrett, 2004; Troy, Lewis-Smith & Laurenceau, 2006).

Migration Experience

Who migrates and why

Immigration is a complex phenomenon including diversity across relocation circumstances, which in turn, impact immigrants' subsequent experiences in America (Yakushko, 2008). For example, a migrant agriculture worker from Mexico, perhaps undocumented, who leaves family behind to seek work to support his family has a much different experience from a person from a wealthy background with computer engineering skills who chooses to migrate and obtains a work permit from the company that hires her.

Legal immigration is the process by which foreign-born individuals are granted legal permanent residence or a "green card" by the federal government of the United States. Legal permanent residence includes the right to remain in the country indefinitely, to be gainfully employed, and to seek the benefits of U.S. citizenship through naturalization; permanent residency status does not include the right to vote (Mulder, Hollmann, Lollock, Cassidy, Costanzo, & Baker, 2001). Within the group of 'legal immigrants', a distinction is made between 'new arrivees' (those who applied for specific status and that still applies), 'adjustees' (those whose status has been adjusted since being in the US), and 'asylees' (who claim asylum based on war or political persecution) (Perry, Vandervate, Auman, & Morris, 2001; Yakushko, 2008).

The most common way to receive legal status leading to citizenship or permanent residency in the US is through a family-sponsored immigrant visa (Mulder, Hollmann, Lollock, Cassidy, Costanzo, & Baker, 2001). Companies or agencies can also sponsor employees for legal residence status, but this is typically restricted to people who have advanced skills or training that are deemed assets for the US labor market (Yokushko, 2008). Refugees are granted a different type of immigration status. In accordance with the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 and UN protocol, the president and Congress determine the number of refugees who are allowed to enter the US (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2007). Around 20 countries in the world have relocation programs for refugees, and the US accepts approximately 4% of the estimated world refugee population (UN, 2004). Finally, there is a group of immigrants that are often referred to as 'illegal' or 'undocumented', who may enter by crossing borders without being inspected, or who

enter with a temporary visa and stay beyond the time restriction (Mulder, Hollmann, Lollock, Cassidy, Costanzo, & Baker, 2001).

The Migration Experience

The literature on the immigrant experience has predominantly focused on the successful integration of foreign-born people through the lens of native-born researchers. Typical variables indicating success include levels of assimilation as evidenced by language use and educational and occupational attainment (Escobar & Vega, 2000; Viruell-Fuentes, 2011). Feminist and critical theorists challenge the assumption that assimilation is the goal or the marker of success. They criticize this approach for being linear and ethnocentric, often ignoring the complex experience of migration and re-settlement in a new country (Peres-Huber, 2010; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012).

Although the immigrant experience is as varied as the circumstance under which individuals migrate, a consistent public sentiment is that non-native status is negatively perceived in social and political spheres (Yokushko, 2008). This may in part be due to the socio-historical context of perceptions of race and nativity in the US, which inform dominant discourse and societal views. A more nuanced discussion about the immigrant experience must include an examination of intersections of identities such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity. It is also important to consider where these various identities are located on the social continuum and how they operate in American society to oppress certain groups of people and privilege others.

Oppression and Social Marginality. According to Young (2009), the reason people do not use the word ‘oppression’ in modern society is because they have an

outdated conceptualization of the term. Originally, oppression designated the tyranny of a ruling party. However social movements in the 60's and 70's redefined the meaning of oppression to refer to disadvantages and injustices that people suffer because of systemic societal constraints (Young, 2009). This definition is what is used by contemporary scholars and activists to identify modes of oppression including those related to race, gender, class, and non-nativity, all aspects of an individual's identity.

Experience of oppression is particularly salient for immigrants. Each day foreign-born individuals experience often unconscious assumptions and reactions in ordinary interactions and, through media and cultural stereotypes (Young, 2009). When immigrants intermarry, those experiences are brought into the couple relationship and impact interactions as partners, parents, and in-laws. Therefore, it is important to understand the power relations embedded within each person's social identity, e.g. as a native or non-native, as a person from the majority race or a racial minority group, as a man or a woman, and how those power differentials manifest in the couple and/or parenting relationship. Research on social marginality suggests that "the power differentials associated with various social identities deeply affect how members of marginalized social groups construct, reconfigure and negotiate their identities" indicating a recursive nature, that many identify with social constructionism (Mahalingam, Balan, & Haritatos, 2008, p. 2).

Loss of Ethnic Identity and Acculturative Stress. American social policies have been guided by assimilationist ideals of Anglo-conformity and nativist Americanization efforts (Schlesinger, 1992). Assimilation holds that immigrants will and should adopt the behaviors, attitudes, and culture of the receiving nation's dominant

group with the goal of becoming well-integrated into their new society (Park & Burgess, 1969). Further, individuals who maintain their ethnic/native culture, identity, behaviors, social network, etc. are at a disadvantage due to lost opportunities for social participation and membership (Reitz & Sklar, 1997). Research on immigrants' experiences has documented the pressure to conform and reorganize their identities (termed acculturative stress) (Berry, 1997; Thomas, 1995). Acculturative stress manifests itself psychologically as depression and anxiety that result when an individual is overwhelmed by the cultural context and has difficulty coping with the pressures to adapt (Berry, 1997).

Intermarriage as Assumed Marital Assimilation. Intermarriage is considered by some to be the 'final stage of assimilation' (Chiswick & Houseworth, 2011; Qian & Lichter, 2001), interpreted on a societal level as a sign of improving race relations and decreasing antagonism among groups (Besharow & Sullivan, 1996). A conclusion from an older study by Cohen (1982) claimed that an increasing number of second-generation immigrant intermarriages corroborates these ideas that intermarriage is a dimension of assimilation.

There are some challenges to interpreting intermarriage as a sign of assimilation. First, it is grounded in an assumption that assimilation is a preferred state of being. However, from a critical lens, that assumption is grounded in the dominant discourse and perpetuates oppression of individuals who are from a non-dominant culture. If assimilation is defined societally as the stage at which foreign-born individuals, marriage partners, have embraced all that is 'American' and have shed all their native culture in their choice to intermarry, this is also problematic. It may assume that the couple is no different from White homogenous couples, or that the White or US-born partner is tasked

with teaching the foreign-born partner about 'how things are', or that both partners privilege and prefer the values often associated with dominant American culture, or that the foreign-born partner does not desire to practice their native culture. Ideas of assimilation have predominantly been in more traditional sociological studies using a positivist paradigm, employing population-based theories and methods that examine trends at a societal level. Few studies have examined intermarriage at a micro-level, employing a critical lens with the couple as the unit of analysis.

Gendered Beliefs about Foreign Born Intermarried Parents. In a recursive manner, the interpretation of idealized or pathologized social behaviors expected of those who are immigrants can also shape what values they uphold. Mahalingam and colleagues proposed that specific racial groups of immigrants are expected to behave in certain ways, often in gendered ways (2008). For example, immigrant women who are idealized as more family oriented than American women and more willing to be content in their role as housewife and mother (Dhruvarajan, 1993; Espiritu, 2001).

Challenges to Intermarriage and Parenting

Dominant Discourses

Dominant discourse is "a system of statements, practices, and institutional structures that share common values" (Hare-Mustin, 1994, p. 19). Van Dijk (2000) described larger discourses concerning ethnicity and race as a form of cultural "hegemony, premised on seemingly legitimate ideologies and attitudes, and often tacitly accepted by most members of the dominant majority group" (p. 34). Dominant discourses impact expectations and perceptions of relationships so that there are accepted ideals for families, which privilege some people and not others, in this way affecting couples

(Killian, 2002). There are norms that are often implicit, generally unquestioned that restrict and silence alternative ways of thinking and being (Hare-Mustin, 1994). These dominant discourses "impose imbalances of power and privilege" (Killian, 2002, p. 604) and shape lives and relationships whether we are aware of it or not (White & Epston, 1990). The most salient dominant discourses that impact transnational intermarried couples involve homogamy, ethnocentric multiculturalism, and nativity. The concept of race is differentially present in all three discourses.

Dominant discourse of homogamy. The dominant discourse of homogamy rests on the assumption that "people are attracted to one another because of their similarities in background"; some consider race and culture to be major areas in which similarity is sought during the mate selection process (Killian, 2013, p. 10). Hearken back to the historical account of interracial marriages and non-native/US-born marriages and it is apparent that society upholds homogenous relationships as the ideal. Prior to the 21st century, it was more common for state laws to prohibit intermarriage. There was also explicit discrimination towards couples that were interracial/interethnic, such as the withholding of financial loans for housing or benefits of government social services based on race. Unfortunately, these forms of unequal treatment of interracial/interethnic couples continue to exist in the US.

Minorities also note a common experience of microaggressions, which are "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a minority group (and) are so pervasive and automatic in daily interactions" that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocuous (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal & Torino, 2007, p. 72). As alluded to in previous sections, at times, these

discriminatory attitudes originate from negative perceptions of intermarriage, where people are disturbed to see a person of color marry a White person, or a foreign-born person marrying a native-born. Partners in a transnational interracial/interethnic relationship face specific challenges based upon the fact that they do not fit the mold of homogenous relationships. Studies reveal that microaggressions have major consequences for marginalized groups in society because they perpetuate stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002), they create physical health problems (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999), they lower work productivity (Salvatore & Shelton, 2007), and create inequities in education, employment and health care (Sue, 2010).

When researchers utilize a deficit framework in studying intermarriages, focusing on such things as how the differences in race or culture cause difficulties and divorce, we are unintentionally supporting the dominant discourse of homogamy. Because the dominant discourse of homogamy perpetuates the notion that intermarriages are not normative and not ideal, using a research inquiry that investigates all the possible challenges and conflicts that such couples have, is indirectly subscribing to that discourse.

Dominant discourse of majority ethnocentric monoculturalism. The dominant discourse of ethnocentric monoculturalism refers to the "invisible veil of a worldview that keeps White Euro Americans from recognizing the ethnocentric basis of their beliefs, values, and assumptions" (Sue, 2004, p. 764). Dominant culture values serve only a narrow segment of the population and denies that these values intrude on the life experiences of people who do not share that worldview (Sue et al., 2007). When a person from a minority culture raises a concern about majority culture, the common response is

to say that they are misinterpreting or exaggerating the situation (Olson, 2013). The concept of standpoint in feminist theory is connected as it speaks to the idea that depending upon one's social position, they may be privileged to have ignorance about another's way of life while others often occupying the 'minority' status have no choice but to have an expansive understanding of those in power- because they must simultaneously live within their own culture and the dominant society.

Ethnocentric monoculturalism not only provides the mold to which families should conform, but maintains and normalizes these expectations by refusing to give voice to those who experience negativity for not conforming. Within the dominant discourse is the message that people of color are 'paranoid' and see racism everywhere; Killian (2013) synthesized this as the 'discourse of hypersensitivity'. Underneath this idea is the claim that race-relations are no longer a problem in the US and/or the subscribing to Liberalist Individualism which holds that our society is composed of autonomous individuals who possess equal opportunity and access to resources and power if they work hard enough (Young, 2009). Thus, because a White partner may view the world as essentially good and rewarding hard work, and their positive feelings towards their partner, there may be an unwillingness to see racism in daily events (Killian, 2013).

In intermarried couples, the ethnic minority partners report an awareness towards negative reactions in social contexts while their partners are less sensitive to these responses (Killian, 2002). White partners may respond with surprise and incredulity. When these experiences of microaggression and racism are not acknowledged, are minimized or rejected as being hypersensitive, partners experiencing the discrimination

may do any of these things; they may document with increased vigilance these experiences and attempt to produce the evidence to convince their partner, they may attempt to reconsider their stance and question their version of reality, or they may be silent, compartmentalizing and choosing not to share this part of their reality with their partner while managing their own negative feelings in the face of sometimes ambiguous and subtle acts of hostility.

Being a partner in an intermarriage intersects with being a parent in an intermarriage. Children who are interethnic and perhaps also biracial experience similar manifestations of dominant discourses. Parents recognize the profound obligation of being a parent feel constant pressure to do more (Ramey, 2001; Hochschild, 1997). Transnational interracial/interethnic couples have to contend with complex societal pressures related to their parenting role, intersecting with their race, intermarried status, foreign-ness, and gender. A foreign-born partner may have to turn to their partner because of feelings of inadequacy about the US culture of parenting; feeling the pressure to demonstrate that they are competent parents yet having little opportunity to do so when the norms are set and successful parenting is measured in an unfamiliar way.

Dominant discourse of nativism. Historical roots of nativistic sentiment and the idea that only certain people should be able to call themselves American runs deep. Nativist groups in the 1800's and some today utilize pseudo-scientific arguments that immigrants are racially inferior and have a higher likelihood of becoming criminals or contracting and spreading diseases ((LeMay & Barken, 1999). Extreme nativistic sentiment has translated into xenophobia, defined as "attitudinal, affective, and behavioral prejudice toward immigrants and those perceived as foreign" (Yakushko,

2008, p. 8) and a "psychological state of hostility or fear towards outsiders" (Crowther, 1995, p. 1385). While there is a large overlap between xenophobia and racism, the two are distinct. Racism has typically been connected to prejudicial beliefs and behaviors against people founded on the socially constructed notion of outgroups via visible phenotypical markers, such as skin color (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997). Xenophobia, however, focuses specifically on individuals who are 'foreigners', regardless of their visible characteristics that differentiates them from native groups (Boehnke, Hagan, & Hefler, 1998; Wimmer, 1997).

Sohoni (2007) reported that throughout history, Asians have been legally viewed as "un-assimilable", "foreign", and fundamentally "un-American" (p. 614). But U.S. immigrants of all origins have been met by "discrimination and prejudice at worst and by mild distrust and indifference at best" (Yakushko, 2008, p. 8). The popular myth of America being a "melting pot" of cultures is neither supported by historical data nor by evaluation of the treatment of immigrants, especially for immigrants of color (Yakushko, 2008).

This is manifest in how society tends to expect that ethnic minority partners will 'adopt' and 'assimilate' to the mainstream culture of which their partner is a part of-she/he will become 'more White' (Skerry, 2000). Research often connects markers of 'assimilation' with success in immigrant populations, maintaining that such shifts are necessary because the different-ness of an individual is not desirable compared to the superiority of the US culture (Edin & Fredriksson, 2001; Portes, 1995).

Discourse of history's insignificance. Americans generally minimize the significance of history. Immigrant researchers have also been criticized for ignoring the

socio-historical contexts of the phenomenon being studied (Escobar & Vega, 2000; Viruell-Fuentes, 2011). Interracial couples also fall into this discourse. Killian (2015) found that interracial partners do not discuss or have knowledge about the historical legacies or contexts of their ancestors. He makes sense of this by positing that the discourse of historical insignificance is convenient "because the people who have the most to lose and the least to gain from examining it can label it as unimportant or just plain boring" (Killian, 2015, p. 141). Furthermore, erasing residuals of race and nativity knowledge allows historical power and privilege differences to be rendered invisible (Dirlik, 1999).

Partners Face Differing Receptions, Perceptions, and Expectations as Parents

As noted in an earlier section, often ethnic minority partners are more sensitive towards negative public receptions of them and their family (Killian, 2002). Partners can serve to be supportive of the partner experiencing 'discrimination' or question, minimize, or disregard their partner's experience (Killian, 2002; 2013).

Research with immigrant parents have shown distinct parenting efforts towards cultural maintenance and the intergenerational transmission of values (Choi, Kim, Pekelnicky, & Kim, 2013; Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). Studies also document specific messages that ethnic minority parents give their children in order to protect them against race-based discrimination (Hughes, & Chen, 1997). These strategies may look quite different for a partner from the majority group and it is expected that these variances can be challenging for interracial/interethnic parents.

At times, discussing family and racial history is uncomfortable, awkward and even unacceptable for ethnic minority partners (Killian, 2002). Dominant discourses of

nativity and ethnocentric monoculturalism may dictate that marginalized narratives are less valid and thus have little bearing on how a couple creates their own family.

Resistance and Lack of Support from Family of Origin and Extended Family

Historically both family and society strongly opposed intermarriage. “Almost all racial and ethnic groups have resisted intermarriage to protect and maintain their ethnic identity” Tzeng, 2000, p. 322). It is ‘understood’ that it is extremely difficult for a child of an intermarriage to select a role-model for his/her identity. For those who oppose intermarriage the argument is that intermarriage leads to a loss of identity among minority groups and signifies cultural disintegration. It is no surprise that intermarriage has been viewed as ‘nonnormative’, and in this way pathologized and pushed to the margins of society.

Foreign-born partners who choose to intermarry may face both physical and psychological distance from their families. Marrying someone from the US and starting a family may prevent foreign-born partners from travelling home as often as they would have prior, often due to cost constraints. The oft tenuous relationships with one’s in-laws may be further complicated by different values and parenting styles. In addition, as commonly documented in the research, many foreign-born individuals maintain strong bonds with their families of origin, which can mean having responsibilities to financially support their families back home and fulfilling other caretaking roles (Fuligni, 2007). These obligations may contend with the obligations that they have to the family that they have created here.

Resiliencies of Intermarried Couples/Parents

Creating a Joint Identity, Support, and Insulation from Societal Pressures

Interracial/interethnic couples report managing daily processes through four sets of relationship strategies: a) creating a 'we', b) reframing differences, c) emotional maintenance, and d) positioning in relationship to familial and societal context. (Sheshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2003).

Perel (2001, p. 180) talks about how inter-cultural couples are like tourists who cross cultural borders. The immigrant partner confronted with the unfamiliar may ask "How may I feel comfortable here?" For the partner who has lived within and been surrounded by their own culture –the local- their curiosity is piqued, offering a fresh look at customs and values that they have not needed to question before. For foreign-born partners, this struggle to feel comfortable can be recurring. The literature on immigrant populations has proposed assimilation and acculturation as common tasks that foreign-born individuals undertake when immersed within a new culture. While some of these theories propose this process is a linear, developmental trajectory, recent research has criticized this rigid conception of adapting to a new society and posit that the experience is more nuanced and complex than that. The knowledge that can be gleaned from conceptualizing adaptation as a dynamic phenomenon is that different contexts and life cycle stages can make these experiences more salient. Perel recounts the story of Safia who was born in Pakistan, married an American and lives in the northeastern US (2001). Safia explains that she has adjusted and finds a comfortable way to maneuver through the new culture she is in but this changed when she became a mother. When her children returned from school, she again is acutely aware of her foreignness and confronted with

the fact that she did not grow up here thus she doesn't know the rhymes, myths, procedures, or even the system. This is consistent with how the experience of parenting brings to the forefront one's identity, values, and power. Studies aimed at identifying what cultural issues are relevant in intercultural couple relationships found that raising children was very salient (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Directly dealing with these issues have been shown to enhance intimacy (Troy et al., 2006) and how couples communicate about difference within the relationship and with others seems to be important (Llerena-Quinn & Bacigalupe, 2009). The processes involved in these intimate conversations can promote commitment, intentionality, and secure attachment, as most couple therapists may attest to (Gaines & Agnew, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 2009; Troy et al., 2006). In addition, relationship talk which involves talking about the relationship, speaking in relational terms, and discussing specific aspects of one's relationship, has been found to be a relationship enhancing behavior that related directly to the frequency of thinking about one's relationship (Acitelli, 1996; Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996). Relationship talk is associated with higher levels of happiness, commitment, love, and also global measures of relationship satisfaction (Acitelli, 1996; Acitelli, 2002; Fletcher, Fincham, Cramer, & Heron, 1987).

Rich, Diverse Synthesis of Cultural Learnings from which to Draw from as Parents

Transnational interracial/interethnic couples have the benefit of drawing from a vast and diverse pool of cultural learnings and values. While there may be contentions between how both partners may parent, it appears to be a resiliency when couples focus on the values that they both subscribe to and come to agreements of how they can unite (Sheshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2003). For example, one partner may have learnt in their

family of origin that allowing a child to explore and experience the world from a safe distance encourages independence, while another partner may subscribe to attending consistently to a child's bid for attention to allow them to feel secure and thus encourage confidence and independence. The methods may look different yet the value that both partners are prioritizing is the same. Partners from the dominant culture who participate and engaged more with their partner's culture and customs, might be appreciation for their efforts (Chan & Wethington, 1998). Furthermore, intermarried couples may anticipate challenges that arise from cultural differences and race, and pre-emptively have those conversations.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Method

This research was informed by the assumptions of a Social Constructionism epistemology which holds that the social world is socially manufactured through interactions and language. Consistent with this philosophy, the theoretical approach that has informed the methods and design of this study reflect an integration between Intersectionality and Hermeneutic Phenomenology, the latter being the methodology as well as theoretical lens. In this section, I will review the integration of the two guiding theories, and then I will go deeper into the methodology used to answer the research question: ***How do heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples experience their partner and parent roles as it is impacted by their racial/ethnic, national, and gender identities?***

Theoretical Lenses

This study used an integration of Intersectionality Theory and Hermeneutic Phenomenology to guide both the design and inquiry process, and the analysis and interpretation process. Both theories are broad and arise out of the rich traditions of social constructionism, feminism, identity politics, postmodernism, and phenomenology/lived experiences. In the ways that are salient to explore the social and shared experiences of transnational interracial/interethnic couples, the two theories are compatible. The next sections will summarize Intersectionality Theory, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, and the integration of both.

Intersectionality and Critical Theories

In trying to understand the partnership and parenting experiences of heterosexual, transnational, interracial/interethnic couples, it would be simplistic and shortsighted to look at only one of their identities or each one of their identities separately as it influences their relationship. However, people see themselves and others as multidimensional. It is at the intersections of identities and roles that peoples' realities become more complex. At the same time, understanding these intersections allows one to better understand another person's experience more accurately. Intersectionality, a feminist sociological theory, provides an effective critical lens through which one can deconstruct and decentralize hegemonic discourses that perpetuate the legitimization and perpetuation of power hierarchies, stratification of social relations, oppression, and marginalization.

Intersectionality was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and posits that one cannot truly arrive at an adequate understanding of a marginalized experience by merely adding the categories such as gender plus race, plus class, etc. Rather these identity categories must be examined as interdependent modes of oppression structures that are mutually reinforcing. For the foreign-born participants in this study, it would not behoove me to look at just their experience of being an immigrant but their experience of being, for example a Latino, Hispanic male immigrant from Colombia, who is married to a White, American woman, and parents two biracial/bi-ethnic children with her. All of his identities cannot be added in a summative way but the unique interactions of his identities needs to be understood to fathom his experience. To ignore one mode of oppression weakens an analysis of a phenomenon because a stratifying force of oppression goes

unexamined (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). Yuval-Davis (2011) noted that additive approaches "often reflect hegemonic discourses of identity politics that render invisible experiences of the more marginal members of that specific social category and construct a homogenized 'right way' to be its member" (p. 195).

Intersections create both oppression and privilege (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Some refer to Patricia Collins's Matrix of Domination to provide a basis for understanding what social identities and categories are marginalized and which are privileged (Collins, 1990; 1998). Collins expounds that models of oppression are rooted in "dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought" where one side is privileged and the other is denigrated (1990, p. 225). Being on the privileged side offers avoidance of disadvantage and oppression by giving access to status and opportunities that are made unavailable to those on the oppressed side (Zinn & Dill, 1996). The significance of conceptualizing race, gender and other social identities as interlocking or intersecting systems of oppression, is that it "fosters a paradigmatic shift of thinking inclusively about other oppressions, such as age, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity" (Collins, 1990, p. 225). The intersectionality approach provides that one may be disadvantaged relative to one group but advantaged relative to another. Thus, no group is homogenous, people must be situated in terms of social structures that delineate power relations implied by those structures, and that unique, non-additive effects exists in identifying with more than one social group (Collins, 2002; Mahalingam, Balan, & Haritatos, 2008; Stewart & McDermott 2004).

Crenshaw critiqued looking at each identity category separately in her writings about the limitations in early anti-discrimination law and the experiences of Black women plaintiffs. She argued that Black women plaintiffs

> "sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double discrimination— the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 385).

Intersectionality rests on three premises. First, it is believed that people live in a society that has multiple systems of social stratification, where depending upon one's rank in this hierarchy, they are afforded resources and privileges (Berg, 2010). Second, social stratification systems are interlocked. Every individual may hold different positions in different systems of stratification at the same time; there is not only variation between groups of people but within groups of people (Weber, 1998). Third, where one is located with this complex social stratification system will consequently influence people's worldview (Demos & Lemelle, 2006).

Connected to that third premise is the concept of positionality. Positionality is the location that we are situated along the various axes of social group identities, and they are interrelated, interconnected and intersecting (Fook, 2002). Within this understanding internal and external identities interact and vary according to changing contexts. Furthermore, these identities may be external/visible or internal/invisible, and carrying privileges or limiting our choices. Thus, because of one's positionality, one has 'standpoint'; depending upon one's social position, one may be privileged to have

ignorance about another's way of life while others often occupying the 'minority' status have no choice but to have an expansive understanding of those in power- because they must simultaneously live within their own culture and the dominant society. This contributes to the challenge of 'objective truth' and how one's position may determine their realities/narratives.

The concept of intersectionality has been revolutionary in conceptualizing the lived experiences of people existing on the margins of society. Specifically, it denotes the ways in which "social divisions are constructed and intermeshed with one another in specific historical conditions to contribute to the oppression" of certain groups (Oleson, 2011, p. 134). Many hail the usefulness of intersectionality as a methodological tool and also for allowing researchers to explore the interacting effects of multiple identities (Hancock, 2007; Weldon 2006).

Finally, in regards to critiques of categorization (White, Black, man, woman, etc.), this research subscribes to the 'intra-categorical approach' (McCall, 2005). This approach rejects the validity of categorizations, but does not reject the social reality that is manifest in one's daily life. Despite the knowledge that the category of race is a "man-made classification and in no way biological truth", the experience of racism still exists and is perpetuated in daily interactions (Ludvig, 2006, p. 248).

Some have raised the critique that intersectionality theory is too open-ended, can include multiple categories of identities, and thus is less formulaic in how a researcher may utilize it as a framework for analysis. Others see this feature as precisely why intersectionality is productive and allows for expansive analysis- with each new intersection come new connections and previously hidden meanings emerge (Davis 2008;

Yuval-Davis, 2006). In this study, Intersectionality Theory guided the exploration of participants' multiple identities and roles and the ways in which their complex individual and couple identities were experienced in the context of the dominant US culture.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Consistent with the epistemological stance of Social Constructionism, Hermeneutic Phenomenology shaped this inquiry. Hermeneutic phenomenology originated from the phenomenological movement initiated by Husserl (1859-1838) and can be credited as being shaped by Heidegger (1889-1976). As applied to research, phenomenology is the study of phenomena where the aim is to develop a rich textured description of a lived experience and uncover the essence of that lived experience. Heidegger, is credited with providing the foundation of hermeneutic phenomenology and prior to that the departure from Husserlian phenomenology. Later, this approach was advanced by scholars such as Gadamer, Ricour and van Manen (Kafle, 2013).

While Husserl focused on understanding phenomenon or human beings, Heidegger focused on the situated meanings of the human being in the world, thus emphasizing a person's history, background and culture. Heidegger was described as having the view of people and the world as "indissolubly related in cultural, in social and in historical contexts" (Laverty, 2003, p. 24). This 'pre-understanding' is not something that can be put aside, either for the human beings from which a phenomenon is being studied or the human beings that are conducting the study. The contention is that one may not be able to describe without interpreting because human beings live 'hermeneutically', constantly interpreting and finding significance and meaning in the world; the contention that description and interpretation are complementary processes (Applebaum, 2011;

Heidegger, 1962). Thus hermeneutic phenomenology rejects the idea of suspending personal opinions, as nothing is encountered or understood without reference to one's context, background, and history. In agreement, Gadamer viewed bracketing not only as impossible, but attempts to do so manifestly absurd (Annells, 1996). Furthermore, meaning is derived as human beings are constructed by the world while at the same time constructing the world from their background and experiences; a transaction between an individual and the world as they constitute and are constituted by each other (Laverty, 2003). Gadamer further illuminated hermeneutics as a means to clarify further the conditions in which understanding itself takes place, stating that "Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject…a connection with the tradition from which it speaks" (1998, pg. 295).

Interpretation in hermeneutic phenomenology is a process of understanding where analysis involves the fusion between the participants and to be human was to embark on constant interpretation. Heidegger (1962) noted that every encounter one has involves interpretation that is influenced and shaped by one's background and history. For the researcher using this framework, it is important to become aware of these interpretive influences and account for them. The analysis often includes the researcher's own stance or interaction with the phenomenon, with acknowledgement of pre-knowledge through reflexivity (Finlay, 2002; Walker, 2007).

A hermeneutic phenomenological researcher's interpretive process is often described as a 'hermeneutic circle', moving from the parts of the experience, to the whole of the experience, and back and forth again to increase the depth of understanding and engagement with the data (Laverty, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1983). At the end of spiraling

through the hermeneutic circle, one should reach a place of meaning with little contradiction.

Integration of Intersectionality Theory and Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Conceptualizing Transnational Interracial/interethnic Couples

Where Intersectionality Theory and Hermeneutic Phenomenology come together coherently is through intersubjectivity. For Heidegger, the 'viewer' and the 'subject' are inseparable; Intersectionality Theory describes the interplay between one's intersecting identities and the social stratification system that one finds themselves in. Thus it is the interaction between things -be it individual to individual, individual to society, individual to social categories, inner reality to external world- that meaning exists. While it may seem an oversimplification of a parallel between two very vast and sophisticated theories, the contention is that both theories rest on a foundation that have the same building block, that is *the discursive nature of experience and reality*.

Hermeneutic phenomenological studies of human experience thus are attempts to describe how humans have interpreted their realities using their "systems of meaningfulness" derived from their relationship to each other (Sembera, 2007, p. 37). Kimberle Crenshaw advanced the idea that it was not possible to fathom the marginalization experiences of someone without understanding the complexities of how their intersecting identities interacted with the social systems and structures in society (Crenshaw, 1989).

While Intersectionality Theory illuminates the macro interaction process between individual and society, Hermeneutic Phenomenology emphasizes the micro interaction process within an individual. Thus, the combination of both of these theoretical lenses

provides an appropriate framework for exploring both the macro, such as how individuals from majority or minority groups experience their world (social self, social identity), and the micro, such as how individuals make sense of themselves and their partner (relational self). The integration between these two theories gives life to a study exploring how couples experience themselves and each other as parents, as partners, and as being transnationally interethnic/racial persons.

Self as Researcher

An important assumption of hermeneutic phenomenology is that a researcher cannot be separate from the phenomena being studied and that nothing is analyzed and interpreted without reference to one's context, background and history (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Laverty, 2003). This premise is possibly even more relevant because I am a foreign-born woman of color married to a White American male. We are raising a son in the US. My efforts to be reflexive is not only contiguous of my epistemological and theoretical framework, but includes my efforts to ensure trustworthiness in my analysis. Myerhoff and Ruby (1992) define reflexivity as "the capacity of any system of signification to turn back upon itself, to make itself its own object by referring to itself" (p. 307). Self-disclosure is a reflexive practice where a researcher engages in a process of including their voice in efforts to be self-aware and have integrity (Heidegger, 1889-1976). Positional reflexivity uncovers the researcher's (or analyst's) position and positioning in the world she studies and seeks cognizance of the unseen dynamics within her interactions with the world (Denzin, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Critical consciousness as delineated by Suarez, Newman and Reid (2008) is "a continuous self-reflexive process involving critical thinking in tandem with action whereby we challenge

domination on three levels: personally, interpersonally, and structurally" (p. 409). Researchers should also explore what key assumptions they are bringing to the research and how to engage in accountable inquiry.

In this section, I aspire to provide a description of my location in regards to the inquiry of this phenomenological study. Then I will locate myself in relation to the identity and role intersections and the positions of power, privilege or subjugation associated with them, associated with them, which is an important task for couple and family therapists and researchers committed to social justice (Hardy, 2008).

Location of the Researcher in Relation to this Study

My self-identify as a transnational Eurasian, woman of color, cisgendered, heterosexual, and able-bodied. My parents were an interracial couple, and it was the norm in my family to marry outside of our racial or ethnic group. I was born and raised in Malaysia and moved to the US in 2004 when I chose to complete my Bachelor's degree in the mental health field at the University of Hawai'i. I am an only child and grew up in a close-knit family. While it was an expectation of my family that my generation complete their education in a Western country, my family did not anticipate that I would stay. I met my partner, a White American man who was raised in a Southern state, when I was completing my Bachelor's degree and got married with minimal understanding to what life would entail after that. We moved to the Mainland and I completed my Master's degree at the University of Nevada.

My experience with racism was common when I was a child. I had a keen understanding of the implicit social stratification system in Malaysia that was determined mainly by skin color. My mother who is Southeast Asian Indian would often overhear

others make derogatory comments about her in a language they presumed that she could not understand but in fact spoke very well: Cantonese. My mother was also raising me alone and the marginalization that came from her intersection of race and gender was not lost on me. A few moments stand out as integral to my drive and interest in this area of research.

First, it was during my Master's program studying family and couple dynamics that I became more aware of the importance of cultural identity and how it influenced relationships. Being multiracial, having English as my first language, and being accustomed to adopting new ways of acting, speaking, and behaving, I have had the privilege of appearing to easily 'assimilate' to this country. However, it wasn't until I had the opportunity to interact with people who shared their unique intersections of identities with me that my awareness of this phenomenon began to grow.

A second circumstance that I recall, was a recurring experience. Several times when I met someone, generally a transnational, woman of color, who had also left her country (about which I had little knowledge), and we would plunge into deep conversation about our experiences in the US. We would experience a profound sense affinity and connection, and discover much overlap in our experiences. Conversations would be about our families in our country of origin, our resettlement and adaptation to life here, and our perceptions or other people's perceptions of us. These women were from Namibia, Thailand, India, Indonesia, China, Barbados, Somalia, Mexico, Korea, Pakistan, Zambia, and other nations. But although there was overlap in our experiences, I noticed there was a wide range of differences.

A third experience that was impactful was the way in which I was received by others in society when I was with my white male partner and the difference in how they treated him and me. This was even more evident after we had a son. At times I had perfect strangers ask me if I was my son's mother, or look angrily at me when my son cried in public, and I noted that my partner was instead commonly praised and given positive feedback when people saw him interact with our son. Our experiences in public were in stark contrast. As a result, I noticed that I made decisions to prevent negative perceptions, whether I took greater efforts to make my child appear presentable in public or at times choosing to have my partner provide all the direct care when we were in public. This also had an effect in how we both discussed and coordinated our parenting efforts.

The field in which I have dedicated my life and energy is family science and family health. I have worked as a therapist for the last eight years and have seen a wide configuration of client families and myriad of presenting concerns. Commonly the intermarried couples with whom I work talk about having to navigate their cultural values and those of their partner's, at times having difficulty communicating; in some ways similar to other homogamous couples who navigate their differences, and in others ways different due to the complexities they bring into the therapy room.

In addition, I have been supervising Master's-level therapists for the last two years in a little city in the northwest. When my supervisees consult with me about clients who are transnational interracial couples, my common process of referring them to the research has not proven useful. I scoured the literature for definitive descriptions of families that looked like mine and couldn't find anything sufficient.

Location of the Researcher in Relation to the Participants

In addition to choosing the US for my home, I have also chosen America because of the way in which my profession as a family scholar/therapist is validated. I knew that returning to Malaysia to work as a therapist would be challenging, not only due to the lack of acceptance and understanding of family mental health, but also because I am a woman of color.

In many ways my immigration to the US, my educational journey, and the work that I have done has been privileged. English is my first language, I am able-bodied, I have a partner that has been willing to relocate according to my academic and work needs, and I have been able to navigate different milieus somewhat well. I have never been a part of the majority and thus resettlement in that respect was not jarring. There were many cultural prohibitions and restrictive expectations of women in Malaysia that are not as explicit in the US, and this coupled with the encouragement to self-advocate and seek justice has allowed me to have privileges not previously available. This I attribute to the hard work of feminists who sought to dismantle sexist practices in the US. However, I am still a racial minority, although it is difficult to determine to which one group I belong. I am also an immigrant. I am stereotyped and experience discrimination because of my marginalized identities.

My resettlement experience as a privileged immigrant initially obscured my appreciation for other immigrant experiences. Although I have had moments of isolation, confusion, and adversity, I have received many allowances and exemptions because of my identities and context. So though I have a connection and profound understanding of an immigrant's reality, it is my reality and journey that I know best. I choose now to sit in

a place of curiosity and openness as I meet with people whose identities are similar to mine but engender such different perceptions and realities. While "there is no better point of entry into a critique or reflection than one's own experience", my embracing of intersectionality theory as my lens helps me know that my experiences are my own (Bannerji, 1992, p. 67).

Finally, in attempts to continually locate myself and be reflexive, I was intentional about my level of self-disclosure to the couples I interviewed. I refrained from telling them that I was a couples' therapist. I also did not let them know my personal relatedness to the research topic. From my appearance, it is clear that I am a woman of color, but beyond that it is difficult to discern if I am foreign-born, partnered, a parent, or of a specific race. My consent form and flier stated that they were asked to participate in my dissertation research; many participants expressed their willingness to support my goal of giving voice to families like theirs.

Methodology

Overarching Research Question

How do heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples experience their partner and parent roles as they are impacted by their racial/ethnic, national, and gender identities?

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Design

The four main conceptual elements that underlie all research inquiry is "epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods" (Miller & Johnson, 2014, p. 250). Regardless of framework, each of these should be logically consistent with each other to be considered vigorous and for the findings to be valid (Crotty, 1998; Miller

& Johnson, 2014). Congruent with the current study's epistemology (Social Constructionism) and theoretical perspective (integration of Intersectionality and Phenomenology), a Hermeneutic Phenomenological methodology is most appropriate. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was employed to describe and interpret the experiences of individual and couples in order to understand the essence of their experiences as they perceived and constructed them (Sadala & Adorno, 2002). The phenomenological approach allowed the research to explore the meaning of experiences and how they were constructed by the participant, a glimpse into the consciousness of their human experience (Laverty, 2003).

Data were gathered via long, intensive individual interviews (Heath, 1997) that allowed for a rich and deep exploration of individual participants' human experiences, their own interpretation of their relationship and parenting (Kvale, 1996), their "knowledge as narrative", and as couples, through deep conversations between partners, about their "knowledge as conversation" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 1994, p. 271). The couple interviews provided space for the couple to co-construct their joint experiences through conversation with each other and the researcher.

Phenomenologist tend to believe that "phenomenon of interest, regardless of what it is, should be studied where it naturally exists and from the actor's own perspective" and that "individuals, couples, or families perceive it to be their 'real' world where they naturally interact in their daily lives" (Boss, Dahl & Kaplan, 1996, p. 84-85). In this study, all couples were interviewed in their homes, consistent with a phenomenological value that common, everyday knowledge about family worlds is epistemologically

important (Boss et al., 1996). I either travelled to conduct interviews in the couples' homes, or interviewed the couples in their homes via computer assisted tools.

The focus of phenomenological inquiry is shared meanings and consciousness and thus researchers have to be judicious in identifying codes and concepts from the themes to represent the experience of a phenomenon accurately. Hermeneutics legitimizes the researcher's personal experiences and reflections and explicitly acknowledges her role as an interpreter of narrations that have already been interpreted by the narrators.

Participants

The inclusion criteria for the sample was heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples who were parenting children together and who had been in a committed, long-term relationship for 5 or more years. The choice to only include heterosexual couples was not made lightly. This study's focus on socially constructed gendered narratives in heterosexual couples and how it affected their relationship provided the rationale for only including heterosexual couples. In addition, given the multitude of variables that affect same-sex and same-gender relationships, and the risk of not capturing significant oppressive factors, the decision was made to only include heterosexual couples.

IRB approval for the research procedure with human subjects was acquired prior to recruitment efforts, from both the University of Minnesota (IRB protocol # 1507P75301) and University of Oregon (IRB protocol # 07022015.002). See Appendix G and H for IRB protocol approval letters. The recruitment of couples was purposive and manifold due to the limited number of heterosexual transnational interracial couples and the specific inclusion criteria of this study. Flyers and invitation letters were sent to

colleagues across the US and to targeted university listserves. See Appendix B for recruitment flier.

For phenomenological research methods, the recommended number of participants is between 3 and 10 (Moustakas, 1994; Sandelowski, 1995). Because phenomenological research seeks to access the richness and details of participant's experiences, there is less concern with numbers of subjects. Eight couples contacted me with an interest in the project. Two declined to participate after learning about the commitment to three separate interviews; they could not allot the necessary time. Therefore, the final sample of this study was 6 transnational interethnic/interracial couples (12 individuals) who had one or more children and who had been in a committed relationship for over 5 years.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted, 2 individual partner interviews and 1 joint couple interview. Couples resided in different states: Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Hawai'i, Indiana, and Oklahoma. Non-US-born partners hailed from different countries: Peru, Pakistan, Japan, Brazil, Ethiopia, and Korea. All but one of the transnational partners was male. Individuals ranged in age from 30 to 43; 37 was the mean age for male partners and 36 was the mean age for female partners. A full description of the couples is provided in the Results section.

Procedure

Prior to the interview, an initial phone call included four screening questions asked of both partners. The female partner was screened first to ensure that she was in a safe relationship without domestic abuse/intimate partner violence (IPV). There is precedence and research evidence for the use of screening for IPV prior to interviewing

or having joint conversations with couples (Bograd & Mederos, 1999; Harris, personal communication, 2015; Syvertsen, et. al., 2012; Todahl & Walter, 2009). This is pertinent in this research because the aims of exploring the strengths and knowledge within the experiences of couples who deal with external stressors to their family, can be obscured or not as evident in relationships where there is violence or abuse. Furthermore, it is the aim of this research to explore couples that may traditionally be identified as healthy and safe.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with each partner separately and then together. All interviews were conducted in English, and were audio- and video-taped. Interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes for each individual interview and 60 to 90 minutes for each couple interview. I transcribed all of the interviews verbatim.

I conducted interviews, first with each partner individually (no order preference), and second, with the couple together. Interviews were conducted at the homes of the couples or, when internet-mediated, with me in my secure office and the couple in their home. Prior to the interview, I conducted an informed consent process per the approved protocol by the University of Minnesota (IRB protocol # 1507P75301) and University of Oregon (IRB protocol # 07022015.002). See Appendix A for consent form.

At the outset of the interview, each partner completed a brief demographic survey with questions about their identified race, identified ethnicities, country of origin, number of children, etc., and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale questionnaire (R-DAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995) to assess the couple's marital relationship quality. The process was different for in-person and internet-mediated interviews; for the former, couples were provided with a paper copy of the demographic survey and the R-

DAS, and for the latter, couples had access to the emailed word documents. Each partner completed and returned the questionnaires to me prior to starting the individual interviews. The R-DAS is a self-report questionnaire that measures seven dimensions of couple relationships by assessing three overarching categories: Consensus in decision making, values and affection, Satisfaction in the relationship with respect to stability and conflict regulation, and Cohesion as seen through participation in joint activities and discussion (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995).

The RDAS includes 14 items, each asks the participant to rate aspects of their relationship on a 5 or 6-point scale. Scores range from 0 to 69 with higher scores indicating greater relationship satisfaction and lower scores indicating greater relationship distress. The cut-off score for the RDAS is 48, such that scores of 48 and above indicate non-distress and scores of 47 and below indicate marital/relationship distress. The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) has been widely used in research and clinical settings (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000). Numerous studies have reported on the R-DAS's strong construct validity, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha .90), and high correlations compared to and with other marital quality measures (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995) The RDAS has been used with diverse populations and evidences good construct validity across different cultural groups.

Partners were first interviewed separately to provide space to articulate their experience of parenting within an intermarriage without the pressure of having their partner adding their perspective or interpreting their responses in the moment. Each partner was allowed to explore these individually first, allowing them to mull over their

thoughts and words before exploring some of their overlapping experiences as a dyad. The couples were interviewed together for an extended interview session. I aimed to understand differences and similarities in the individual-level and jointly-created realities of the couple. Though not entirely preventable, participants were asked to refrain from talking at length with their partners about their individual interviews before meeting as a couple for an interview.

There were unexpected learnings from structuring the interview process this way (partner 1, partner 2, and couple). As was anticipated, speaking initially to each partner about their experiences appeared to prime them to be more forthcoming about their relationship in the couple interview. This may have been a result of establishing an initial relationship with each of them in addition to having them consider these topics in a different way- this was evident in how multiple participants noted that they had a sense of how they might answer a question but had not ever synthesized or put it into words. Additionally, depending upon the couple dynamics, some partners felt more comfortable using language that demonstrated more intense feelings about a topic in the individual interviews versus the couple interviews and vice versa for other couples.

Holding my location and how it intersected with my participants, it was useful to keep field notes and a study journal. Field notes were taken during and after the interviews to capture other experiential data such as significant facial expressions, emotional tone of the conversations, or notable body postures. It helped me track an enormous amount of data for each person and couple. I also maintained a journal where I explicitly documented my biases which helped to safeguard their impact on my analysis, and my feelings and reactions that arose to reflect on my developing hypotheses.

I anticipated the interviews might involve sensitive topics and resulting emotional reactions, for which many interviewers report feeling unprepared (Roulston & Lewis, 2003). I have years of experience talking about and processing difficult content in interactions with couples in my capacity as a therapist. My location and role as a therapist has provided me with an understanding about 'joining', balancing alliances, and maintaining safety that often helps couples be able to describe vulnerable issues in their relationship. This was a strength and allowed me to build a connection with them early in the interview process. According to some clinical research (Troy et al., 2006), directly dealing with issues can enhance intimacy. Furthermore, how couples communicate about differences within their relationship and with others is of prime importance (Llerena-Quinn & Bacigalupe, 2009) and the processes involved in these discussions may promote commitment, intentionality, and secure attachment (Gaines & Agnew, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 2009; Troy et al., 2006).

To attend to, contain, and prevent heightened distress during the interview process, I utilized a few communication skills during the interviews such as reflecting back to the participants their statements, communicating validation with verbal cues or posture, and using pauses and silence to help participants regroup. Additionally, I made efforts to build rapport with the participants, which can buffer the disruption that might possibly occur if an individual feels unhappy or triggered. The ways in which I felt my training, my therapist- and advocate-self needed to be bridled was during the times that I felt pulled to augment and reflect the feelings of my participants in order to normalize their hurts, or as an expression of solidarity to their experiences of injustice.

Individual interviews

The individual interview was conducted separately with each partner using the same questions. The questions that explored their family of origin, transmission of culture and values from parents, how their context helped shape their identity, what pieces they brought into their parenting and relationship their identities, and also ways that they connect or understand their partner's values around family and parenting family of origin, - through the use of narratives. These questions were aimed at acquiring a deep understanding of the contextual elements of the partners and their experience of each other, separately. This allowed each partner to describe their unique experiences, based on their intersecting identities, their social status, and their social location. Partners were provided with the option of having their individual interviews kept separate and confidential from their partner if they chose. All participants did not opt to keep their individual interviews confidential from their partner. The individual interview script can be found in Appendix D.

Couple interviews

Couple interviews occurred after both separate partner interviews had been completed. This was a strategic decision as the aim was to allow couples to jointly explore and co-construct their realities after reflecting on their own experience. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) emphasized "that all interviews are reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions, whether recognized or not" (p. 4). Questions for the couple interviews explored partners' similarities and differences in cultural values as it pertained to parenting, how they have negotiated their differences, if they have recognized negative external pressures to their family, reactions/reception of friends, family and the larger

society to both their relationship and parenting, and ultimately how they perceive their relationship. The joint interview allowed couples to co-construct their realities based on societal perceptions of intermarriage. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) emphasized "that all interviews are reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions, whether recognized or not" (p. 4). Prior studies have shown that couples will share key relationship incidences or stories that define how the relationship is for them and how their self is defined in the relationship (Johnson, 2004). The couple interview script can be found in Appendix E.

Data Analysis

This study of relationships is 'multi-level' because individuals (both partners) are nested in a couple relationship (Sayer & Klute, 2005, p. 290). This research focused on answering questions at both the individual and couple level of analysis

Data analysis requires a dialectic between data and qualitative theory. While the data cannot be analyzed without a theoretical framework guiding the drawing out of themes, the theory must be shaped and tested by the data being analyzed (Dey, 2003). Due to this study's examination of a phenomenon that conceptualized the intersections of identity, the interplay of couple and parenting relationships, and individuals' and couples' social realities through narratives, this dialectic applies.

The data analysis process was three-fold: 1) immersing, transcribing, and reflecting, 2) producing an initial description and increasing trustworthiness and confirmability, and 3) coding and interpreting, including common steps of phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings and essences.

Immersion, Transcribing and Reflecting

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by me to maintain intimacy with the data and consistency from interview to transcription to analysis to interpretation. Next I watched and listened to the videos of the interviews while reading the transcriptions to ensure accuracy, and to insert any speech dysfluency, such as non-lexical vocables (e.g. ‘uh’, ‘hmm’, ‘huh’, ‘um’) and false starts (i.e. where words are cut off mid-sentence or phrases restarted or repeated). This form of transcription is called naturalized transcription through which utterances are transcribed in as much detail as possible. Any speech dysfluency was assumed to contain meaningful information. Speech dysfluency was used, not as a standalone guide for interpretation throughout the analysis process, but in conjunction with tone, vocal inflection, and volume to enhance a hermeneutic understanding of a participant’s experience as they talked about a particular topic. While immersing the self in the interviews by viewing the videos, I accessed both the field notes and the journal to add any further observations and reflections about the interview process or content.

Producing Descriptions and Themes, and Increasing Trustworthiness and Confirmability

The next stage of the data analysis included efforts to increase trustworthiness and confirmability. Trustworthiness will indicate that this study’s processes and thus conclusions are rigorous, and are often identified with other aspects: truth value, applicability, consistency. Truth value asks if the researcher can be confident in the truth of her findings, applicability indicates that the results can be applied to other contexts and settings, and consistency asks if the findings may be replicated (Guba, 1981;

Sandelowski, 1995). To ensure the rigor of my analysis and conclusions, I took five steps; 1) conducted member checks, 2) triangulated analysis with the use of peer debriefs, 3) offered rich and thick descriptions of the participants' statements, 4) used field notes, and 5) embarked on a process of researcher reflexivity (found in the 'Location of the Researcher' pg. 74 section)

Member checking. All interviews were read and reflected on to produce an initial description of overlapping emergent themes within each couple. The process of the reflections was informed by relevant literature and my clinical experience. This reflection process has been noted as providing a "logical, systematic and coherent resource for carrying out the analysis and synthesis needed to arrive at essential description of experiences" because it sensitizes the researchers to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). For example, almost every couple expounded on their efforts to maintain their or their partner's culture by transmitting their language or customs to their children. This initial description produced 40 subthemes which were connected to each couple (e.g. Theme #3- C1, C3, C4). This initial description was then used to guide the member checks.

Qualitative researchers have employed different methods for member checks or member validation; some researchers have sent the transcribed interviews to the participants, and others have sent a summary of the interviews to the participants (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, & Neumann, 2011). This process can be varied and complex.

Emerson and Pollner (1988) have noted several difficulties with the use of member checks, such as problems arising from failing to read the transcripts in its entirety and missing the context of what is being said, having participants unwilling to

criticize the researcher because of the connection that was established during the course of the in-depth interview, and inadvertently asking member validation questions with which it would be difficult to disagree. I made efforts to avoid these missteps by being intentional about the member checking process. Consistent with the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the narratives of the participants are viewed as already interpreted data, thus I provided the participants with not my analysis or transmuted understandings, but excerpts of the transcribed interviews connected to headings that were the major themes that I identified. Providing participants their verbatim transcripts and at this stage of the research process versus after analysis is one way to establish rigor (Glaser and Strauss 1967). A stock letter was used to invite the participants to edit anything in the document, making corrections, clarifications and even adding information that they felt I had missed or failed to punctuate. I explained that my efforts were to ensure accuracy and invited any feedback from the participants.

Member checks have been hailed as the most crucial technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) because they give participants the opportunity to correct errors and challenge what they perceive are wrong interpretations, to volunteer additional information which may be stimulated as they read through their responses, and to assess the adequacy of data in representing their experience of a phenomenon. Because participants may find transcripts of their interviews that include their dysfluencies off-putting or embarrassing, possibly affecting their willingness to provide feedback, I removed the dysfluencies while maintaining the participant's actual words in the excerpts. The feedback I received feedback from all but one couple, affirmed that my themes and how I captured the meanings of their words

were accurate. A few participants offered more information to elaborate on what they had said in the interview; new information was incorporated into the respective transcripts before further analysis and interpretation. Below are their comments, received in writing.

- Thank you, Blendine! We really enjoyed the interview with you! Let me know if you need any further clarification or etc., I will be very gladly help you!
- I read through the summaries and I think they are accurate. Thank you very much for taking the time to verify them with us.
- It was nice to participate in your study. There is nothing that I want to change in the attached files.
- I've read over both and the both sound good to me- nothing to add here!
- We loved reading it all! Looks good! Thank you.
- I'll check it over tomorrow, when I can see it on a better computer, but I'm positive it'll be just fine! Thank you for the opportunity to be part of your awesome work! :)
- Looks good.

The high response rate and the positive feedback suggest that my initial interpretations of the data can be considered a credible description of my participant's experiences.

Triangulation of analysis. In addition, peer examination was used to triangulate and enhance the credibility of the analysis. Two colleagues experienced in qualitative methods read through the transcripts of data and produced their own set of emergent themes. One of these scholars was transnationally intermarried with a breadth of research in culture and families, offering an 'insider's view' of the phenomenon of transnational interracial/interethnic parenting. The second scholar was not transnationally intermarried,

but had a wealth of experience in qualitative research and years of academic, research, and clinical experience with couple relationships and parenting, thus offering an 'outsider's view' of the phenomenon of transnationals intermarried parenting. Their written and verbal feedback was elicited and referred to after I had begun my analysis so as not to let their perspectives influence my coding and analysis of themes, but to check and confirm if my interpretations were consistent with their reading of the transcripts.

Rich and thick descriptions. In this paper, I provide detailed representations of the participant's statements, along with layering the information with their conceptualizations of their roles and identities. I use tables with information about each partner and couple for the within-case findings; this will sensitize the reader to who they are and their positionality. For both within- and across-case analyses, I infuse results with verbatim excerpts from the interviews. My goal is to increase the trustworthiness of my findings by providing readers with the opportunity to themselves determine the transferability of the data; by reading the words of the participants and having knowledge about the participant's characteristics, readers will be better able to discern if the findings can be applicable to similar populations.

Coding and Interpretation

The coding and interpretation process consisted of phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of themes for both within case and across case analysis.

Phenomenological reduction. This phase of the analysis included a process akin to Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction which is the labor intensive process of reading the data line-by-line and delineating units of meaning from the data. I delineated

units of meaning that appeared to show some relevance to my research question, a process also called explicating the data (Hycner, 1985). The qualitative data analysis software HyperRESEARCH, was utilized to identify codes –as much as possible using the literal words of the participants- from selected chunks of texts and apply a code name to the chunks; 222 codes were identified within the18 interview transcripts.

To facilitate within case and between case analysis, each code noted whether the individual speaking was a foreign-born partner or US-born partner and if the individual was speaking during an individual interview or a couple/joint interview. Furthermore, the codes reflected if the individual speaking was speaking of themselves ("I"), their partner ("my spouse/husband/partner"), or their couple relationship ("we"). This was consistent with the theoretical framework of examining each participants intersecting identities and relational selves. An example of this process using an excerpt is provided in Figure 2.

Actual Text	Identified units of meaning
Mr. X: <pause> *So, yeah. I want them to have better opportunities than I'd had, like any parent wants. But uh, I just try to do, uh, I want him to, my style is to not be so restrictive with him, I don't want to be, I don't want to be that parent that always says no, and then, but it's like, to me it's like, everything is open for discussion. Well, I'm not going to* <gestures with hands open>, *you know I am dad- there are rules and limitations, but at the same time, you know, I am aware that I have to let them find their way. You know, there is a saying in Spanish from my culture that I've seen, basically it says that your children, they're not yours, they're a gift, you're just there to guide them, but you can't treat them like your property. You can't own the person. You just have to help them find that.*	FB Self Want children to have better opportunities FB Self Parenting style not too restrictive FB Self Parenting involves rules and limitations FB Self Parenting influenced by cultural ideas FB Self Parenting is guiding children to find their own way

Esposa: *In disagreements…and this is kind of a big one, and I would say is because his parents want to visit and when they visit they visit for such a long time and that's a cultural difference, my parents believe that it's our home and their visit should be during the day, and they leave, they don't believe they should come stay with us, whereas my husband's family they probably would love to come stay with us for months on end but I really don't want them there for more than two or three weeks.*	US Self Disagree on how long family should visit US Self Cultural difference with partner US Self Own parents believe in day visits and not staying with us US Self Partner's parents would love to visit for longer US Self Prefer partner's family to have short visits

**FB: Foreign-Born partner, US: US-born partner, Self: Individual Interview*
Figure 2. Delineation of coding process.

Imaginative variance and synthesis. At this stage, imaginative variance and synthesis process was conducted for the within and across case analysis. Imaginative variance arrives at a "structural description of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98).

Within-case imaginative variance. The within-case analysis focused on the emergent themes for each couple and their experiences as partners and parents, given the unique intersections of their identities. The process involved two steps: first, a clustering of the units of meaning (codes that I had produced), and second, determining themes from these codes. This was an iterative process of re-contextualizing meaning units. This process was conducted using the HyperRESEARCH software that allowed for convenient reference via hyperlinks to the source of each code.

Statements are then examined for attributable factors such as cause and effect. Using my theoretical framework and guiding research question, I focused on experiences

that spoke to identity and roles. These steps were conducted with all three interviews for each couple. An example of this process is provided in Figure 3.

Codes that were grouped	Source for each code (Actual Text)	Emergent Theme
US Self Partner's family is more traditional	*…his family is actually from __ and that's a little bit more of a uh, conservative area so I found when I met his family, they were a little more traditional and um, and my husband, he was, he would tell me things like 'Well, don't say this, say this because, you know', just telling me a more formal way to talk with his parents than I was used..*	Theme: Shifting gendered expectations as the relationship matured Elaboration of the theme: While gendered expectations in their relationship was attributed by and to each partner, through previous cultural learnings, both partners shifted to valuing a more egalitarian structure as their relationship matured.
FB Self Different cultural expectations	(researcher asks about cultural differences) *Um, yes, uh, so especially in the first few years of marriage um, I had some expectations to her um, and I got frustrated when she didn't meet my expectation…*	
FB Self Parenting and gender roles	*Um, when I was infant or uh, toddler I guess my father would uh, work and so my mother was pretty much like a single parent so that, and my father used to expect my mother to do all the raising child, so uh, and I don't think that is uh, that was a good idea, I think that ..we should both participate in the child care together, whereas my father had a different idea about it.*	
FB Self Values about gender have shifted	*That's another thing about differences again, they are still much, a lot of sexism in __ and many males, men still think that raising a child is a woman's job and I disagree with that.*	
Couple US Conformed to partner's culture early in relationship	*I tried to conform to the kind of gender stereotype where the woman cooked and um, you know, and I just kind of acted kind of submissive, you know, I tried to act feminine and um, since I've come to the US, I've become more*	

	American I guess. So in the beginning of our relationship um, I feel like I was trying to impress him and fit in with his culture.	
Couple FB Values about gender roles have shifted	*In the first few years of our marriage I used to have um, some kind of an, um, unspoken de facto gender expectations* (chuckles) *which I thought, I thought it was obvious but and I think that was wrong, but um, and which I don't have any more, so.*	

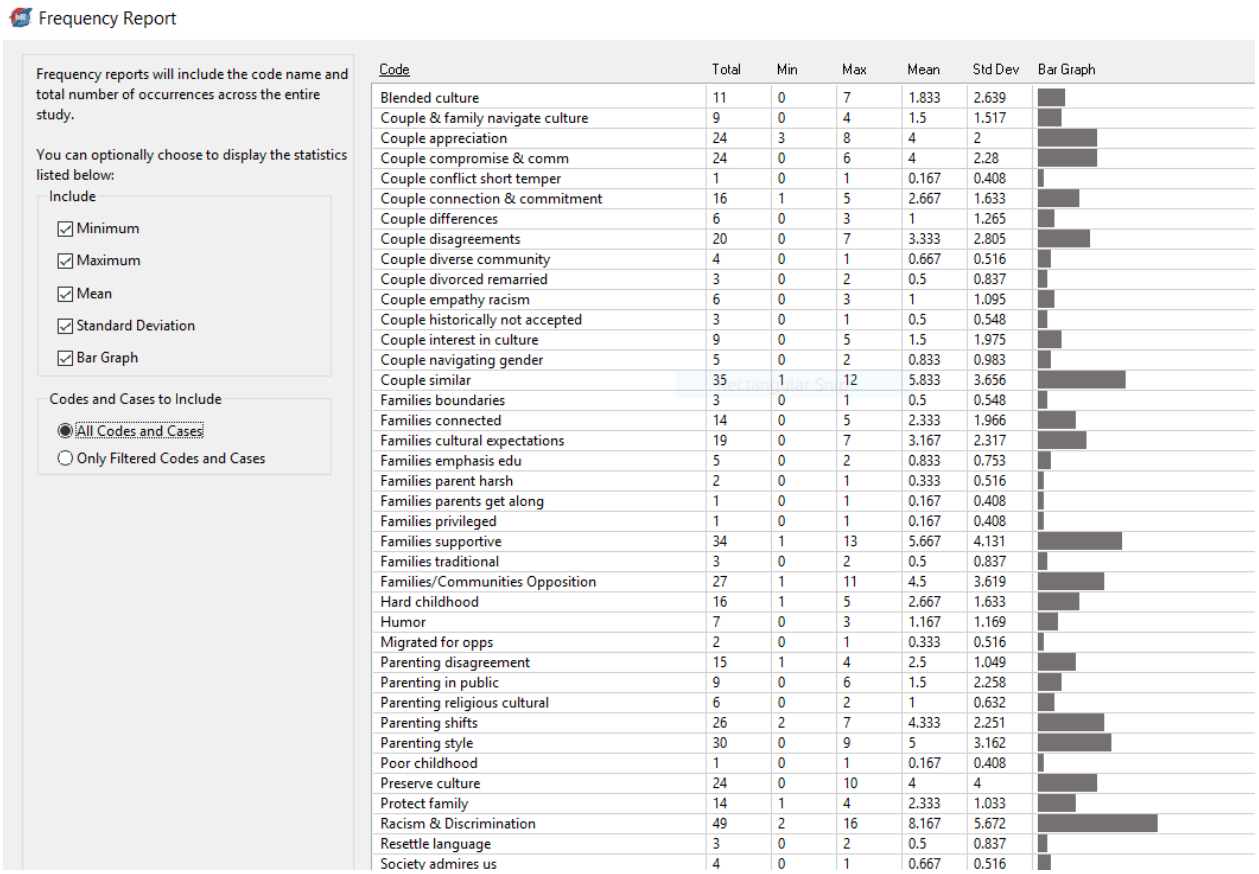
Figure 3. Example of within-case analysis and process by which within-case themes emerged.

Consistent with the hermeneutic cycle, reading and re-reading the statements within the transcriptions was imperative to ensure that statements endorsed the themes and also allowed for more expansion and clarification of how each couple interpreted those themes. The themes were rigorously analyzed by case/couple for unique experiences; they subsequently informed the across case analysis.

Within-case synthesis. A synthesis is a "unified statement of essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). The essence is a common thread between the experiences, in this case, how each heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couple's experiences as a partner and parent as it was impacted by their racial/ethnic, national, and gender identities. The within-case synthesis was aimed at capturing the essence of each couples' experience given their unique intersecting identities. From the example above, both partners identified how a specific value had shifted for them; both of them expressed this in their individual interviews.

Across-case imaginative variance. The process to explore emergent themes across all the couples was a separate process and involved going back to the codes

originally deciphered. My steps involved reading the 222 codes identified across all cases to see which had similar meanings and could be combined. Using HyperRESEARCH, codes were collapsed into 39 codes and frequencies across cases noted. Frequencies provided evidence that codes were significant *across* cases rather than *within* cases (See Figure 4)



Frequency Report

Frequency reports will include the code name and total number of occurrences across the entire study.

You can optionally choose to display the statistics listed below:

Include

- ☑ Minimum
- ☑ Maximum
- ☑ Mean
- ☑ Standard Deviation
- ☑ Bar Graph

Codes and Cases to Include

- ◉ All Codes and Cases
- ○ Only Filtered Codes and Cases

Code	Total	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Bar Graph
Blended culture	11	0	7	1.833	2.639	
Couple & family navigate culture	9	0	4	1.5	1.517	
Couple appreciation	24	3	8	4	2	
Couple compromise & comm	24	0	6	4	2.28	
Couple conflict short temper	1	0	1	0.167	0.408	
Couple connection & commitment	16	1	5	2.667	1.633	
Couple differences	6	0	3	1	1.265	
Couple disagreements	20	0	7	3.333	2.805	
Couple diverse community	4	0	1	0.667	0.516	
Couple divorced remarried	3	0	2	0.5	0.837	
Couple empathy racism	6	0	3	1	1.095	
Couple historically not accepted	3	0	1	0.5	0.548	
Couple interest in culture	9	0	5	1.5	1.975	
Couple navigating gender	5	0	2	0.833	0.983	
Couple similar	35	1	12	5.833	3.656	
Families boundaries	3	0	1	0.5	0.548	
Families connected	14	0	5	2.333	1.966	
Families cultural expectations	19	0	7	3.167	2.317	
Families emphasis edu	5	0	2	0.833	0.753	
Families parent harsh	2	0	1	0.333	0.516	
Families parents get along	1	0	1	0.167	0.408	
Families privileged	1	0	1	0.167	0.408	
Families supportive	34	1	13	5.667	4.131	
Families traditional	3	0	2	0.5	0.837	
Families/Communities Opposition	27	1	11	4.5	3.619	
Hard childhood	16	1	5	2.667	1.633	
Humor	7	0	3	1.167	1.169	
Migrated for opps	2	0	1	0.333	0.516	
Parenting disagreement	15	1	4	2.5	1.049	
Parenting in public	9	0	6	1.5	2.258	
Parenting religious cultural	6	0	2	1	0.632	
Parenting shifts	26	2	7	4.333	2.251	
Parenting style	30	0	9	5	3.162	
Poor childhood	1	0	1	0.167	0.408	
Preserve culture	24	0	10	4	4	
Protect family	14	1	4	2.333	1.033	
Racism & Discrimination	49	2	16	8.167	5.672	
Resettle language	3	0	2	0.5	0.837	
Society admires us	4	0	1	0.667	0.516	

Figure 4. Frequency Report generated by HyperRESEARCH qualitative analysis software.

Evidence of intersecting identities as partners and parents began to emerge through analysis of the collapsed codes for these couples. For example, more than half of the couples reported that people within their ethnic, racial, or cultural group had

assumptions about their family. For example, they assumed that the couple's relationship was more difficult than couples who were homogamous, or they worried that the couple would not successfully transmit their culture to their children because it was somehow diluted, or there was a general sense that they were viewed negatively, though they were not sure if this was the case. In my first wave of coding, these had been separate codes. In the second wave of coding, I combined these into a subtheme of 'Others from own cultural group had assumptions about their family' to reflect couples' experiences as partners and parents, and perceptions engendered by their intersecting identities. Regardless of the particular nature of the assumption, I was able to that most of the couples in my study experienced negative assumptions from people in their community.

Across-case synthesis. Across-case synthesis occurs when themes have been combined in ways that are relevant to the research question and stay true to the experience of the couples. Analysis involved drawing significant and salient connections within each theme. Two emergent themes that encompassed the essence of the couples' experiences were discerned; one of them is illustrated in Figure 5.

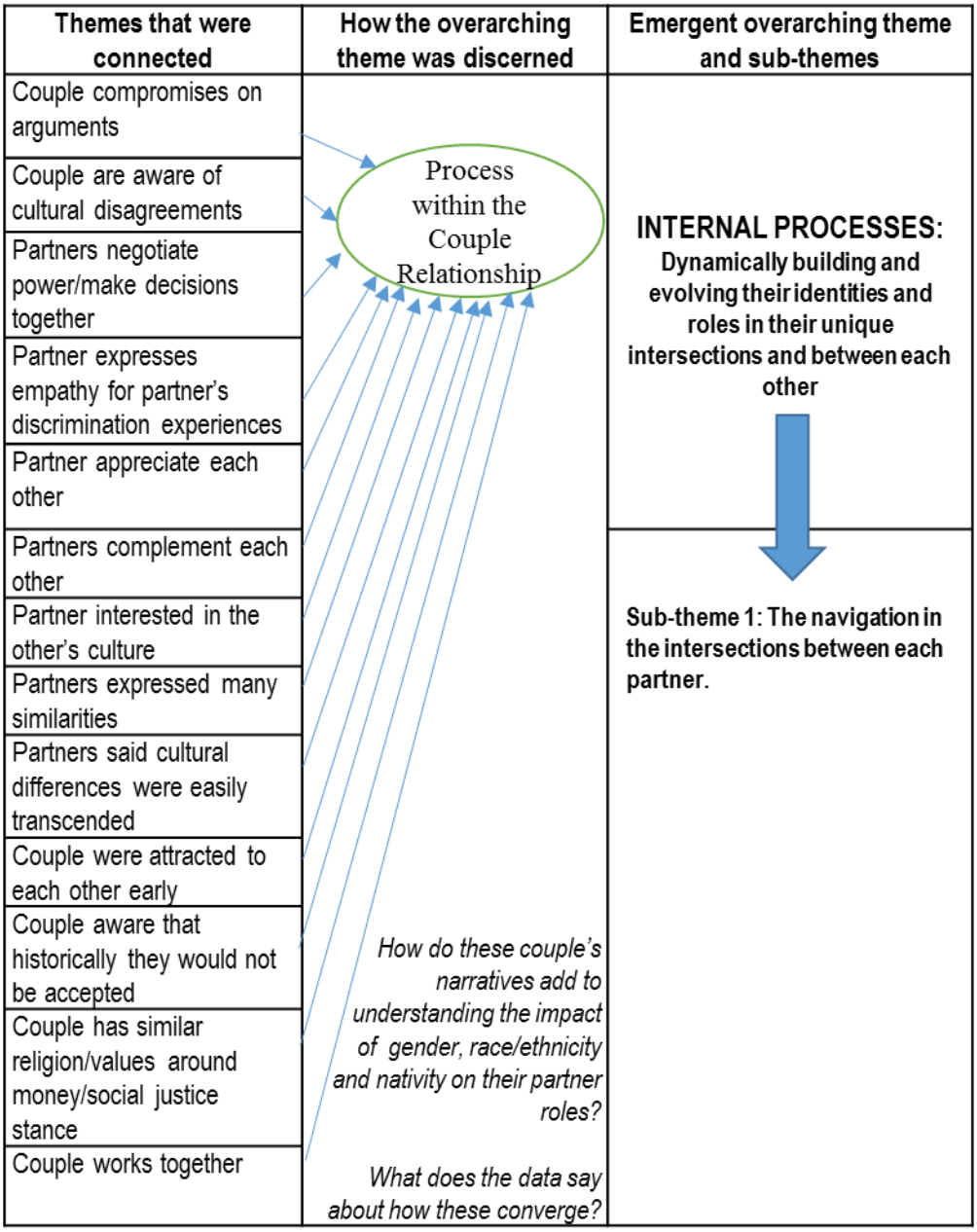


Figure 5. Process by which Emergent themes and Sub-themes were discerned.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The profile of each partner and each couple is presented below. Because this is a study of intersections, it is important to explore the identity categories that intersect for each individual. Consistent with my research philosophy, I asked all the participants choose their individual and couple codenames. An unexpected benefit was that in some cases, the words they selected revealed a facet of their individual and relationship conceptualization. This will become clear in later sections. Results are organized to answer the research question: How do heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples experience their partner and parent roles as it is impacted by their racial/ethnic, national, and gender identities?

Profile of each partner/couple

Couple Code Name	Years Together	Partners Codename	Gender Identified	Race Identified	Ethnicity Identified	Nation of origin	Years in the US	Bio children # and ages	Level of Edu	RDAS Total scores
Mr. & Mrs. Fringe	5 years	Elise	F	White	Caucasian	US	Life	2 (3yrs* & 8mos*)	BA	52
		Mr. X	M	White	Latino	Peru	26		MA	48
Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire	5 years	Esposa	F	American Egyptian	Caucasian	US	Life	4 (21yrs, 18yrs, 6yrs* & 4yrs*)	MA	59
		Workhorse	M	Asian	South Asian	Pakistan	16	2 (6yrs* & 4yrs*)	PhD	57
Mr. & Mrs. Egg	5 years	Rian	F	Korean	Korean	Korea	11	1 (12yrs)	MA	54
		Ravenson	M	White	Caucasian / Irish	US	Life	-	MA	53
Mr. & Mrs. Adwa	6 years	Lady Bug	F	White	Caucasian	US	Life	2 (11yrs & 3yrs*)	MA	45
		Tigray	M	Black	African American	Ethiopia	24	2 (12yrs & 3yrs*)	BA	62
Mr. & Mrs. Hamada	9 years	Melissa	F	Caucasian	American	US	Life	1 (4mos)	MA	51
		Nate	M	Asian	Japanese	Japan	2		BA	48
Mr. & Mrs. Volleyball	8 years	Jennifer	F	White	American	US	Life	1 (6mos)	MA	54
		Grayson	M	Portuguese, African, Native Brazilian	Hispanic/ Latino	Brazil	16		PhD	54

**Both partner's biological children.*

Within-Case Findings

In analyzing each case I used the guiding question: how does this couple experience their partner and parent roles as it is impacted by their racial/ethnic, national, and gender identities. Several distinct themes arose that were unique to each couple. Naturally, because of the layers of identities and roles, the themes for each couple serve to deepen an understanding of each of their experiences and directly relate to how they conceptualize these selves and identities for their partner and themselves. Two to three themes were discerned from each couple from their unique experiences. I present excerpts of their individual and couple interview for each theme.

Couple 1: Mr. & Mrs. Fringe (Mr. X & Elise)

Couple Codename	Together	Partners Codename	Race Identified	Ethnicity Identified	Nation of origin	Years in the US	5 Words each partner chose to describe their relationship
Mr. & Mrs. Fringe	5 years	Elise	White	Caucasian	US	Life	Loving, Caring, Smart, Very Empathetic, Understanding
		Mr. X	White	Latino	Peru	26	Very strong, very trusting, loving, pretty affectionate, teamwork/ partnership, we're positive influences on each other

The themes that arose from the three interviews conducted with Mr. and Mrs. Fringe were *an affinity towards each other deriving from shared childhood experiences of turbulence*, *a similar but unique uncertainty about having a singular or coherent cultural identity*, and *a conception of their partnership as consisting of more similarities and consonance than differences*.

Affinity towards each other deriving from shared childhood experiences of turbulence. Both partners in separate interviews talked about how difficult their early

childhood was and how it continued to be salient for their relationship. They both described heated arguments and heightened emotions leading to their parents' separation and divorce. For the foreign-born partner, this level of emotionality was a facet of Latin American culture, "But as you know, I chalk that up to the culture, you can't have a clean divorce". Neither had a sense of permanence in terms of residence until they moved to Nevada. Elise's father was in the military and they moved every two to three years until she was 13. Mr. X's childhood was "split in two" when due to terroristic threats and civil unrest, his mother took him and fled the country when he was 9.

When speaking together, they remembered having an early connection when they met in college, in part was due to having similar familial experiences; each had experienced the death of a parent.

> And we both had parents that passed away at the same time so, even though like he knew we would be a good couple, we had so much going on in our lives that wasn't about us that we had to take care of that, that, in some ways it made us very similar because it set us apart from our friends because they didn't understand our circumstance, you know. And they're all having fun in college and we're all taking care of our families, you know, yeah. (Elise, couple interview)

Specifically, for Elise, it was important to distance both herself and her partner from their parents' dynamics. Her role as parent and spouse was in some ways shaped by these difficult experienced and she was determined to not have her children have anxiety related to their parents hating each other. In addition, she credited her ability at resolving conflict to not wanting to repeat her parent's mistakes. In describing her partner's temperament, the concept in gender and ethnicity tended to come into play as she described him as a non-stereotypical Latino man, in the way that he was not passion-

driven and “running around on his wife”. Mr. X saw another dimension of his temperament and connected it not to a male figure in his life, but to his mother, who he described as different.

> Uh, I think what I'm finding out right now is uh, just my mom's character, just uh, I'm starting to find it more in myself, at the same time… she not very like, typical motherly, she's very like, independent. And um, like I was saying, um, about my mom that I'm finding out about in myself is her short temper <chuckles> uh, and I'm starting to see that in myself right now. (Mr. X, individual interview)

They both valued minimizing conflict and anger in their household and while this can be related to cultural values, it also connected with their desire to distance themselves from their childhood and build something different for their family.

Similar but unique uncertainty about having a singular or coherent cultural identity. In speaking of cultural identity relating to masculinity, Mr. X and Elise held similar conceptions of what constitutes a typical Latino or Hispanic man. Mr. X departed from this stereotype and desires a different structure in his marriage.

> Not about us, you know, I try to keep things, I feel like I try to keep things between us like, even. Well, yeah you know, it’s not...I'm not the stereotypical Hispanic husband where the wife does all the cooking and cleaning. I take care of the kids. (Mr. X, couple interview)

While Mr. X referred to this as being “modern”, Elise described it as being “Americanized”. Concordantly, Mr. X said he has “assimilated quite well” and is grateful to his well-travelled and culturally aware step-father who served as “the bridge to American culture” for him. He was unsure of how much he has internalized in terms of culture and sometimes just defaults to Americanism when situations call for it. The couple tended to refer to language as a big part of Latino culture and when Elise tried to

learn how to speak Spanish, they both laughed about how Mr. X could not help her because he would just keep speaking in English to her.

While there seemed to be a distance between Mr. X and his native cultural identity, he was connected to his cultural group in different ways. He worked in the school system serving primarily Hispanic and Latino populations, specifically with coordinating programs that helped children learn English and adjust to school in America. This required him to constantly advocate for their rights and it was in these systems that he felt that he had to fight against negative cultural sentiment on behalf of others.

In conversation about culture and ethnicity with Mr. X and Elise, they also talked about skin color and appearance in regards to visibility in the larger society. There was an acknowledgement that lighter skin and European features were desirable in many different spheres. Elise, who identified as White, knew that she was readily accepted by Mr. X's family because of her race, their children were doted on in different ways due to the fairness of their skin, and Mr. X was faced with less opposition because of his appearance. For the children, the couple considered naming them differently so as not to affect their prospects negatively, especially since one son appeared to have lighter skin than the other. Appearance was connected with the idea of being 'Americanized' and as a protective factor to judgement.

> Mr. X: Yeah, even like going to Nebraska, going to some little town that's not like family. I guess it like because I don't, I don't...
>
> Elise: You're, you are Americanized enough I think too, that's the hard thing to judge I think, once you open your mouth and you're not like what they think like you're going to sound like, you know.

> Mr. X: Well, you know something that's mentioned before, about like my looks, I might pass off as a different ethnicity, not necessarily Latino.

Juxtaposed with Mr. X's perception of himself as being able to blend in and "pass" were his experiences of being profiled. Returning from his native country with his "stereotypical American-looking" friend, he had been singled out and interrogated by airport officials. Elise never realized how much one could be profiled until she met Mr. X. The couple joked about using their son –who has fair skin- as a 'passport' when going through the airport so as not to be profiled, "Yeah 'here's my card' there you go, <gesturing to his child>, security, see I'm white, white kid, white kid".

Elise had a different perspective on her culture, predictably having little to do with her race, but an absence of cultural identity.

> I think I've had more discussions like this with his dad, when his dad comes from Peru. And they, they sort of have this nationalism, where they can say 'I am Peruvian'. And I think because I've lived all over the place, I don't really have a home, so for me it's like "Hi, I'm American or Las Vegas". I just don't have, so sometimes I just feel like "You're just so Peruvian and I'm just nothing, you know" <chuckles>. I don't know if that's something that other Americans have ever, but, then even, Mr. X is just sitting there saying 'I don't know what I am either'. So in a way he comes on to my side, 'cause he's like 'I'm sort of stuck in the middle too'. Yeah. (Elise, individual interview)

Conception of their partnership as consisting of more similarities and consonance than differences. Both partners in conversations alone and together ended up talking about their similarities. They had more cultural parallels than differences and their cultural differences were "superficial" and surmounted by their shared values of family and their parenting philosophy. Their conception of their marriage was that it was egalitarian, that they were able to compromise when needed, and worked well as a team.

Another way in which this couple felt like they are united related to a close family relationship they identified as being sometimes tense and conflictual, Mr. X's mother.

> That's a difference, I don't know if that's an argument, although, it seems like when we have arguments related to cultural heritage, we're kind of on the same side, um, I'll be like "Oh, your mom said this, that pisses me off", and he'll be like 'that pisses me off too!' <laughs>."She's so old fashioned". (Elise, individual interview)

What fused Mr. X and Elise is their interpretations of themselves as living on the margins, experiencing a sense of cultural dissonance, and thus finding a home with each other.

Couple 2: Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire (Workhorse & Esposa)

Couple Codename	Together	Partners Codename	Race Identified	Ethnicity Identified	Nation of origin	Years in the US	5 Words each partner chose to describe their relationship
Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire	5 years	Esposa	American Egyptian	Caucasian	US	Life	Understanding, giving, we work hard for our relationship, diligent, grateful, loving
		Workhorse	Asian	South Asian	Pakistan	16	Strong, respectful, cohesive, spiritual, fun/exciting

The themes that arose from the three interviews conducted with Mr. and Mrs. Electric Fire were *intersecting identities engendering experiences that served to bring together and cause friction, the tense border between partner and in-laws,* and *hard work as the relationship cornerstone and root of mutual admiration.*

Intersecting identities engendering experiences that served to bring together and cause friction. This couple was unique. Although Esposa identified as Caucasian and Egyptian American, and Workhorse identified as South Asian, they remarked, and I noticed, that they could be perceived as being from a similar racial or ethnic group.

Workhorse noted that if Esposa presented with more Caucasian features, they might get more looks and be more visible as an interracial couple to others.

In regards to gender, consistent with the feminist concept of standpoint, Esposa had a conception of her position as a Muslim woman in religious spheres and with family, which was surprising to Workhouse and different from his conception of her.

> Esposa: One thing I do get though from, I think I get this a lot from the Muslim community but I get it specifically, I remember his family in Canada they would kind of like treat me like maybe I don't know much about Islam. Yeah, like your uncle, the way like he would talk to me it's like, like he's teaching me every time.
>
> Workhorse: Really?
>
> Esposa: Really. Oh I might be more sensitive to that, since growing up, like people around me would always speak down to me like I didn't know anything about the religion. And then I wore the head covering for a little while and, that all changed within the Muslim community, but then when I took it off again, there we go, it's like I'm treated like I'm ignorant about the religion.

Additionally, Esposa also talked about embracing gender roles in her relationship as a strength and a choice.

> Like we were talking about gender roles, like one thing -as a woman- that I do tell my female friends is like, you know 'Let him be the man, let him have that feeling like he's taking care of the family, you know, don't step all over him' and I, I have a tendency to really be an a dominant person and do that and I have to constantly tell myself 'Ok, step down, you know, ok, let him be the guy', why not, it's healthy for the family, and so like uh, I think not being on an ego trip is being healthy for a marriage, you know, saying sorry, realizing that you know, seeing the other points, the other persons point of view is much more important than being right, you know, um. (Esposa, couple interview)

Another facet of this couple's identity that they understood as causing friction between them was their socioeconomic status when they were growing up and thus their

values around money and spending. Esposa's father was a cardiologist; she grew up very rich, travelling extensively, and having economic privilege. Workhorse grew up in a small village with little means; his father worked hard to migrate to Canada. They lived in what Workhorse called "the projects", supported by government assistance for most of his childhood. Both partners in their individual interviews spoke of each other's upbringing as being vastly different and equating that to the cause of their disagreements.

> Yeah, I think uh, because her father is uh, you know well-to-do, and I grew up in a very poor kind of background, so I'm definitely a lot more conservative when it comes to finances uh, and donations and things like that, where she is probably the opposite of that. Yeah. (Workhorse, individual interview)

> I would say the only other thing we have ever argued about is probably money. Um, like he's much more, he likes to save and I like to spend, and I've tried to meet him in the middle, and he's tried to meet me in the middle, but, you know, we both came from such extreme sides of that that it took a little while to get to the middle. (Esposa, individual interview)

Both partners practiced Islam and grew up in Muslim families and they talked about their religion as surmounting cultural differences. In some ways, the identities they shared served as a connecting force. In other ways, their identities divided their experiences and added a layer of complexity. For this couple, there was usefulness in understanding intersectionalities; conceiving their experience from one identity construct would have been incomplete

Tense border between partner and in-laws

While this couple does not report facing much opposition or receiving negative judgements about their relationship from the larger society and also their direct community, interactions with either their own and each other's parents have had strained

moments. Esposa recounted her parents as highly conflictual, and her father as an abusive man who directed his anger towards her and her sister. She credits her father for gaining the confidence to stand up for herself and becoming independent. As an adult, her relationship with her parents are not nearly as connected she perceived her husband and his family. She described her parents as not flexible or "embracing" and believes it to be because of her mother's British background. Accordingly, Workhorse experiences Esposa's family as formal and bounded in a way that is very different from his family. He recounted thinking it strange when it was expected to have to ask for permission for "almost everything", such as borrowing his father-in-law's car.

This was Esposa's second marriage; she has two older children in addition to their younger two children. This was Workhorse's first marriage. The fact that she was a divorcee and had children was a point of contention for Workhorse's father. He felt strongly enough to not attend the wedding.

> …but his father was like, would not have anything <emphatic> to do with me. It took him about a year, I think once I, I think once we were pregnant and having a baby, and I think the baby really united us… So, they were not, he was not for it at all, uh, more not because of the culture but more because I have 2 children from a previous marriage, but I think also because of the culture. I personally think my mother in law was not on board either but didn't have the heart to tell her son that, you know, so. (Esposa, individual interview)

In addition, the implicit meaning of Workhorse choice to marry a divorcee, as it applied to gender, did appear to have implications for how Esposa viewed other's perceptions of their marriage. She saw and experienced the Pakistani culture as generally patriarchal. She knew that her husband had in some way disregarded his parents' opposition, and thus naturally assumed that others looked at their relationship as less 'traditional'.

> I know they probably assume that my husband is not eating Pakistani food all of the time, you know, <chuckles>, and they probably assume that he's not the patriarch of the family, you know because I think in a Pakistani culture, a lot of the men are very much the leaders and rule-implementers but that could be my perception. (Esposa, individual interview)

The couple felt that their families don't give either one of them concessions. They are expected to know respective families' practices and traditions and conform accordingly.

> Esposa: …I wish I was extended that excuse of not knowing because I sincerely don't know, but that doesn't happen, I'm kind of expected to learn and pick it up quickly and vice versa, him too, he's kind of expected to.
> Workhorse: Yeah, because to them it's almost a no-brainer…

Consequently, the couple has maintained a fairly firm boundary between their relationship and their parents.

> And having each other's back and putting each other first...before anything, parents are so important, they're the most dear people in our lives but you know what, I have to have my husband's back first before anybody…in the end of the day its him that I'm going to support, I'm not going to choose, you know, I don't know, you know thankfully we haven't been in that situation which we've had to choose, but if we did, I think that you know, we'd have to choose each other, we have children, we're a family now, you know and I think that we've done a good job of trying to get our parents on board…(Esposa, couple interview)
> (Workhorse nods in agreement)

They talked about the importance of putting each other first. Sometimes they don't agree on the distance needed from their families of origin. For example, Esposa does not want his family to visit more than three weeks at a time because she does not get along as well with her father-in-law. This leads to hurt feelings, but both attempt to understand and compromise with each other. An added dimension of Workhorse's role as

husband, is that he has Workhorse shared that he grew up disliking how his father treated his mother with whom he has a close relationship. This dislike taught him what not to do as a partner.

Hard work as the relationship cornerstone and root of mutual admiration. Among the many qualities that this couple appreciated in each other, the theme of hard work appeared central to how they viewed their couple identity and equated their marital success. They grew up watching their parents work really hard to either maintain or elevate their economic status. Esposa understands her husband's work ethic as part of his family's cultural values; as the oldest male in the family he has a lot of pressure to be a good role model, among other things. For Esposa, while they had the means, her parents made her work hard for anything she requested. She was also the older of two girls and her father treated her "like a son" and held high expectations for her.

Additionally, as a couple, they focus and put work into their relationship. It was a long road to gain acceptance from some of their family, and they talked about persevering through that. Now, they provide that advice to others in their lives.

> I would say definitely respect the family and hear them out…I just recently gave my sister in law that advice, to, she's uh seeing somebody who's from a different culture and you know, her parents were kind of upset at first and I just told her, yeah you know, of course they're going to be upset, let them have that for a while and your job is to keep reintroducing it to them but don't just say, 'Well they didn't want to hear it the first time so that's it, I'm not going to talk to them ever again'. I'm like, you know, you know, you need to be respectful that you know, they're going to have their opinions and they're not gonna like it and that's okay, you can just keep on knocking on their door and keep on showing up and eventually they'll get used to it, you know. (Esposa, Couple interview)

Couple 3: Mr. & Mrs. Egg (Rian & Ravenson)

Couple Codename	Together	Partners Codename	Race Identified	Ethnicity Identified	Nation of origin	Years in the US	5 Words each partner chose to describe their relationship
Mr. & Mrs. Egg	5 years	Rian	Korean	Korean	Korea	11	Love, trust, comfortable, security, safe, funny
		Ravenson	White	Caucasian / Irish	US	Life	Unusual because it's so different, united, devoted, kinda silly, adventurous

The themes that arose from the three interviews conducted with Mr. and Mrs. Egg were *the amplified focus on parenting, the impinging perceptions and judgements from society and family*, and *navigating the border between conventional and divergent with a sense of lightheartedness.*

Amplified focus on parenting. Rian had been previously married to a man from her ethnic, cultural and racial group and divorced when her son, John, was 4 years old. Ravenson entered their lives when John was 6 and immediately took on the role of father. There was a common focus on parenting John for both Rian and Ravenson. Rian was drawn to Ravenson initially because of his acceptance and care for John. Her previous marriage was abusive and she wasn't sure she ever wanted to be in another relationship. She met Ravenson while they were both studying theology at a seminary.

> Oh, that was when I saw how he interacted with my son, he really loves my son, the way he was, it was not like he was pretending to earn my attention, it was very real you could tell, so I was a single mother and my family was in Korea and all those things happening, and I did not have a lot of support, so this random guy shows up and he says he wants to help me out, take my son and pick him up from school and all that. I have school so my son always has to wait for me like 1 or 2 hours at school and I said thank you. And one day he came and picked up my son, it was raining and I was really worried, and then he came home and my son was completely dry and Ravenson was soaking wet and I didn't know what was going on and I feel really sorry for him, like I asked him 'Are you okay', he said, uh he's very sad because if he was rich he would have a car and would give him a ride

> and then he said ‘The only thing I can do for your son was give my jacket to your son, I wish I could do more for him' and I realized this was real, he loves my son, (he was) not the man that pretends that he loves me, I realized that this is real love. That’s how I opened my heart. (Rian, couple interview)

So much about Rian’s role as a parent was connected to her culture, her gender, and her perceived status as an immigrant. When she was growing up, she vowed that she would be different from her parents, who were unaffectionate and not emotionally engaged. They had disciplined her with beatings, which she noted was a cultural norm. She described herself as an overprotective, overinvolved, strict, and also sacrificial mother. Mothers are generally considered as primary caregivers in her culture and it is accepted that children will always come before a mother. Paradoxically, the relationship between parents and children is hierarchical, linear, and inflexible. Rian has made many shifts in her parenting philosophy and practice since meeting Ravenson. A major disagreement that they had was Rian’s method of corporal punishment. They decided against this and agreed to use other non-physical forms of discipline such as time-outs.

Ravenson was both described by Rian and described himself as less restrictive and less committed to maintaining the hierarchy between him and his son than Rian.

> I think. Ok. I think I do better than others but I could be more, I don't get. I don't get unnecessarily angry I don't shout or call him names I don't use corporal punishment but I think there are times that I can be a little irritated. I work in retail, so sometimes my son takes this tone with me and I'm like ‘Man, man I deal with that everyday man’, I get irritated. I got to walk away from that, I gotta walk away. I think sometimes too I can be, I can come off as too buddy-buddy with him, I think that can affect the hierarchy at times. He can start to think that I'm one of his school buddies and not his father. I'm ok, there are times I do good with that and there are times that I don't do so good with that… She's pretty, I wouldn't say strict, she's firm. I think she's better about the hierarchy than I am…I know it's a big deal for her especially when we were dating before we got married was,

> between me and him, if I wasn't going to be interested and you know if I didn't love him appropriately, it was never going to work from the start… we're not playing around here, we are adults, I have a son , it was very clear about that from the beginning, so I think her values as a parent can be reflected there in regards to Jun. (Ravenson, individual interview)

From early on he knew that he would have to be as committed to making it work with John if he were to have a chance to be with Rian. While he was open and accepting to so much of Rian's cultural values and practices, parenting John in a way common in her culture was not an area that Ravenson willingly adopted. The couple are committed to giving John the best opportunities and ensuring his success in life, and that translates into being very involved parents who spend much of their time together.

The impinging perceptions and judgements from society and family. This couple spoke much about how they were viewed by others and were keenly aware of these perceptions. This couple and their son lived in Hawai'i and thus faced some very different as well as some similar societal perceptions compared to the Mainland. Ravenson had an acute awareness of what his appearance represented, while it would seem that he has embraced the 'local' Hawai'ian way of being, given that he spent the latter part of his childhood there.

> I think culturally there was a difference, I think Hawai'i, I'm kind of the minority a little bit you know, many Asian Pacific Islander mix, there's a fair number of White people but generally we're not liked by people, 'the white people are taking away everything from everybody', you know, what not. (Ravenson, individual interview)

In contrast, Rian's appearance engendered a different reception in Hawai'i.

> You know, I think with her being here, the expectations are a little different for being American, it's pretty negative, I think in many ways, people are going to

> give her more leeway because there is a blending, such a melting pot of all different Asian cultures. She doesn't really stand out that much. I mean it's going to be really rare for her to be the only Asian person in the room, where else I have a pretty good chance of being the only White person in the room. (Ravenson, couple interview)

However, there are complexities to how Rian is perceived that can be best understood when considering her intersecting identities of race, nativity, and gender. Her appearance and language use indicates that she is foreign-born. She has encountered discriminatory interactions both on the Mainland and in Hawai'i, and they tend to be central to her being an immigrant. In addition, the couple's experience in California was not the same as in Hawai'i. Rian recognized a distinction in how people treated Ravenson and her - amiable to him and unfriendly to her.

> But then sometimes people look at me like I'm a 'Green Card Wife'… (other times) 'What are you doing here?' And I said, I'm attending school, and they said 'Oh you're finishing high school?' (laughs). (Rian, couple interview)

This was juxtaposed to how Ravenson was stereotypically viewed as a White male who was partnered with an Asian woman:

> …And one thing that kind of bothers me and I know I just gotta deal with it, is that White Man-Asian Woman thing, fetish, that she's my fantasy you know kind of thing. Yeah there were people, there were people when we first got together that were kind of upset like they were 'Why didn't he choose me? Why didn't he choose me? Why is he with her?'. Like the first thing they noticed is that she's got the kid, and then, 'Oh it's because she's Korean, he likes Asian women. I'm going to have to get used to that.

Judgement was also harsh from people in Rian's community and she felt more from the women in her community than from men. The couple recalled being very secretive about their relationship at the start to avoid being identified as a couple by

others in Rian's ethnic group. The potential fallout from the in-group bias seemed to bear negatively on the start of their relationship.

> Well, we, because we got pretty deep into our relationship pretty early, that was one of the central issues because we were you know when we started emailing and talking, nobody else knew um, we kept it a secret, that was because we knew, and really more on her side because of the Korean…A lot of them, from the school, some of them were more traditional, and um, we were kinda hesitant if they knew we were a couple, and so that was always a discussion for us, and I always knew that was something she would have to deal with, especially where she worked, there were a number of Koreans as well, it wasn't gonna be just casual, it was all around us all the time. And for me it wasn't that bad um, nearly that bad at all. (Ravenson, couple interview)

The concern persisted after the couple got married.

> In Korean community, they're not shocked, I'm already divorced, in Korea your status become already low, you're lower than the general woman, they didn't ask 'why did you marry a single guy'. Their perception was I did something to get somebody to marry a divorcee and child. (Rian, individual interview)

The couple's families had been similarly un-embracing of their relationship, having to do very much with the cultural differences between them. Ravenson's family believed that Rian had created a distance between Ravenson and them. He acknowledged that he has separated himself from them because they have unrealistic expectations of his marriage. Rian's family did not accept Ravenson, and promised to disown her if she married him. Her family ascribed to a cultural ideal of maintaining a "pure blood line" and opposed interracial or interethnic marriage. It took Rian two years to have a conversation about their marriage with her family and five years for her family to tell extended family about their union. The language barrier continues to be a struggle, but eventually they were able to fly back and visit her parents.

> So it took a while for them to accept him as my husband, so when I talk to them about my husband I just talk to them about how nice he is and they try to talk with him but the language barrier is kind of big as well and they get nervous talking with my husband, so in Korea it's not really common to talk with a foreigner much, Korean people they always just are with Korean people. (Rian, couple interview)

Another impinging opinion from Rian's family, e consistent with the larger theme of maintaining appearances, was Ravenson's weight.

> And again Korean culture, in Korea appearance is really important, you maintain your body shape, if people were overweight, if you're fat they just say it. My husband has a little belly. And my parents always tell me 'you need to tell him to lose weight, you need to tell him to lose weight', they constantly, whenever I talk to them on the phone they always say 'you need to tell him to lose weight'.

Noting how Rian repeated her statements in the interview, coupled with the clarity in her words and the lack of dysfluencies, my estimation is that this message from her parents has been a dominant message. This may also be an indication of societal messages as it seems consistent with increasing rates of plastic surgery and body image preoccupation in her country of origin.

Navigating the border between conventional and divergent with a sense of lightheartedness. Due to Rian's and Ravenson's intersecting identities and their relational roles, the couple sees themselves and are seen by others as strange and different. It was no surprise to this couple that people saw them as differently, specifically because of how quickly it seemed, to others, that their relationship had progressed. Their religious seminary and her cultural community circles tended to have more conservative values. Rian and Ravenson disregarded the expectations based on

those values. They described their relationship as unusual, interesting, and adventurous; they were comfortable and united.

While there is so much that is unique about this couple, they practiced their faith and culture in a very conventional way. Ravenson has adopted or gone along with Rian's cultural practices, such as for food and mealtimes, in an agreeable way.

> …so, some of the things that I've learnt, like culinary stuff, like eating. Like rice, you have to eat enough rice and you have to alternate with other foods, or it's kind of rude, you'd make it seem like you don't like the food or what not. Nobody blows their nose at the table, don't blow your nose on the table. What else, be respectful to your elders, it's kind of standard but meeting people, greeting people, people, it's a big deal, like setting the hierarchy from the very beginning. (Ravenson, individual interview)

When they both talked about cultural differences, it focused on what Ravenson has learned not to do because it crosses a cultural the line, as opposed to how Rian has adjusted to his culture. This is expected, given where they live and the predominance of Rian's cultural representation and means to practice her traditions, for example, Korean food ingredients are more available where they live. But also, Ravenson has lived in Hawai'i for years and is both accustomed and open to adapting to the diversity of culture and experiences, even describing himself as more deferential to others than she is (in speaking of their personality differences). Rian saw their cultures as very different and attributed much of their earlier misunderstandings to those differences. There was also a sense of appreciation for his culture in regards to his roles of partner and parent intersecting with gender.

> Um, I really didn't know his culture, until marrying and living together…Um, observing him, how he uh, react with me and react with our son. In Korea we have dominant culture that man is not emotional like the woman. But I was

> impressed with how he asks for my opinions, he always asks me, he will say 'how do (you) feel?' Which is very different. (Rian, individual interview)

Another way in which this couple practiced a conventional lifestyle was through their religion. They both talked about referring to their religious beliefs and values as a guide to family decisions.

Both partners exhibited a sense of lightheartedness when it came to their differences and what other people regarded as their incompatibility. In speaking about what words represented their relationship in the individual interviews, one partner said funny and the other partner said silly.

> I think one thing that is if they think she's a tiger mom that she's in charge of everything there is, and I think also just sort of, that I'm just a backup singer in some cases and just kind of fun to have around, I think, it's just the first thing in people's thoughts. (Ravenson, individual interview)

> Yeah, they assume because I'm Asian and he's Caucasian they think I have low (status) and I'm very submissive, and I cook every day I do every single thing for him, and I sacrifice myself and treat him like a god, but that's not it. (both laugh) (Rian, couple interview)

They laughed together when they talked about the prejudgments that people have about them, even providing contrasting ideas of how people viewed them, evidencing even more this couple's divergence from the norm.

Couple 4: Mr. & Mrs. Adwa (Tigray & Ladybug)

Couple Codename	Together	Partners Codename	Race Identified	Ethnicity Identified	Nation of origin	Years in the US	5 Words each partner chose to describe their relationship
Mr. & Mrs. Adwa	6 years	Lady Bug	White	Caucasian	US	Life	Passionate, dependable, sometimes rocky, always interesting, fun
		Tigray	Black	African American	Ethiopia	24	Amazing love connection, good balance, very conscientious, very

							mature/responsible, stands for justice

Themes from Mr. and Mrs. Adwa's three interviews were: *the weight of social injustice*, *conflicting cultural concepts of time and pace as a cause of distress,* and *the acceptance of having the family closely aligned to culture and traditions*.

Conflicting cultural concepts of time and pace as a cause of distress. Ladybug grew up on the West Coast in America and Tigray moved away from a North Eastern African nation as a refugee when he was a teen. Tigray's mother died when he was very young and he remembered growing up poor on a village farm until his family fled to escape civil war in their region. Tigray stays very connected to his cultural heritage and defines much of his way of life through his cultural lens.

The concept of time emerged as a significant cause for contention throughout conversations with this couple. While Ladybug expressed frustration at her partner's management of time, Tigray described it as culturally consistent for him and also expressed remorse for how it affected his partner.

> So the bigger hump that we have- small or regular daily basis, like, I'm not as fast on the timing and she is, and so like, that gets in the way and I'm just too careless and she's very time oriented and whatnot, that kind of stuff that gets in the way but in the end we always find a way like, to fix it, otherwise it's just like you can't survive it. (Tigray, individual interview)

Tigray is a skilled storyteller, providing word illustrations of his thoughts, and doing do with flourish, often meandering with excursive direction.

Ladybug finds that Tigray's pace affects their parenting and causes disagreements because it disrupts their schedules.

> And bedtime, bedtime has really been um, actually a sticky point, a lot of these things we've ironed out over time, but he doesn't value sleep as much as I do, just personally and for the family and so um, which ties into another area that we disagree on which does affect parenting sometimes, which is time, we have very very different concepts of time and that comes up every day, where you know, where like today, we have things scheduled closely together, he just really, it just takes him a long time to do everything. (Ladybug, individual interview)

> …Which are like time management you know , she is, like in American culture everything has to be done on time and at the end of the process it has a lot of stress whereas for me -I love it too- but I like having that little flexibility… but I try to do a better job and its stressful sometimes I simply like it to be more mellow and with the flow but I also see the risk sometimes because especially on a school day on a work week if you're not sticking to the morning routine, the schedule and what not, you know you're going to be behind. (Tigray, individual interview)

Although both partners recognized how integral their sense of time is to their way of life and culture, it has placed a strain on their relationship.

Acceptance of having the family closely aligned to culture and traditions. A situation in which Ladybug willingly accepts Tigray's management of pace and time is when they are with his family and during his cultural functions and festivities. This is demonstrative of her embracing stance towards his heritage and traditions, and also the many particularities that are somehow connected to Tigray's culture or upbringing.

> …but she understands what is important to me, you know, what makes me and my kids, our kids that we care deeply about, she's very supportive of, she's very understanding of. So for instance when we go to Ethiopian parties in Seattle you know I know that for her it's very important to keep the kids on schedule, even just as we were visiting my family, it's really like I always mess it up, I mess it up without meaning to, I let the kids like, run around and you know, stay awake till midnight or 1 a.m. and bedtime here is like 9 and 9:30 is super late already, but those kinds of things. I think you know, rather than her getting mad and sticking to the principles that we have in American culture, she understands that and so, she might not agree with it deep inside but, but I think, out of respect for me she

> allows it, you know, where she supports it, she allows me to be loose with them and it means (a lot) to me, you know. (Tigray, individual interview)

Tigray's core values were formed from his unique experiences as an African male refugee, resettling on the west coast of the US and spending all of his childhood and youth in poverty. He spoke of having very little in the way of daily comforts, resources, and educational opportunities, in addition to facing threats of violence prior to fleeing his home country to a Sudanese refugee camp.

Both Tigray and Ladybug practice Christianity. For Tigray, many cultural practices are connected to Christian traditions such as baptisms. His sister, with whom he grew up, lives in an area with a larger population that shares their ethnic and cultural heritage, and he commonly returns there. Staying connected to his family of origin, his extended family, and others in his ethnic group are important for him; these connections contribute to the importance of practicing their religious traditions together.

> I think his family is a lot more religious than mine is but we're both Christian and so that is a commonality of our families…Um, we have had the opportunity to spend a bit of time with his family in Seattle and his sister was born in Ethiopia, and uh, just in Seattle they tend to stay a little closer to the culture in a lot of ways because there are, is a much larger Ethiopian community in Seattle, so they do a lot of traditional cooking and um, we had our daughter baptized in the Ethiopian church in Portland, um and that was a really interesting cultural experience because none of it is in English and it was fun to have both of our older children um, Tigray's older daughter is much more um, a part of the Ethiopian culture because her mother is from there but my son it was really different and fun just being in a church where, you know they weren't speaking English and they, they have a lot of um, ceremonies attached to big events so you know there's uh, music and um, prayer and they have um, just the art of the church and um, the way that um, the way that they do a lot of incense burning and kinda sort of the events incorporate all of your senses into those big life moments. (Ladybug, individual interview)

This couples' narratives highlight cognitive strategies such as reframing situations in terms of growth in inner strength, and focusing on future aspirations and potential to succeed (Khawaja, et. al., 2008). Tigray spoke of his past with a sense of resolve in the lessons he'd learned, and the opportunities that were available to him. He lives a life of discipline in many ways, specifically around rules of conduct and finances, and places much emphasis on transmitting these values to his children.

> For instance, I came from a very poor situation and so did she, obviously but I want the kids, like if we go to a restaurant somewhere and when ordering something I want them to order stuff that they're going to eat… if half or less than half of it (is eaten) and the rest of it is going to get thrown away, 1, its money that's getting thrown away but that we both work hard for, 2, they're not appreciating that there are so many other kids out there, there are families out there that don't have what our kids have, they have it the easy way because we have a nice house and, they go to school, there are clothed very well, we take care of them we provide everything they need… so I'm very hard on the kids to make sure that they are conscientious of not wasting money. (Tigray, individual interview)

Tigray recalled his early life on a farm, much like many parents recall their own childhoods, when deciding what values were important to teach their children.

> …Because what I don't like is, and they know this, is like I don't like kids getting up and like complaining that making their bed is a hard thing to do, try to go back to, you know, where I come from, getting up in the morning, going out there barefoot to herd, you know, to gather up the goats and cows and what not and thorns poking through your toes and what not, so, so, and am I like putting them in that environment? No <emphatically, chuckles> and so like making your bed is like the easiest, simplest thing to do but it teaches them at the end of the day like, you know, responsibility, the value of money, money doesn't grow on trees, and it's not free, and so I think, you know, that, that sort of stuff, that's the tougher aspect of it… so you know that kind of stuff I want them to be appreciative of, I don't just want them to feel this entitlement, even though we're not going to have them, like, you know, starve or you know, not have the appropriate clothing. (Tigray, individual interview)

Ladybug has embraced Tigray's traditions and practices, and also allows him to take the lead on some of the parental decisions, even when they disagree. There is an acceptance from both partners that their family is different from other families.

> We, uh, I have the number one rule of thumb for my kids and that is never compare yourself to other families, to other kids, you know if someone else is doing you know, something different, sorry you know, that's their household, that's their family lifestyle, and that's not, that's not how we do it, um, and she and we at the end of the day, to cut it short, those are you know, some of the important things for me things I value as a father, and for her, she's an amazing mother um, you know, she um, even if she doesn't, with some of the stuff um, when she doesn't agree, let's put it that way, she's very good at supporting me, she's very good at going along with it… (Tigray, individual interview)

Both partners seemed comfortable inviting and infusing their lives with Tigray's culture and traditions and find a richness to their differences.

Weight of social injustice. Consistent with literature that posits that Black-White couples experience societal perceptions and are affected by discrimination in unique and more severe ways than other mixed-race couples, much of Tigray and Ladybug's public experiences were attenuated by microaggressions and racism.

At times, the person of color in an interracial couple has more awareness of racial discrimination (Killian, 2013). This appears to be the case for Ladybug and Tigray. Ladybug was aware that people's reception of her partner was tainted by racial prejudices. Ladybug advocates for those who have been abused and oppressed in her profession. Tigray described this as a big part of her character and appreciated her ability to empathize with his experiences of injustice.

> … She has a very good understanding of the, the injustice system and our culture and so she spends a very good amount of time looking into like what are the sensitive issues for minorities (Tigray, individual interview)

For Tigray, being a black male immigrant in the United States has primed him to be perceptive of all possible societal messages, including the message about being with a 'White woman'. While Ladybug may have been cognizant about racism towards individuals, her privilege may have buffered her from perceived or actual harsh judgment for choosing to be with a 'Black man'.

> Yea, well I think unfortunately, there have been a lot of experiences of racism um, and, I, I wouldn't say that I've had a lot of experiences of people um, having bias against us that I know of because we are a mixed race couple um, but I've definitely seen examples of racism against um, Tigray while I was with him, um, and also um, with his family members…people sometimes feel like young black men need to be put in their place or they need to be educated by the outside community. (Ladybug, individual interview)

> I'm sure there are people out there, they would say how dare her like cross over and go with a N*****… people think that I'm with a white woman because she's feeding me and she's working and I'm living off of her paycheck. (Tigray, individual interview)

Their narratives revealed that people treat Ladybug differently from Tigray. When interacting with others, Tigray needs to discern whether his appearance or the color of his skin will make people uncomfortable; he often must decide if it would be better for his partner take the lead. As a result, he may not be able to advocate for his child at times. A recent incidence was particularly salient to their roles as parents and illustrates this dilemma.

> They just had an assistant the doctor's assistant there and she became uncomfortable, and the, the thing that bothered me was you know, um, like when she was talking to them they were like, calm, collected and very nice, when I said

> something I wasn't seeing that, and, what bothered me was like, in the waiting, they said like 30 minutes wait time, and a 30 minutes went by, they were behind and they were rude, and I got up and said 'hey, I'm sorry but you guys are like, you have three people behind you talking and doing nothing, you're here struggling to enter the paperwork and it's taking forever because we're not the only ones, there other people, but we have a child who is in pain, we need to get her in and she's like 'Well you're going to have to wait like everyone else'. And I said, 'This is how, really you should treat a person? So I just went back and sat down and just didn't want to continue with it, so I let her (Ladybug) finish all the paperwork with them… I realized like you know, letting her take the lead works better than me trying to take the lead, because, just like, because it's not pretty often times, like when I'm seen not dressed up professionally like, or my appearance isn't very good and my, with my skin color unfortunately, it's troubling. (Tigray, individual interview)

Another way that his intersecting identities engender perceptions that affect his parenting, is in the way he speaks and provides structure for his children in public. Due to common stereotypes about Black men being angry, dangerous, and violent (Young, 2006), Tigray has to consider his words and tone when talking to his children in public.

> …It's also partly for me, that I'm as a person of minority, the perception in American culture, how we are generalized as black men, you know I don't, if they see me like, with an angry face and talking to my kids it's like 'Here we go', you know we are very generalized in this culture, nobody thinks I could be just equally as valuable, as educated as a white middle-aged man, like my age, so a white middle-aged man yelling at his kids in public, he would be less criticized and viewed as like, not as a threat to his kids than someone like me, with a stern eye or voice, my concern is that, the back of my head, is I know that it will irritate certain people and so to be honest with you I have to be mindful of that and therefore, I just have to like choose my words of communication with my kids, and watch what I say…so that's another thing that I can think of, for me it's that because of how our society is structured, (to be) more ultra-careful about certain things I say in the general public. (Tigray, couple interview)

The generalizations people make about Tigray as a black man are also felt by Ladybug. She expressed concern about implications they may have for her children.

> Usually I would say, it's in more subtle things like in assumptions that people make about what he may or may not be able to afford or what his intentions are…and it's difficult to witness and it's hard to think about what that means for our kids. I have optimism that it will get better but we do see a lot. (Ladybug, individual interview)

> To give you a direct answer is yeah people don't think I'm educated…or I'm like somebody who's not educated enough to have a conversation or have something addressed in an appropriate way, before they even hear from me, before they even interact with me. (Tigray, couple interview)

The idea that Tigray is either uneducated, or not able to have calm conversations or resolve disagreements, compounded with his role as partner and parent seems to produce assumptions about the couple's marriage.

> I think that people assume we have more disagreements about parenting than we really do, I think people make a lot of assumptions about people from other cultures and think, 'Wow, it must be so different from here and so hard to get along'… I mean it's a good opportunity, but they do, they ask questions that make me realize that they have assumptions about how different our cultures are and what kind of tension that must cause. (Ladybug, couple interview)

Due to the weight of the experiences of racial injustice that is experienced primarily by Tigray, the couple places less emphasis on understanding Ladybug's experiences of oppression as a woman. Both Tigray and Ladybug noted that they hold divergent ideas about gender, and while some of these ideas have shifted for Tigray, Ladybug acknowledged that it is a cause of disagreements. In Tigray's culture, there is a defined division of labor between men and women which translates into more power for men as earners. It may be that in the context of his home country and religious community, women have willingly fulfilled caretaking roles and not explicitly demanded change. Tigray may be less attuned to Ladybug's experience in society as a woman due

to the fact that she is White and therefore does not experience racial discrimination, which is the primary way that he understands marginalization.

In addition, Ladybug describes Tigray's cultural values around gender.

> I think the biggest difference is with ideas about gender roles. Um, so Tigray's sister would be horrified to see him in the kitchen cooking and um, kind of where the, my family's ideas about that kind of thing are more um, modern and more with um, American culture in terms of equal… Disagreements? Definitely the gender role thing is part of it and in separation of household duties, because I definitely, especially when our daughter was younger did most of the um, the taking care of the child in the house, I think that maybe that works better when women don't also have to go to work full time but, but that was a major area of disagreement in the past, it's gotten a lot better as our daughter gets older. (Ladybug, individual interview)

Both Tigray's and Ladybug's roles as partners and parents have been affected and, in some ways, shaped by their experiences with injustice.

> Oh yeah, we do talk about it a lot, it comes up a lot for us…I feel like for Tigray, it's um, it's something that he has to always have in the front of his mind, you know, is race (looks over at partner). (Ladybug, Couple interview)

This couple daily faced the effects of race and gender on their relationship and family. Their couple interview revealed a sense of the ongoing labor that is required to decipher the safety of situations, protect their children from the fallout of discrimination encounters, decide how to advocate for or defend themselves, and provide a secure foundation for their family. For Ladybug, the task involved giving space to her partner to manage the emotions elicited from these experiences of injustice, such as allowing him more authority or more decision-making power with the children, providing instrumental support when he takes legal action, researching and learning about systems of injustice, and encouraging his connection to both his heritage and his social support system. For

Tigray, the tasks are endless; his priorities are a balance of standing up against injustice and ensuring that he keeps his family safe.

Couple 5: Mr. & Mrs. Hamada (Nate & Melissa)

Couple Codename	Together	Partners Codename	Race Identified	Ethnicity Identified	Nation of origin	Years in the US	5 Words each partner chose to describe their relationship
Mr. & Mrs. Hamada	9 years	Melissa	Caucasian	American	US	Life	Affectionate, supportive, different, strong, stable
		Nate	Asian	Japanese	Japan	2	Good, sometimes difficult, compassionate, loving family, nice family

The themes that emerged from the three interviews conducted with Mr. and Mrs. Hamada were *shifting gendered expectations as the relationship matured*, and *individualism versus collectivism*.

Shifting gendered expectations as the relationship matured. Melissa has had an interest in Japanese culture since she was in high school. She learned Japanese and moved to Japan to teach English when she was in college. Nate has lived in Japan his whole life, growing up in a little village on an island off mainland Japan. Both Melissa and Nate are very focused on their education, which Nate remembers being emphasized since his childhood. Melissa and Nate have been married for nine years and recently had a baby.

While present conventions in Japan have shifted to ideals of equality between the genders, there remains traditional ideals of traits considered desirable in women and men (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). These were evident in how both Melissa and Nate described expectations for Melissa behavior early in their relationship.

> I guess I tried to act Japanese as much as I could… I tried to conform to the kind of gender stereotype where the woman cooked, and I just kind of acted

> submissive… So in the beginning of our relationship I feel like I was acting more Japanese trying to impress him and fit in with his culture. (Melissa, Couple interview)

> Um, um I used to have, in the first few years of our marriage I used to have um, some kind of an, um, unspoken de facto expectations (chuckles) which I thought, I thought it was obvious but and I think that was wrong, but um, and which I don't have any more, so. (Nate, Couple interview)

. Melissa verbalized her expectation that her partner needed to emotionally expressive, but Nate's Japanese cultural values seemed to be in conflict with that expectation.

> And also he's said that the way he was raised, he was taught not to show emotions as much and that's kind of come into play in our relationship, because you know, growing up in America, I expect my husband to be able to say 'I love you' easily, and be really openly affectionate and show happiness and sadness and things like that and he said the way he's raised, he's raised to not show his feelings on the outside so much, and I think that's not just a Japanese thing so much but also because he was from this more rural, traditional area, yeah conventional area. (Melissa, Individual interview)

Melissa saw Nate's family's ways as conventional, and also attributed her own mother's dissatisfaction with Nate to her conventional ideas. The couple described that the relationship between Nate and Melissa's mother began on a positive note but soured after a while. Nate believes that she began to dislike him the more time she spent with him, and also believes that it was because of his 'difference' which was that he was a foreign-born, Japanese man. Melissa's mother also saw him as controlling, which connected with his male gender and role as partner to her daughter.

> Well, she likes the people okay as long as they conform with her expectations, her cultural expectations… she likes me to be more frivolous with my money and um she thinks if I'm not having fun with my money than he's kind of somehow

> stopping me from having fun with my life, which is not how it is but that's somehow her kind of impression. (Melissa, couple interview)

The couple described how their gender roles had shifted to accommodate a more equal dynamic. As graduate students living away from family and Melissa's parents' model of equally involved parenting, they made decisions to share parenting and childcare tasks equally.

> Um, just as far as the split between childcare…when I am at work or at school um, when I was a kid, my uh, dad was a house husband for a while and took care of us kids so it's pretty normal in my family for the husband to share the house care duties like Nate has been doing. (Melissa, Couple interview)

This was quite different from Nate's parents' model of parenting and his native culture's gender role prescriptions for women.

> …My father used to expect my mother to do all the raising child, so uh, and I don't think that is uh, that was a good idea, I think that we uh, should stay together, we should live together and we should both participate in the child care together, whereas my father had a different idea about it…That's another thing about differences again, there is still a lot of sexism in Japan and many Japanese men still think that raising a child is a woman's job and I disagree with that. (Nate, Individual interview)

Individualism versus collectivism. Both Melissa and Nate found the concepts of individualism and collectivism salient for how they saw their different ways of being and the potential for conflict between them. Nate saw the benefits of each and recognized the potential challenges as well. Melissa indicated an appreciation for a more collectivistic lens and noted that she is accustomed to thinking more individualistically. They both talked about these concepts in their individual interviews, indicating the important role this played in how they understood themselves and their partner.

> The biggest difference is the collectivist and individualist culture and the collectiveness of the culture is good in some way and bad in some way, like when there is a disaster, in individual culture people tend to, some people take advantage of the situation like, stealing from other, chaos, where else in collective culture it rarely happens, people tend to maintain order but individuals in collective culture are usually less free than individuals in individual culture, there are so many expectations from others in Japan where else you can do anything here as long as you don't break any laws and not hurt others. (Nate, Individual interview)

> Japan is a more group-oriented culture and I'm from a more individual culture, so from his culture you would always consider the needs of the group first and the way I was raised individuals would speak up about what they wanted to do…we did have some disagreements because, because I was thinking about my individual needs and he wanted me to consider it from the perspective of other people more, which I wasn't really taught to do growing up, but I think it is important. (Melissa, Individual interview)

One way that individualistic versus collectivistic values impacted this couples' parental roles was how they chose to prioritize

> I don't know, uh, sometimes, sometimes Nate will expect Jack to behave a bit longer so we can get something done but I would prefer to put him first, you know, if we have something to do, like when we were packing and moving, then you know, Nate would say 'Okay, you need to get this packing done no matter what Jack doing, we need to put Jack down for bedtime so we can continue packing, where else I would be like, um, 'No, he's not sleepy yet, he's going to cry' and I need to pay attention to him for as long as he needs, so Nate tends to put the needs of the group first and I would kind of pay attention to Jack no matter what else we need to do. (Melissa, Individual interview)

Layering ideas of patriarchy on individualistic and collectivistic values, a complex picture emerged; the converging of these can elucidate how this couple navigated parenthood. While individualism often denotes a prioritizing of personal goals over goals of the group, it can allow for both women and men to have equal power in achieving their

goals. Collectivism, which prioritizes group goals and can increase cooperation and interdependence, can also overlook the individual needs of the most vulnerable members. In both cases, when there is a tradition of males having more power, they may be more influential in deciding what priorities are most important.

> Yeah, so hm, so, when the child cries a lot um, when I'm only here and when she's not and she wants me to um, let her know that the child is crying a long time so she can come back home and take care of the baby but uh, I personally feel that she should um, spend more time at school but she tends to prioritize child care to her school work, and again I am really concerned about her school work. (Nate, individual interview)

Both partners in this couple are attuned to the philosophical differences between them and have intentionally shifted their ideals and practices around gender and power. Having a child allowed them to revisit some of these ideas and continue to navigate them with flexibility.

Couple 6: Mr. & Mrs. Volleyball (Grayson & Jennifer)

Couple Codename	Together	Partners Codename	Race Identified	Ethnicity Identified	Nation of origin	Years in the US	5 Words each partner chose to describe their relationship
Mr. & Mrs. Volleyball	8 years	Jennifer	White	American	US	Life	Strong, honest, evolving, fun, comforting
		Grayson	Portuguese, African, Native Brazilian	Hispanic/ Latino	Brazil	16	Unity, understanding, supportive, very loving, caring

The themes that arose from the three interviews conducted with Mr. and Mrs. Volleyball were *embracing and celebrating foreign-born partner's culture*, and *generous social support from family and community*.

Embracing and celebrating foreign-born partner's culture. Grayson, who grew up in Brazil, came to the US with his brother to go to college and is currently

completing his medical residency. Grayson and Jennifer met through a collegiate Christian association. They have a distinct memory of the first time they participated in a volleyball game and how badly they both played. From the beginning of their relationship, Jennifer showed an interest and appreciation for Grayson's culture. Grayson was initially surprised that Jennifer would attend a group that was primarily attended by international students and saw her openness to diversity as a characteristic that was different from stereotypical Americans.

> So the funny thing, at least to me, she is not your traditional American, at least to me, the assumption I had and the expectations that I had about Americans, she wasn't quite like that, you know, she was friendlier, and she used to show up to the International Bible study, I was like 'This is for internationals, what are you doing here?' (smiles). So, in that sense, she was very different, and that showed me that, you know, not every American citizen is exactly as you expect them to be, so that showed me a different side to the American culture. (Grayson, individual interview)

Jennifer was born and raised in a US southern state. Her biological parents divorced when she was in middle school and she continued to live with her mother. Her mother remarried an African American man, who she refers to as her father, and gained two step-sisters. She continues to have a strained and distant relationship with her biological father who, in addition to being an angry man, held racist and prejudiced beliefs. She aligns closely with her mother's embracing of diversity and intentionally keeps her son James away from her biological father.

Jennifer sees herself as someone from a multiracial family, which influences her identities despite being seen as a White American woman. Her understanding of racial discrimination arose not from her interracial marriage, but from her experiences in public

with her father, an African American. She believes, from her experiences, that being Black engenders more prejudice than being Latino, particularly when associated with White women.

> I think it's a lot more, like I've experienced discrimination going out with my step dad, he is black… and we've actually gotten mistreated when we go out if it's just the 2 of us. But with Grayson and I, we haven't noticed anything. I still think it's because people are a lot more negative when it's Black and White, when it's a black person and a white person. (Jennifer, Couple interview)

Her experiences of prejudice seemed to increase her intuition about possible threats, and while she did not express fear for herself or her partner, she does want to protect her child from these elements.

> …I think it's, maybe it's because we don't surround ourselves with those kinds of people or we don't, we're not in those kinds of circles, and I guess if people do feel negative they don't say anything, but for instance, my biological father, I know that he probably has a problem with it, which is one of the reasons, even at this age I choose not to engage with him, so I know just from my upbringing that kind of mindset is still out there and I don't want Jack to experience that, and so I think maybe because of my upbringing I'm a little more sensitive to it, so when I sense something like that we kind of, you know we just don't go around that, um, but um, I don't think I run into that too much. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

Jennifer and her family have embraced Grayson's culture and do much to show their support for transmitting his traditions and language to James.

> …She's also trying to teach him Portuguese, even though she's not fluent in it. But we've got like cds and videos in Portuguese sop she'll play that to him during the day. (Grayson, Individual interview)
> …Even my mom is very nurturing of the Brazilian culture, she even tried to learn Portuguese, and it was a mess, she knows. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

Grayson is also invested in teaching his son about his culture, because it is in some ways inextricable from his nationalist identity. He sees America as different from

many other nations in the world, and does not want to shelter his son from learning about other ways of living.

> Grayson: Yeah, I would agree, and for the person who is the international, to not give up your culture or forget about your culture especially with your kids, try and teach them about where they came from, they're side of the family, and language, if the language is different make them aware. From my perspective, coming from a 3rd world developing nation, I don't want him to take that for granted and just get used to the way of life in America, and think 'Oh everything comes easy' no, 'This is where your family came from, you need to be thankful for what you have', so just having a sense of awareness that, America is a great place to live but in certain ways it's a bubble, you're not exposed to all that's out there so it's making your children aware, where their family came from and the culture.

When there are conflicting ideas about mores and practices in Grayson's and Jennifer's cultures, they try to understand and adjust. For Jennifer, it was getting used to relational boundaries that were less defined, and for Grayson, it was getting used to being more systematic and deliberate in his interactions.

> Brazilians are very, I would say they're very warm, and they're very friendly, and they're very open, so sometimes, you know I feel like there's more defined boundaries between Americans as far as boundaries with time and boundaries with family, as far as things you discuss and things you don't discuss, in Brazil I feel like it's a lot more fluid, like those boundaries are not as rigid, so sometimes things aren't planned out all the way, not as much as they are here, it's not a big deal… I guess people are a lot more in each other's lives and each other's business than they are here. So that took a little bit of getting used to. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

> In Brazil, people are very spontaneous and without telling you, they will just show up at your doorstep, they'll be like 'Hey how are you, I'm coming in for a snack or a cup of coffee'. Where else here in the US it's more structured, you call people and you say 'Hey is it okay if I come by?' or even plan a week or two ahead. In my culture people are more spontaneous, they just show up, people are fine if you just show up last minute, so that has taken some getting used to and pre-planning… (Grayson, Individual interview)

Grayson and Jennifer have also navigated having parents and family visit from outside of the country.

> Concessions as to when they come, when his parents come, they will come for 3 or 4 months at a time, so just having company in our house for that long, that's kind of a concession, but I think it's important, it's not easy to go back and forth between Brazil and here, so when they come I feel like them being able to stay, even now more so with (baby), is important. If they come it's a good trip, so if they have to stay for a long time, I'm okay with it. (Jennifer, Couple interview)

Jennifer made sense of this cultural difference and made accommodations. This is another way that she embraced his culture; she wants her child to have deep connections with his grandparents so that he can develop a cultural identity that embraces their ethnic background.

Faith, SES, and family support act as resiliency factors allowing the couple to focus on their success. As much as Jennifer embraces Grayson's culture, his parents have embraced her. This positive synchronous pattern undoubtedly encourages Jennifer to not just make concessions for his family, but also invest in her relationship with them. For Jennifer and Grayson, familial support has served as a resilience and source of strength in addition to their religious faith.

> I come from a like my family is really large, my dad has 8 siblings, my mom has 8 siblings also, so I have 16 uncles and aunts altogether… but my parents only had 2, so my brother and I, so it was just the 2 of us, I feel like overall we were privileged, we were able to go to private school, learn English and that's my parents- they wanted us to have an education, so that was what they may a priority… I feel like they were very supportive of education… I feel like, like I grew up in a supportive environment and they always listened to my wishes and career goals and things like that. (Grayson, Individual interview)

This couple also draws support from their personal and professional circles. They are connected to the medical community through Grayson's residency. They are also steeped in their religious community; their faith is a foundation of their couple identity. Their faith is also at the center of the connection between their families. Grayson's parents were relieved to hear that he had met a girl that came from a close-knit Christian family, and Jennifer's parents began calling Grayson 'son' before they were dating but were involved in the same religious community. Faith can often be a fulcrum to unite people and families that may be worlds apart otherwise. Practicing Christianity has been shown to allow immigrant populations more opportunities to connect with groups in the US due to perceived similarities in values and ideology (Shandy & Fennelly, 2006). For both Jenifer and Grayson, their families had little to no reservations about their partners and this was connected to their religion.

> So, it's funny because, like my mom, her main thing was 'Make sure she's a Christian, make sure you both have the same religion' that's how she raised us, she's like 'I don't really care apart from that I just want you to be happy'. But they knew about her, because I always talk to my parents, and you know they were excited about it, that she was Christian and her family was involved and that I got to meet her parents… it would have been much harder if they were against it and if they were against it I would have been 'Why are you against it?', red flags would be going up. (Grayson, Couple interview)

The couple has also taken steps to ensure that their relationship continues to be supported by their families. They have established boundaries that don't allow their parents to be triangulated into any of their disagreements.

> Jennifer: My parents love Grayson, they've never had any frustrations and even if they did, that's a boundary that I would keep, I don't discuss our issues with our parents, so that's just a boundary that I have, but they've never

voiced any. My previous boyfriend they didn't like at all, they love Grayson.

Grayson: Yeah, same thing you know, we try to keep our business private so if I'm upset with something Jennifer did I don't just call my mom and vent and say 'Can you believe she did this' because nothing good is gonna come out of that. They've told me they're happy with her, they're happy with how she's taking care of (baby) and the wife she is to me.

For Jennifer and Grayson, each partner's intersecting identities - their class, their religion, and their parental support - granted them personal power to shape their roles as partners and parents.

Across-case Findings

Across all cases, what emerged was a multifaceted and even congruent narrative of how heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples construct their roles as partners and parents, given their identities based on gender, race, ethnicity, and nativity, as they interact with one another, other people in their lives, and the larger society. Using the lens of hermeneutic phenomenological and intersectionality theory, this section presents across-case analyses that resulted in two emerging processes for all the couples. The experiences of the couples spoke to two ongoing and interacting processes, one internal to the couple's system and the other external. The internal processes included how the couple was continuously blending and consolidating the integration of their past and present selves, the intersections of their and their partner's identities, and their navigation together as parents. The external processes are their discerning, drawing support from, and ways of protecting themselves from their families of origin, community and culture, and the larger society.

Thus the essence of this study's heterosexual, interracial/interethnic, transnational couples' experiences as partners and parents is expressed in two themes:1) **Dynamically building and evolving their individual and couple identities and roles in their unique intersections and between each other,** and 2) **Navigating and shaping resilience as a couple, as they interface with families, communities, culture, and the larger society**. The themes are necessarily complex and not mutually exclusive when examined through the lens of intersectionality. In the following section, findings from this study are presented along with a discussion of their location within the body of extant literature. The themes and sub-themes are listed in Table H.

INTERNAL PROCESSES: Dynamically building and evolving their identities and roles in their unique intersections and between each other
1. Integration of past and present selves **2. Intersections between partners** **3. Navigation as parents**
EXTERNAL PROCESSES: Navigating and shaping resilience as a couple, as they interface with families, communities, and the larger society
1. Intersections between couple and their families of origin **2. Intersections between couple and their community and culture** **3. Intersections between couple and society**

Figure 6. List of across-case themes.

Internal processes: Dynamically building and evolving their identities and roles in their unique intersections and between each other

When talking about their relationship and role as partners, individuals exhibited an awareness that their partners walked through the world differently than they did. The couples described a process of building their identities and roles together that included three facets: the integration of their past and present selves, the intersections between

each of their unique identities, and their navigation as parents. Within each of these facets of their internal process, the couples described similar themes.

First, I will explore how the couples reported on the influences of their own and their partner's early life experiences; the intersections of past and present selves. Second, I will present a picture of how the couples talked about what happens between them as partners; the navigation in the intersections between each partner. Finally, I discuss the ways in which the couples talked about having children, and how their role expansion to include 'parent' has impacted them, will be delineated; the intersections and navigation of being parents. Naturally, all these parts of the couples' narratives overlap and will be discussed as such.

Integration of past and present selves. The couples acknowledged that their own and their partner's early life experiences were formative in developing not just their character, but also informed how they conceptualized their roles as partner and parent; this awareness was grounded in the contexts of their culture, SES, gendered ideas, religion, and nativity. The two ways that partners talk about integrating their past and their present selves are in their recounting of difficult childhood experiences and the intergenerational transmission of values from their parents.

Difficult childhood experiences. The majority of partners recalled difficult experiences in their childhood, some directly related to their parents and upbringing, or parental conflict and divorce, some connected to their migration and resettlement, some due to poverty and lack of resources. These impacted their character and values and ultimately significantly framed their construction of roles as parent and partner. All but one of the partners who identified these difficult past experiences, reframed them as

moments of immense growth and resilience, where they learned to be better partners, parents, and human beings.

> I came from a family of nine, my mother passed away when I was 9 years old and my father and the rest of my family my brothers and sisters you know I came from a very well connected, well-loved family but I left Ethiopia back in the mid 80's during the civil war in Ethiopia. I migrated to Sudan as a refugee for about four and a half years and came to the US over 20 years ago… you know I came from a very poor situation and so did she obviously. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> I lived with my mother and um, I didn't know my biological father. uh, so, but I had a really good close relationship with my mother which I still do and um, we grew up very poor which is uh, a big part of my background, um, yeah. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

> My dad was a little abusive growing up, not a little abusive, he was quite abusive physically growing up, often hit us when we didn't do something right, which really affected my sister and I growing up, it made us very angry, and I think my dad's shortcoming, I always tell my mom, my dad's shortcoming was to teach us to be so independent because at age 14 I stood up to him…Um, and I think as an adult, I, uh I hear people who suffer from their childhood experiences, my friends and family always tell me like, 'I don't know how you got through your childhood so well?' but I think I attributed it to you know my parents really made me independent, and uh, I didn't want to be like, their relationship, I didn't want to, uh, and I really sought out undoing the habits that I had instilled in me. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> His dad is not an easy man to get along with and from what I've heard, more from his siblings than from him was that his dad would often outburst and get angry and not communicate properly and his mom would just kind of take it, you know my husband didn't like that, he didn't like how his father treated his mother so in learning to be a good husband, my husband says its more learning what not to do than learning what to do, he just didn't like the way his dad treated his mom…Um, their mom is so loving and laughs all the time, and just jokes around and I think my husband gets that light-hearted personality from that, because he basically turns every serious, unfortunate or heavy situation into laughter but not to avoid it, he kind of, he's trying to, it's kind of like 'It's not the end of the world

so let's laugh about it' and his mom does that, and I think maybe they had to that with the dad, I don't know. (Esposa, Individual interview)

…My parents who are both white, they got divorced when I was uh, in middles school, when I was 14, and then my mother remarried an African American, so completely different…my biological father, complete opposite, very you know, would make racist comments and very prejudiced in that way, so it was very different um, for me to grow up between the 2 of them…with my dad, it was, that relationship has always been very strained and very distant even when they were married, there was not a lot of interaction, and when it was it usually wasn't very positive, so I have some good memories of him but not a ton, and I actually haven't seen him since my parents divorced I saw him a little bit in high school and after that we hadn't seen each other since high school. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

So I think as a, I think I was probably kinda mature when I grew up and I kind of recognized that, and knew that I wouldn't want that for my life. That's what influenced my parenting, in that I knew if something was wrong I'd either fix it or we'd change our lives of something. I wouldn't want to have an unhappy marriage, if it affected me so much, you know, it was just a struggle you know, and even though you know, it wasn't as if I was depressed all the time, it was just really hard to live in a house where everybody was upset all the time…I know for me, it's like, I just kinda have this resolve that it's better to talk things out than to fight about it because, and I think a little bit like that for him too, just knowing how his parents were divorced when he was little and it was a battle at his house too, maybe that's part of it, we have that similarity. (Elise, Individual interview)

You know the divorce! You know the fighting, uh added that they're so young too. So, uh yeah, what can I say. That, uh, it wasn't the best, uh, but it could have been worse, you know. I had a lot of people who loved me on both sides, they just couldn't talk to each other, you know. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

Uh, childhood, so I grew up in a very small town in, on um, so I have 3 younger brothers and so there were 5 of us, 3 boys and our parents…Um, my parents were very strict, hm, so I often envied other children uh, who got like uh, more spending money, you know more toys and stuff when I was little, hm, my mother was pretty much like a single parent so that, and my father used to expect my mother to do all the raising child. (Nate, Individual interview)

> And then, my stepfather and I, we don't really talk at all either. We had some brief contact after the divorce and then most of the attention shift to his natural child, I didn't know he was my stepfather so my parents getting divorced was (gestures 'a big deal') my parents got married when I was so young, I had no recollection of having someone else, um, so I don't have a relationship with him either…I don't think I picked up anything from my father, stepfather, I don't really recall too much too. My stepfather could be a little insensitive, I didn't get a whole lot of interest or time from him, I try to give my son time you know just even sitting and talking. (Ravenson, Individual interview)

The research on the impact of early childhood experiences is incredibly broad and generally inconsistent because it is difficult to predict how and what people internalize and punctuate, how their individual variances interact with each circumstance in unique ways, and what other contextual variables influence the effects. Through a hermeneutic phenomenology lens, a participant's words are their interpretation of their world, and thus an experience in childhood equates to reality in their current situation.

The way in which they link their parent's relationship is with their own, and the way they link how they were parented is with how they parent. Specifically, Elise, Esposa, Nate, and Ravenson spoke about wanting something different in their own relationships than what they observed in their parents' relationships. They also wanted to parent differently than they had been parented. They wanted to resolve disagreements with their partner with less conflict, be more attuned to their children, and to share the parenting duties more equally with their partner.

Intergenerational transmission of values. Another facet of their childhood experiences that the couple noted as significant was how education, diverse knowledge and hard work was emphasized. All but one US-born partner described their childhood as having culturally diverse exposure and experience, and all but one foreign-born partner

described their upbringing as having a strong emphasis on education and that being the primary reason for migrating to the US. For the US-born partner, they remembered their parents taking them travelling around the world, having diverse communities, and having both an acceptance and welcoming stance towards other cultures and cultural groups.

> …But kind of, you know, but they, my parents were always very into education and into knowing your world and travelling, and I think that may not always be Midwestern, but that is also something that Mr. X is also into, and I don't know if that's because of his family or it's just him, but that's something that we meet on, we have a similar views on education and just being aware of diversity… Um, so, I guess I was interested in his culture because I come from a, from a background that, where there is diversity, cause we moved a lot, um, my mom was an anthropologist, so I actually had an interest in learning about other cultures. (Elise, Individual interview)

> So, I was born and raised in Oklahoma, so I've lived here all my life…but as far as upbringing my mom was always very open and welcoming of other cultures, other races and stuff like that. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

> Uh, with my dad, with my father, yea, with my father… definitely with him, it's more about open-mindedness, the openness to learning, to other experiences, yeah, those were the main things…Okay, with my mum, it's about uh, determination, the work ethic, uh, pushing yourself to be the best, do the best. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> Ok, I was born in Seattle and I grew up in Washington state and I was always interested in studying the Japanese language from high school on so I uh, was an exchange student in college for a year and then I worked, I majored in East Asian studies and after college I worked for a few years in the States and then I went back to teach on the jet program…So, let's see, I spent some time in Japan, I spent 7 years in Japan after college. (Melissa, Individual interview)

> I would say growing up I had a very disjointed childhood although my parents tried really hard to give me a rich childhood, they filled me with rich experiences, travelling around the world, going to places, going out to nice dinners, nice lunches, we lived in a beautiful home, but they also tried to teach me not to be greedy, I wasn't given everything I wanted. If I wanted the latest Guess jeans I

wasn't allowed to have it, so I had to work really hard for everything, I had to get a job when I turned 15, I had to learn how to drive, the day I got my license to drive, uh, you know they taught me to work really hard, they taught me that nothing comes easy, I have to work hard for anything I want in life um, they taught me to be independent. (Esposa, Individual interview)

Uh, well, I mean, I just remember how hard my parents worked, cause you know coming from Pakistan they didn't know the language very well, and they were definitely laborer uh, people and we used to live in government housing, like the projects and stuff, so I remember all that like just kinda growing up through those times, it's kinda fun like, just seeing where we came from. (Workhorse, Individual interview)

Early childhood wasn't too bad, we moved around a lot, Scotland, Guam, Pennsylvania, Colorado, been around a little bit. When after they divorced, we moved here to Hawaii and uh, we lived with my grandparents and my mom's sisters and her husband for a while, and then we moved out to San Francisco, out to my other grandparents. (Ravenson, Individual interview)

I feel like overall we were privileged, we were able to go to private school, learn English and that's my parents, like they wanted us to have an education, so there was what they may a priority, because they both grew up on a farm and their thing was: 'We're not going to leave you anything but we want to invest in your education so we can go further than what we did'. And so I feel like they were very supportive of education and they weren't really a fan of me coming here but they knew I wanted to for education and to further career goals and they were supportive of that. (Grayson, Individual interview)

…Culturally you know where we come from we, believe strongly and, you know family, work ethic, so at a very young age I already was taught how to survive. (Tigray, Individual interview)

Um, they were highly focused on educating children, so we didn't come up in a very rich area but yet they had a very good school. (Rian, Individual interview)

I went to this private high school which was about 20 miles away from my parents' house and so we moved, we all moved to an apartment closer to my school, I was 12, and they were very, my parents were very uh, passionate about

> education but uh, I was the one who wanted to go to the school and my parents would, my parents support my decision. (Nate, Individual interview)

While being inculcated with a strong work ethic was salient in the narratives of both foreign-born partners and US-born partners, having exposure to diversity and an emphasis on education seemed to be specific to US-born and foreign-born partners respectively. US-born partners, Elise, Jennifer, Esposa, and Ravenson, tended to talk about their childhood as having diverse experiences, travelling, and learning about other cultures, and their parents as more culturally aware and accepting. Mr. X, Grayson, and Nate who were foreign-born explicitly noted that their parents were very focused on their scholastic achievement, to the end of not only ensuring better opportunities in their own country but also paving their way to an education and further success in the US.

Foreign-born partners connected their early life experiences to cultural values, ideas about gender, and nativity. For example, Esposa reports that it is within her partner's culture that the oldest son takes on the responsibility to be a role model and be successful, while also experiencing the privileges of being a male in his family of origin household.

> …and the Pakistani culture really places a lot of um, I don't want to say pressure, because I think they invite it, but they do put a lot of expectation on the oldest, and the oldest needs to not only take care of the family but be a good role model you know, and so he really stands up to that role wholeheartedly…like his sisters talk about it like being a very male-dominated house where the males could kind of do anything they wanted and the girls were slaved away" (Esposa, Individual interview).

The gendered messages about having discipline and being successful that shaped Workhorse's identity is further complicated with the pressure he felt from being an

immigrant in the US who was entrusted with 'carrying the torch' and caring for his family of origin. While education may be an emphasis for Workhorse's family, it is difficult to understand fully how it applied to him without looking at the intersections of his identity - being male, being an immigrant, and being the eldest son. Nate, also the oldest son, described gender specifications in his family of origin, where his mother performed more of the caregiving than his father. He also noted his family's emphasis on education and their support of his educational aspirations, even relocating so that he could attend a private high school.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on immigrant education and exposure to diversity. Higher intermarriage rates in immigrant populations in the US are often found in families who were more connected with American society, had higher education levels, lived in diverse neighborhoods, or had lived for a long time in the US (Blau, 1994; González-Ferrer, 2006). This study also found that US-born partners who chose partners who were immigrants and ethnic/racial minorities, had increased exposure and earlier connections with diverse cultures.

Intersections between partners. The other significant internal process for couples was what happened between them as partners. From their collective narratives, couples spoke of many ways that they navigated their different unique identities, and were continuously building a strong relationship.

The four aspects of how couples navigated and constructed their identity as a couple was in how they focused on similarities and compatibilities, how they made efforts to communicate directly and compromise and prioritize in disagreements, their shifts in gender roles, and through their support and investment in each other's culture.

They talked of an immediate connection with each other, readily followed by commitment. They subscribed to direct communication about misunderstanding and used compromise and prioritizing when there were differences. More than half of the couples talked about shifting gender roles and gendered expectations as the reconstructed their intersecting identities throughout their relationship. Furthermore, the US-born partner invested in their partner's culture and expressed empathy for their partner's experiences with discrimination. Both partners in all couples were candid about how they found fun and humor in their cultural particularities and differences.

Focused on similarities and compatibilities. Although the couples acknowledged that cultural values differences provided fodder for disagreements and frustrations, they downplayed them as they focused on their similarities and compatibilities. The couples' similarities spanned identities and roles, such as their religious and cultural identities, and their values as parents and partners. Some couples chose to emphasize the foreign-born partner's reframed cultural identity as "Americanized" as a point of similarity. In this study, all but one of the couples subscribed to the same religion, mainly Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam.

> But he um, he and I have similarities in that we are both interested in learning about each other's cultures, and even though I don't know where the line is in his American culture, I feel like he, really understands my Americanism or where I come from at least, which is kind of funny because, I guess I was brought up with my parents Midwest values, I guess. (Elise, Individual interview)

> You know our ethnic background or nationality whatever aspects have kind of, not re written, but sort of adapted because of our faith too. So that brings us together as far as what we consider normal in our household. We can generally agree because of that aspect. (Ravenson, Individual interview)

I think his family is a lot more religious than mine is, but we're both Christian and so that is a commonality of our families. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

Well, I would say there are some foundational things for us that are the same, that kind of transcend culture, so um, like our faith is very important to us, so we lined up on the foundational things that were important to us, and I guess in the ways we are the same, as far as family being important um, trying to get together with family, just respect for our parents, things like that, a lot of those things were the same. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

Yeah <emphatically> uh, you know, on the surface, like Nebraska and Peru? But, the uh, when you get down to it, from what I've seen there, when we visited there you know, the nucleus of the family, the importance of the family, it is a very common thing, from the culture that I was brought up, you know Peru. Uh, add to that, her family comes from a farming background, they're like farmers and they're also educators, so like a lot of teachers, so I, there is a big emphasis on education, and like my family has also a big emphasis on education. Differences? Uh, for me it would be like a more superficial, well, uh like you know, language…I think we have similar values, we're both like (from a) Roman Catholic background. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

…We have religion in common which you know, for both of us we wouldn't have accepted any other spouse with a different religion, so to us, that was very important. um, not that either of us are really practicing, but we just felt like it was such a critical part of ourselves that we felt like we couldn't really make a relationship work with someone who had a difference in religious values...now that I see our relationship, and I see other relationships, I see how we really do work hard, we work hard for the kids and we work hard to keep the house clean and we work hard for one another, you know, and um, you know we have that work ethic in common, we also value education I think we have that in common, um. (Esposa, Individual interview)

To me it was fine I wasn't worried about her being a different culture, because we were the same religion, so that kind of surmounted the fact that that she was that she was from a different cultural country background. (Workhorse, Couple interview)

The couples' religious identity was commonly cited as a marker for similar values that transcended other differences. For Esposa and Workhorse, who met through a speed dating event at their mosque, Islam was the cornerstone of their relationship. While many experience Islam as both a religion and a culture, practices and traditions can differ greatly depending on the region of the world. Partners who come together from such different backgrounds can feel like they are coming from separate worlds even though they share the Muslim faith. This couple focused on navigating issues related to family and community, consistent with what's been found with multiethnic Muslim couples (Daneshpour, 2003).

Even though a few couples identified as Christian or Catholic, it was not something they outwardly practiced. Yet it was part of their identity, important enough to claim as compatible with their partner. Some of the literature on modern-day religiosity has found that the practice and identification of religion has shifted from being less 'ascribed' and 'core' to more 'achieved' and 'secondary', where the former speaks to a collective religious identity that is primary to a person's identity and the latter of an individual's choice (Haddad, Smith & Esposito, 2003). For the foreign-born partner, circumstances and demands in a new country can reshape beliefs and practices that may have been common and taken for granted in their country of origin. For some immigrants, religious identity is inextricably tied to their cultural and ethnic identity, and in a new country, may be a way for them to practice their culture. Couples also easily identified their shared values of family, education, hard work, and love of food, which hearkened back to much of what they remembered was emphasized in their childhood.

A few of the couples identified disagreements as having less to do with culture and more about things that were insignificant or unique to the couple's context.

> Mostly, we agree on the big important things and argue about, like everybody does, stupid things like where you keep the butter. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

> And we have a lot more similarities, in the ways we look at things. Uh, I think what I'm finding out right now is uh I'm starting to see that in myself right now, uh, lack of sleep with the baby, it's just that the patience is not as good, which is now that we're starting to have, like uh, you know conflict. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> I guess the number one common thing that we have we both have, we both have a passionate in equality and justice to every person, she knows how much that means to me. (Tigray, Individual interview)

All but one of the couples -who met online initially- also talked about feeling an immediate connection with each other and that their decision to marry or move-in together was an easy one to make. While this didn't speak directly to their identities, it did indicate that their different intersecting identities was not a barrier to their initial bond or moving forward in their relationship.

> So then, (I) came back for the summer and went back and I'm standing in the bookstore with one of my friends from Hawaii and uh, she walks by (emphatic), I'm like 'Who's that?' and he's like 'Oh that's Rian from Honolulu', and I'm like 'Really' and that was kind of 'it' for me. (Ravenson, Couple interview)

> We had an instant connection so I think that's kind of where we started and we kind of based it from there, we just, uh, we were really, really good friends before we ever dated, and so that was like the basis of our, uh, our good relationship, you know, like we already knew each other before we dated. (Elise, Couple interview)

> Workhorse: We met at a, at a uh, mosque, at a speed dating event. Uh, and when I came down the stairs and looked around and um, my wife she immediately caught my eye. Cause I looked around and who am I going to spend

> energy on, and well, I didn't know, I liked her physically, I thought she was really attractive and that why I wanted to get to know her.
>
> Esposa: Yeah, and for me uh, like when I saw him, like when he walked up to me and said 'I've been wanting to meet you all night and I would kick myself if I left here without saying hello' or something to the effect of that and he said that 'Assalamualaikum, I'm Workhorse, tell me about yourself'. You know, and it just you know, I loved his directness.
>
> (Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire, Couple interview)

> So we, like I said before, we were friends for a full year and by that time, pretty sure we knew, okay we agree on most things, we like each other, and so at that time we started dating and we waited for almost the full year and then we got engaged and, I believe by the time we were engaged we already knew, we wanted a short engagement so we were just engaged for 6 months, but just the fact that we felt like, we were made for each other, and like we agreed on those things, we agreed on the important things and uh, I just felt that she was a well-suited partner for the future, to raise a family with, and just the person who completed me. (Grayson, Couple interview)

> I just saw the true heart of her, what her heart was like…if you have a genuine human heart you don't brag about it, but you share…when I was like standing for my principles and also for my rights, that she stepped in and when I saw that I think that sealed for me the fact that the difference, you can tell who your true friends are, I think that for me, that's what I saw, that I had a true friend and the person that cared for me as a human being. (Tigray, Couple interview)

The partners cite various characteristics that drew them to their partners - their appearance, their friendship, their first impressions, etc. For Tigray, Ladybug's commitment to social justice was what drew him to her initially, and that was closely connected to his identity.

Communicated directly, compromised and prioritized. Another couple dynamic that the partners described was how they communicated directly about misunderstandings, compromised, and prioritized when there were differences. Given that the majority of the couples reported an awareness that they each experienced the

world differently, it was no surprise to hear them talk about communicating directly about their different perspectives and potential misunderstandings.

> Rian: I think communication is important always when any disagreement happens, and it may not be a personal attack, you're wrong I'm right, if they know that they go by their different culture then it would help them understand each other.
> Ravenson: And don't be afraid to tackle some of that tough stuff especially early on, I think if, if it goes unchecked, it becomes more of an issue long term, you know. Yeah, nip it in the bud right away, it helps, it helps, being on the same page.
> (Mr. & Mrs. Egg, Couple interview)

> Um, just to communicate openly about everything, talk about your assumptions for the relationship and realize that the cultures may be different, don't assume that, that your partner will um, be okay with the way that you think about childcare unless you discuss it, because there are a lot of differences. (Melissa, Couple interview)

> Yeah, I, I, the same, you know open communication, and discussions, um, without um, without any, without making assumptions, so yeah, open, be open-minded and talk honestly and calmly if possible. (Nate, Individual interview)

> And also just keep in mind like the pettiness of the little stuff that comes along because you have a pride of certain things, it only aggravates. If you really genuinely care about the person and care about the children, it's okay to have a sidetalk without your kids around and be honest and open but don't bring it up when you're worked up, just process through what bothers you… she's real good about keeping me on track about that and making sure that we communicate and if there are things that bother me, she wants to hear them which is good… with that being said I think it's important to, what I've learned so much from Ladybug is like listening to that person feelings and thoughts and then processing that and then responding to it once you have processed and respond to that and then bringing up yours and sharing to that person and letting them process it and then respond to, to you. (Tigray, Couple interview)

> We tend to compromise on everything <laughs>. So, we always find a middle ground and we have a lot more similarities, in the ways we look at things. (Mr. X. Individual interview)

> I love him to the core, he's just so giving and he's so patient and he's uh, you know he always says that I'm the heart of our relationship and I make us communicate well and all of that but I think he does. So, we just work so well together. And uh, you know I think we're both so thankful to have each other and be in a good relationship where we communicate well that we are so willing to put aside any sort of ego because we're so, we're just so grateful for what we have together… I think my husband and I easily sweep these arguments under the rug because we just don't feel like they're important enough to go to bed upset over, you know. I think we both agree that at the end of the day just having a loving family and household is most important. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> I think um, it's okay to bring your traditions with you and the way that you were raised and the way you did things but also to not be afraid of having a true partnership with someone where you work out the details of how you going to raise your children in a way that's just unique an individual to your relationship and not worry about if it contradicts of how your mom would have done it or contradicts how people do it now, so if it works for you and it works for your partner works for your family then that's how you know that it's the right things to do. (Elise, Couple interview)

Many of the partners talked about communication being imperative, whether it be about cultural differences, assumptions about the relationship, or feelings, in addition to how they communicate, which is calmly, directly, fairly, with perspective, and knowing when to take a break or let something go. Consistent with earlier themes of the couples emphasizing similarities over differences, the couples also talked about finding common ground, compromising, and even transcending smaller issues because they prioritized their relationship.

In addition, in the midst of all the complexities and diversity of thoughts, the couples noted it useful to find a unique way that works for the family instead of trying to

adopt or preserve ways that they learned from their parents, families, or in their culture. The ‘found their own way’ and felt united as a team. Some research showed that strong interracial relationships with high levels of satisfaction relates to the manner in which they navigate (Garrett, 2004; Troy, Lewis-Smith & Laurenceau, 2006). In addition, couples in conflict are less likely to remain in conflict if their conversations shift from being partner focused to more relationship focused (Bernal & Baker, 1979). This was apparent in how the partners in the current study talked about finding their own unique way of being a couple

Shifts in gender roles. Couples also talked about how gender had shifted throughout the relationship. For many of the participants’ families of origin, gender was often operationalized via division of labor and decision-making power. Gender, as an important construct that emerged in this research, must be understood within conceptions of patriarchy.

Studies globally across time have consistently revealed patriarchy as a societal mechanism that perpetuates gender inequality and oppression (Bartky, 1990). While patriarchy can be a simplistic, tautological term that homogenizes gender inequality, an intersectionality framework allows for a more critical conversation about the interacting effects of multiple identities in addition to gender (Patil, 2013). The phenomenology of heterosexual, transnational, interracial/interethnic partners in this study becomes clearer when the discourse of gender is layered with race/ethnicity, and nativity. All but one foreign-born partner in this study was male, and all of the foreign-born partners spoke of the gendered expectations of partners and parents in their cultures of origin.

Males who migrate and resettle in America may need to renegotiate the hegemonic masculine identities learned in their country of origin. However, there is little research that provides information of whether these identifications change, are maintained, or are perpetuated (Donaldson & Howson, 2009). Scholars have noted that having a child often encourages heterosexual couples to adopt more stereotypical gender roles as work and family tasks tend to become more differentiated (Katz-Wise, Priess & Hyde, 2010).

> Oh, well definitely the gender role thing is part of it and in separation of household duties, because I definitely, especially when our daughter was younger, did most of the um, the taking care of the child in the house, I think that maybe that works better when women don't also have to go to work full time but, but that was a major area of disagreement in the past, it's gotten a lot better as our daughter gets older. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

> I think we've got like comfortable in a way that makes sense, like whenever I have like weaknesses or what not I think it's been very nicely corrected like making sure I'm helping out with the kids, cooking, preparing the kids like early in the morning she go to school only putting their breakfasts and all, I think you know it makes me appreciate the culture, and that's one of the things that is nice about this culture in this country is you know sharing responsibilities in helping out makes things smooth and happy happier in the relationship we're at times I've seen my, my parents for example of my dad did all the outside work and my mom did all the inside work even though I was really young when she passed away and I think the trend is also fading and Ethiopia. (Tigray, Couple interview)

For example, Mr. and Mrs. Adwa noted shifts in their gender roles around parenting; while Ladybug connected it to having children, Tigray did not connect this shift back and forth to having children. He conceptualized their relationship as culturally different from his upbringing in his country of origin, and connected the equal division of labor in the household as a facet of American culture. For another foreign-born partner, Nate's

preferences were different from his own parents, and having children allowed them to be clarified.

> …My father used to expect my mother to do all the raising child, so uh, and I don't think that is uh, that was a good idea, I think that we uh, should stay together, we should live together and we should both participate in the child care together, whereas my father had a different idea about it. That's another thing about differences again, they are still much, a lot of sexism in Japan and many male Japanese men still think that raising a child is a woman's job and I disagree with that. (Nate, Individual interview)

Part of Nate's shift in gendered expectations may have been impacted by Melissa's shift from conforming to gendered expectations. Melissa was also very much aware of traditional Japanese expectations of women and conformed to these expectations in the initial phase of their relationship, but then shifted back to her ideals after their relationship matured and when they had a child. Japanese societal expectations of gender have also experienced several shifts over the course of history and as it can be said of any nation, some of the more contemporary ideas may not be as quickly integrated into communities that are more rural. Japan was originally a matriarchal society with women having dominance, yet shifted to patriarchal rule through the strong influence of China in its early history and the establishing of warrior ethics that institutionalized a gendered division and ideals of androcentrism (Bem, 1993; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2000). With that came distinct expectations of how women should be subordinate to and have dependence on their husband (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2000).

> Melissa: I tried to conform to the kind of gender stereotype where the woman cooked and um, you know, and I just kind of acted kind of submissive, you know, I kind of acted Japanese.
> Nate: Um, I hm, I think what she says is correct, she hm, she became um, more like American, like here.

(Mr. & Mrs. Hamada, Couple interview)

For Rian, a foreign-born Asian woman, her partner demonstrated a different way of 'doing' gender that was surprising.

> Um, observing him, how he uh, react with me and react with our son. In Korea we have dominant culture that man is not emotional like the woman. But I was impressed with how he ask(ed) for my opinions, he always asks me, he will say how do I feel. Which is very different. (Rian, Individual interview)

Elise and Mr. X also conceptualized gender in their relationship as equal and different from Mr. X's culture of origin.

> Elise: Yeah, um, you don't, I guess he doesn't fit the stereotype as a person, so, like the Latino stereotype is like 'Passionate' or maybe runs around on his wife, um, I think that's kind of like how your mom talks about men in Peru, um, and I think you don't fit that, well knowing you, you're just not that kind, not passion-driven, um.
> Mr. X: Well, yeah you know, it's not...I'm not the stereotypical Hispanic husband where the wife does all the cooking and cleaning, I take care of the kids.
> (Mr. & Mrs. X, Couple interview)

Finally, Esposa expressed her preferred gender expectations as more traditional, something she saw as healthy for her family.

> Yeah, I was going to say that. I think it's more like marriage advice than interracial advice, like we were talking about gender roles, like one thing, as a woman that I do tell my female friends is like, you know 'Let him be the man, let him have that feeling like he's taking care of the family, you know, don't step all over him' and I, I have a tendency to really be an 'A' dominant person and do that and I have to constantly tell myself 'Ok, step down, you know, ok, let him be the guy', why not, it's healthy for the family, and so like uh, I think not being on an ego trip is being healthy for a marriage, you know, saying sorry, realizing that you know, seeing the other points, the other persons point of view is much more important than being right, you know, um, and you know. (Esposa, Couple interview)

Gender was central to these couples as they explored together how they wanted to construct their relationship, make decisions, resolve conflict, and divide their responsibilities. There are many contextual elements that can come into play in re-evaluating and constructing masculinity for a foreign-born male, and in this study, identities such as race and ethnicities, and roles such as partner and parent, in conjunction with their US-born partner, all converged to impact the way they 'did' gender in their families. Many male and female partners believed that cultural expectations from the foreign-born partner's country of origin were more in line with male leadership in families, and that American models of relationships were more egalitarian or equal. Some scholars have hypothesized that migration may provide men with the opportunity and occasion to change themselves and alter their relationships, specifically with their partners and in their families (Kufman et al. 2000; Willis and Yeo 2000).

Support and investment in partner's culture. While the couples recognized that there were parts of each other's culture that was more desirable or less desirable for them, like the performing of gender roles, it was notable that the US-born partners expressed interest and invested in their partner's culture in many significant ways. The foreign-born partners expressed a deep appreciation of their partner's willingness to learn about and also adapt to some of the cultural pieces from their country of origin. For some, it was an embracing of their cultural group, and for some it was their language.

> So, we met in college um, and I knew he was from Brazil, didn't really know anything about Brazil at that point other than it was a country in South America, but definitely became interested in him and so definitely wanted to learnt more about it in that way, um, it was just kind of introduced, there was actually some other students on campus that were Brazilian, so there was kind of a little Brazilian community there that I would hang out with and so that's how I got to

> learn a lot about, even though they were away from, they kind of had their home away from home with each other. (Jennifer, Individual interview)
>
> Uh, we'll start with the first part, of how I got familiar with his culture. Um, so, I guess I was interested in his culture because I come from a, from a background that, where there is diversity, …so, for me and him and the group of friends that we had when I met him, we all had very diverse backgrounds, um, and so we were kind of like this little microcosm of multicultural group of people. <chuckles> And so, I guess I was interested in knowing about his culture. (Elise, Individual interview)
>
> You need to be supportive of your partner's culture, try to learns the language if you can, it's really hard, I know that Grayson really appreciates when I try, so I say try to embrace those things, find a community away from home if you can, but it's important, especially when you're raising children… (Jennifer, Couple interview)
>
> Yeah, I'm more now. She's been helping me learn how to read Korean, um, I try and watch Korean shows with her, try to get some of the flavoring, and since I've been to Korea now, it's given me uh, and opened my eyes to more, but there's more to learn. (Ravenson, Couple interview)
>
> (to partner) I know you pretty well but I wish I knew you better, I wish I knew more about your Peru side, and how that makes you who you are... (Elise, Couple interview)

Tigray described his partners support: "What's nice you know is Ladybug does a really good job of you know like researching about Ethiopia and the culture, and everything else and so it makes it like a lot more easier". He specifically may have had unique experiences as a refugee where having the support and opportunity to access his cultural-religious community may have built his sense of resilience. Research with post-migration resettlement experiences of Sudanese refugees have suggested that religious beliefs and social support are crucial in assisting many Sudanese refugees in coping (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007).

Classic assimilation theories hypothesize that maintaining one's ethnic culture, behaviors, social networks, and institutional affiliations after migrating to the US might come as a cost of opportunities, impacting social status and social mobility (Park, 1950; Weber, 1946). The likely response to pressure to assimilate and the costs connected to not assimilating can be mitigated by a culture of pluralism, from which the community promotes cultural maintenance (Reitz & Sklar, 1997). A significant theme that many US-born partners talked about was their investment in their foreign-born partner's culture, which included joining them in cultural customs and practices, giving them every opportunity to spend time with family and community, to show interest in learning about their culture, to participate in transmitting their language and heritage to the children, and even travelling to their foreign-partner's country of origin.

It was apparent that the couples had an interest in each other's culture as well, in the way that they found beauty, fun and humor in their cultural particularities and differences. The couples were intentional about integrating their customs and traditions in their significant life events, such as marriages and their children's baptism, at times even attempting to be fair in how much of each other's culture they incorporated.

> So, they (parents) came up, we graduated from undergrad in 2007, so I had already told them that I was going to propose while they were here, so in Brazil, like the engagement is more of a formal event instead of you just like taking another person aside, you know, so some people they do a service, they do a party, like we blended both cultures in that way, I went with Jennifer, and everybody already knew that I was going to propose, so we went out just the 2 of us and I proposed, and at the same time we had a party set aside with her family there, and my family there, and our friends, and so I surprised her you know with our tradition. And we had cake and everybody was there and they were all congratulating us, and so that was a way for me to bring my culture into play, and

> they knew, so they were all excited and her parents were excited about it too. (Grayson, Couple interview)

> We had our daughter baptized in the Ethiopian church in Portland, um and that was a really interesting cultural experience because none of it is in English and it was fun to have both of our older children um, …they have a lot of um, ceremonies attached to big events. (Ladybug, individual interview)

> We didn't want to have any, any claim on the wedding culturally and even for our song we chose an American wedding song, the music we chose we had a mix of Pakistani, Indian, Egyptian and American music, that just kind of, and even the dress I wore, I wore a, I had a Pakistani dress made, it was like a lenkha but I had it made into a full dress, for the ceremony end and for the reception I wore the wedding style dress but purple so with color without having like, but without making it a Pakistani wedding or an Egyptian or American, and just us it was more just us.
> (Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire, Couple interview)

The way in which these partner's investment in each other's culture was evident was in how the majority of the couples found fun, beauty, and humor in their differences in customs, sayings, and practices.

> Esposa: <chuckles>
> Workhorse: Yeah, like for instance when family, you know I got I gotta kiss the men with their stubbly beards and mustaches each side 3 times.
> Esposa: <chuckles> One on each side and again, that's it! <smiling> You're done. You don't do that in your culture, what do you do? Just look at each other?
> Workhorse: We just shake hands.
> Esposa: What?! I never noticed that.
> Workhorse: Yeah, we don't do the kisses.
> Esposa: Oh my god I never noticed that! <chuckles>
> (Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire, Couple interview)

> Yeah, and, and, that doesn't make any sense <chuckles> what, what? That doesn't make any sense. And I was like, uh, I don't get it and he was like 'Oh, that's just something they say in Peru, it doesn't really mean what it, it's not literal, uh... <laughs> Uh, I don't know what that means! (Elise, Couple interview)

Kind of funny too…um, when preparing meals, typically Korean dish, there's the main rice and a lot of side dishes, the way Korean eat is one scoop of rice and the side dish, one scoop of rice and side dishes, when I married him, he started to eat all the sides and never eating rice. I explained to him 'Cannot!' <chuckles>. (Rian, Individual interview)

(both smile at each other)

Ladybug: yeah I think so, sometimes I think we and you're not necessarily going to agree with this but I think we both of us, both taken advantage of that a little, of where there are slight misunderstandings of just like 'oh that's just how I do it because that's just how we do it in America', like I know that's not necessarily true, I know for sure, I can't speak for him, I know for sure I do things, different things that I do that way that I don't, that I think are not like the American culture, but it was the culture that (I) was raised, you know, and so, and, but we have fun with it, I mean, I think like, we really enjoy teaching each other expressions and sayings like, and they don't make any sense like to him, and his don't make any sense to me and we just get a real kick out of that stuff, the ways in which we have cultural differences that are silly.

Tigray: Yeah I mean, I think that, we have trained (Ladybugs son from a previous relationship) before, when you wake up in the morning, I have to tell him, you know because he'll get up and come in and you won't even see him and the next thing you look and he's right there, and so I started having him practice when he comes into a room, he has to say good morning or say hi, and so finally one time I remember I said 'hey don't forget to do that because back home even when a cow sees another cow it moos' and he's like 'what does that mean?' (everyone laughs) it's just another saying that means you have to greet, and so, when he looks at me and then I says 'oh you caught me', 'I'm glad I caught you before you got to say good morning, so good morning Tigray!', 'oh you got me before I could say, 'the cows going to moo'.

<all laugh>

(Mr. & Mrs. Adwa, Couple interview)

…But then, explore culture and most of the time it's something that's a plus, it's not going to be a hassle, it's something that makes your relationship unique and fun. Like whenever I use an expression and he doesn't know at all what I meant, he, we think that's funny... (Jennifer, Couple interview)

They spoke of a richness that came from the diversity in their marriage; finding excitement in teaching each other about their different ways, leaning on some of these ways as excuses or to minimize a disagreement, or just using some of the idioms and sayings as banter. Some of the more recent research indicates that racial and cultural differences may not in actuality have negative effects on couple satisfaction, and other variables, specifically religion, class, and education are more indicative of relationship distress (Killian, 2013; Mathews, Rasheed & Rasheed, 2004).

In many ways, they ways that couples understood their identity intersections and navigated their relationships can be summed by one of the participant's statements; that one has to accept that there will be differences and even disagreements based on culture, and that it is best to have mutual respect, and view the process as a dynamic and flexible one in constructing how the relationship should be.

> Yes, right because I think at the end most people, I hope when they join a relationship with someone who is from a different race you know, they should already know that, what they're getting themselves into, they're with that person because they love that person and when they joined together, so if I do that then, all the other stuff should no longer be a big deal because when you meet somebody you're thinking about relationship and family and all those things, you should already know that there is going to be cultural clashes, there is going to be many things that are, aren't going to be the same based on race, culture, gender, and children and all those things… I mean there are little things that people don't think about like the bedtime like we just discussed, so things like cultural clashes that will come into the household, among other things but in the end you really have to be able to discuss it and you know, agree on certain areas and respect each other and then if there's good respect for each other, I think it is easier to give up certain things how you wanted it to be because 'It doesn't have to be that way'. (Tigray, Couple interview)

Navigation as parents. The other significant internal process that the participants accentuated was how they both navigated their parental role together. All of the couples in this study described their parenting journey as transformative in some way, either by providing them with perplexing circumstances in which they had to evaluate their own understandings and thus roles and identities, or by offering clarifying moments that provided them with new perspectives on their roles and identities.

The couples described three aspects that came together as they navigated their roles as parents along with their unique identities: that their parenting was influenced by identities and efforts to preserve and transmit values, that their parenting style complemented or contrasted with their partner's style, and also shifted through time in line with their desire to be better parents. While race emerged as an influencing factor to parenting, it was not internally attributable but externally, mainly because the parents only had to consider their race when they interfaced with others outside of their family, and thus race will be more extensively discussed in the second theme, page 170.

Parenting was influenced by identities and efforts to preserve and transmit values. Participants' parenting practices related to the values that were instilled in them when they were young. For foreign-born parents, they talked about their struggle to find the balance between their culture of origin that had shaped their own identity, and their partner's culture, and that of the country in which they were now living and raising their children. Cultural learnings and cultural identities provide the framework from which parents' socialization goals are shaped and how ideas about what constitutes good child rearing are constructed (Keller, et. al., 2006; Keller, Voelker & Yovsi, 2005). Foreign-born parents can often feel a sense of allegiance to the ways in which they were parented

because it directly contributed to their sense of achievement in migrating, resettling and finding success in America. However, at the same time, foreign-born partners may have a realization that their parenting styles might be incongruent with common parenting philosophies in the US.

> My upbringing was very, very strong. I struggle in some ways to hold on to it but in other ways it's not always the best because I feel like I have to have grace and balance for the kids…I believe still in keeping my heritage, in my languages and just many other customs that are very important to me, that they were so powerful to me growing up as a young man that I wanted to make sure that my children also have a balance of knowing it and appreciating it and respecting it… I know that everything that I believe in and everything I follow isn't going to be entirely passed on to them because they have to find their balance in the society but I think if you're wise enough and you know how to approach it with your children, it's very easy to bring them in, to make them aware and to have them at least be educated about it. (Tigray, individual interview)

> Yeah, we have a very big difference. When we have a disagreement and I explain to him why I have to do this, how when I was young, when I grew up, and it was a really big learning moment for me too. 'You don't do that, you help your child, give him another chance, give him time out but don't use the ruler'…<chuckles> That's funny because I always talk to my sister, 'When I grow up and have a child, I will not beat my child the way my mum and dad but, but I try to be more available for him, like in Korea you don't really talk to your child all the time, you keep your distance, try to become authority over him, but I do not like it, I was always longing for my mom to hold me. The big difference between my family and my current family- I like to hug my child, kiss my child, yeah that's the big difference. A very similar thing is I find myself focusing on education as well. (Rian, Individual interview)

> Yeah, I would agree like for the person who is the international, to not like give up your culture or forget about your culture especially with your kids, you know try and teach them about you know, where they came from, they're side of the family, and language…but from my perspective, coming from a 3rd world developing nation, like I don't want him to take that for granted and just get used to the way of life in America, and think you know 'Oh everything comes easy' no this is where your family came from, you need to be thankful for what you have,

> so just having a sense of awareness that you know, America is a great place to live but in certain ways it's a bubble you know, you're not exposed to all what's out there so it's making your children aware, you know, where the family came from and the culture. (Grayson, Couple interview)

> …For instance you know I came from a very poor situation and, and so did she obviously but, but um, I want the kids like you know…that there are so many other kids out there, so many other families out there that are you know that don't have what our kids have, our kids I feel like you know, they have it the easy way because you know we have a nice house and, they're going to school they are all clothed very well, we take care of them, we provide everything they need…I have my own blood family today, you know, they struggle, and when I was talking on the phone earlier you know, they were telling me that they just telling me, some of them just got heavily affected by uh, recent hail you know, it's the end of the crop season and so the hail came and destroyed their crops, which means like for the next like, you know, year, they don't have anything, so what do they have to do, you know. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> Every Sunday we have to get up early in the morning you have to go to church, that's how it was back home for me, that's how it was in Fresno, and here. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> I guess the thing that I find a little bit I don't know if I want to say difficult I don't know what I find it actually, it's a, his family seems a little but more lax about Islam, a little more relaxed, if people choose not to pray or choose not to fast, where else in my family it's like what your expected to do, you fast, you pray, you better not be not fasting or praying. And uh, I kinda want to raise the kids kinda with that expectation, if its Ramadhan you fast you know, and um, yeah, so... (Esposa, Couple interview)

For some of the couples, it was important that they instill in their children a sense of humility and cognizance of their privileges, as they hearken to the hardship and poverty in their country of origin. Naturally, many partners subscribed to religious beliefs and looked to their faith to guide their parenting, often referring to it as their 'foundation'. At times they recognized that the values that they emphasized were not

parallel with their partners. Significantly, all couples expressed a desire to preserve and transmit the foreign-born partner's language and culture to their children. For some, this was phrased as a useful skill to have and for some it connected them to the culture as well as the people within their or their partner's community.

> Yeah, no, what I was, what I would say to that is when it comes to, expose him to both cultures, expose him to the languages, don't worry about you know, if you're teaching them a language other than English, don't worry about the kid falling behind, you know that's a, that's a myth. Teach him, teach him at home, the other language, it's hard, it's hard when you have like both parents don't speak the same native language, but, but even so expose them to… and read to them. (Mr. X, Couple interview)

> As far as raising him with both sides, cause ideally I would like him to go, when he's older, spend summers in Brazil and be able to communicate with his family over there, because I know it's hard for me when his family comes, because I can have basic conversation but I can't have really deep meaningful conversations unless he's translating for me. So, I want Jack to be able to go and experience his family over that and not have language as a barrier, so. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

Their parenting style complemented or contrasted with their partner's style.

Although some research has indicated that interracial/interethnic parents have a higher possibility of incompatible parenting behavior (Bratter & King, 2008), other research has found that there are more parenting style similarities across cultures than there are differences (Usita & Poulson, 2003; Julian, McKenry & McKelvey, 1994). The couples in this study talked about how their parenting styles were complementary and/or contrasting with their partner's style. For a few of the couples, the US-born partners identified that their way of parenting focused on children's needs over other needs and that this differed from their partner's style. Some talked about this difference as a

variance in their worldview -being more individualistic or more collectivistic, which influenced how they ranked the importance of their collective family goals, their educational goals, and their parenting. Some literature has proposed that people construe themselves in two different ways. The first is with concepts such as "individualist, independent, autonomous, and separate" and the second with their antonyms, "collectivistic, interdependent, communal, and relational" (Kashima, et. al., 1995, p. 925). The former are often attributed to men and those in Western cultures (Triandis, 1994). How these may affect parenting is in what socialization strategies parents may focus on. In models of independence, strategies focus on personal qualities to support self-enhancement and self-reliance (Shweder, 1995), where else for interdependence models, the focus may prioritize acceptance of norms and hierarchies, and the harmonic functioning of a system or unit (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni & Maynard, 2003; Keller, et.al., 2006).

> …We have different ideas, definitely different ideas about empathy, so what to do when our daughter falls down, cause I, I, do feel like yes you want to wait those maybe 10 seconds where you really don't have a strong reaction because you don't want to make the situation worse, but then I think they must be scooped and kissed and he feels like that, no you should tell them what to do differently so that it doesn't happen again and they get hurt, so we disagree on that little piece. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

> Sometimes Nate will expect Jack to behave a bit longer so we can get something done but I would prefer to put him first…I need to pay attention to him for as long as he needs, so Nate tends to put the needs of the group first and I would kind of pay attention to Jack no matter what else we need to do. (Melissa, Individual interview)

In addition, the parents explored how their partner's style was complementary, and that they picked up where they left off, and either tended to do things differently or were able

to do things they were not able to. At times in the individual interviews, a partner would speak of a personality trait that their partner had that they valued and how they had a contrasting personality trait, and then in the interview with their partner, they would note the same personality traits as what they appreciated in their partner, such as one partner being more intentional and planful and the other partner being more spontaneous and fun.

> Uh, you know she's great. We work good together, uh, we take turns, we try to be aware most of the time, uh "Does she need a break, "Do I need a break?", uh, "Is it my time to step in?". Yea, yea. She's very, you know sensitive to, like people's needs and things like that. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> Well, uh, she's definitely way more organized as a parent like she kinda always knows what that purpose of the conversation she's going to have and I feel like I'm winging it a lot more, like when there's something going on in the household, she's able to kinda step back and look and see okay, as a teacher kinda how to re, uh, how to change that, you know that situation, where else I almost handle the situation and she's more educating and teaching them about the situation. (Workhorse, Individual interview)

> Fantastic <emphatic>, he's just a stellar dad, he's just amazing, never complains, he never gets tired, he's always just got a smile on his face, I envy him, he comes home tired from work and he's rolling around on the floor laughing with them and playing and I look at him in awe, like 'Where did you get this energy from? Where do you find this laughter?', He channels this laughter that I just can't channel, I think that you know, there's a part of me, maybe from my childhood that just has a harder time arriving at the boisterous laughter that he arrives at, for him it comes so easily, and um, and I love it, and I feel so happy that my children get that from him because, I feel that I'm more the serious quiet one, where else he's more the tickle and wrestle on the rug, and it's just great. (Esposa, Individual interview)

Coincidentally, another contextual factor in this sample was one partner each in four of the couples had a background in child development, either as a teacher or counselor. Partners talked about this knowledge base as informing their parenting ideas.

> I kinda learned about parenting from Mr. X, because he was going through grad school learning about early childhood development…I think both of us respect each other probably a lot, like I know, I feel like he understands very much like how to do this from his clinical standpoint um, and I'm just doing it from the heart, and I think, they kind of complement each other a little bit. And I feel like I should probably be a little more strict but I, I'm just like, "Eh! <chuckles> We're gonna live... (Elise, Individual interview)

> Oh, um, well I come from a behaviorist background, I did a lot of parent training so I think that it would be hard for anyone to parent beside me in some respects because I have really strong opinions about um, how things should be done and so does Tigray, so for the most part we kind of agree on parenting. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

The couples in this study noted that they did have disagreements due to their contrasting parenting practices that were connected to their own upbringing, however they were consistent in stating that their ultimate goals for their children were the same. Often, parenting styles have been divided into three in the literature: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. While authoritarian parenting, which emphasizes the hierarchy and may include harsher forms of discipline, has been connected to ethnic minority families, findings are inconsistent (Hill, Bush & Roosa, 2003) and often disregard the influence of socioeconomic background, single, dual or co-parenting, community characteristics, gender, and nativity. Couples in this study seemed to draw from and blend their multiple identities in constructing their parental role and their style. The couples talked about how they were at times stricter and at other times more lenient than their partner, specifically because they recognized that some things were more important to them than their partner. While each partner had a tendency for focusing on

and thus disciplining their children for different things, none of them attributed their gender as parents to their discipline styles.

> I don't feel like we've had to make any major decisions with him yet but you know, maybe bath time you know, just trying to keep him on a schedule, I guess one time I had to you know, go to bed early, and I was wanting to give him a bath early and she's been trying to keep him on a schedule so it keeps him regular, so he knows what's coming, what to expect and so that was a difference in parenting. (Grayson, Individual interview)

> Um, but um, that's him and me and then when we disagree about a parenting decision, uh, usually, most of our parenting disagreements really come down to the disagreements in how to control their behavior…Uh, yeah, I'll get mad at him if he yells at the kids and I think he's frustrated that I don't do more, so that's, that's our thing. (Elise, Individual interview)
> …So what to do when our daughter falls down, cause I, I, do feel like yes you want to wait those maybe 10 seconds where you really don't have a strong reaction because you don't want to make the situation worse, but then I think they must be scooped and kissed and he feels like that, no you should tell them what to do differently so that it doesn't happen again and they get hurt, so we disagree on that little piece. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

> I'm sure there has been. And, yea, I think it just stems from me becoming impatient and wanting the kid to "do this now <emphatic>". And her just being more laid-back about it. And I think that sometimes, it's sometimes, uh, we've had conflict over. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> I don't spend too much time correcting it with the children and for a lot of stuff, it's just a matter of 'hey don't do it, stop it', such as being more simplistic in a lot of ways, but just kind of like, reinforce things in a way that(s) productive versus like, the time out things I was telling you about, to me it's like, you tell them to go to their room and they sit in there, you have no idea what they're doing in the room, I'm not saying necessarily for us but in general, so I'm kind of like, I don't know, it's just in 20 plus years in this country, it doesn't quite click in my mind, and its fine, I go with it, I mean when she uses it… it's just fine. I don't intervene on that, but I don't agree with that, I don't believe that time-outs have any purpose but in this culture they apparently work, for me my approach is probably a little bit more tougher, because um I do, they know, the first of all they know I love

them and that I care for them deeply but at the same time, I sometimes talk to them as if they're old people like me, you know, and it's just partly, um, I want them to understand the value of everything in life. (Tigray, Individual interview)

I love children and they're just everything to me in the world, coming from a family of nine, I'm just I'm all about family, and you know, she is exactly that…so we have an amazing common beliefs and like having good quality life, good quality family. (Tigray, Individual interview)

We don't have major, we tend not to have major disagreements about parenting because you know, there's such a value on family, I think in way that both of us were raised um, that I think he does a pretty good job of putting his kids, um, making his children the priority, that really limits the amount of arguments about parenting. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

Esposa: I don't know, I think our expectations are pretty similar. Right?
Workhorse: Yeah, I think its universal, you want them to be well behaved, you want them to be respectful, you want them to be kind and to be strong and not give in to peer pressure, you want them to understand the place of religion and how important it is. So I think we're pretty much similar, I think discipline wise, you know there's, uh, maybe I'm just a little bit more oblivious when it comes to discipline, you know, they'll do something and I won't necessarily notice it, where she's a little bit more um, astute about that…
Esposa: Yeah, I'm a little more hardline about the discipline, so.
Workhorse: Not hardline, I just think you're more aware, that they need to be disciplined at that time you know, so it's not, I wouldn't say you're like hardline, like 'Oh you're so strict about it' it's just to me it's just unnoticed, it's like when somebody leaves their socks on the carpet you don't even notice it but the other person is like 'Why is this person always leaving their socks on the carpet'.
Esposa: <laughs>
Workhorse: Now if its towels on the carpet that's a totally different example!
<all laugh>
(Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire, Couple interview)

Parenting style shifted through time in line with their desire to be better parents. As part of constructing their parental role, the couples talked about shifting their

parenting practices as a result of learning new ways from their partner- from disagreeing with each other, or because they were dissatisfied with the ways in which they were brought up which tended to be more structured and hierarchical.

> Um, he is very friend-like. He hangs out with our son like a friend. In Korea you don't hang out with your child as like a friend, so that is different from them. But I learn a lot from him and he has lots of patience and he tries to meet his interests, like if our son wants to read something, they will read together, my son loves to play and they will play together. Yeah, I learn a lot from him, his parenting style, his parenting is more like eye-level to our son, just like friends. (Rian, individual interview)

> Um, she (his mom) might feel like I might just be a little too hippie-ish. Which I'm not <emphatic>. Um, hippie-ish in the sense of you know, just a little too lenient, like letting them do too much, not providing enough, uh, discipline. And uh, like, uh, and I see it with uh, my brother. Because, I uh left the house when he was almost 10, so it was just him and my mom, and they had a lot of conflict, and they can't talk to each other. They're not good at communicating with each other, so oftentimes, they use me as the in-between person, and I'm just like "Oh god, you both are just so stupid!" <feigned exasperation>. Just, yeah <chuckles>. Um, so I have disagreements with the way my mum parents. (Mr. X, individual interview)

> She's very good at supporting me, she's very good at going along with it, and then she will, kind of give me like certain areas where I can be better at it. For instance, my approach with the kids, when I say like 'Hey this is not done, what happened here'. She likes the fact, 'Hey, when you finish when they do it, don't forget to tell them good job, you know', & I was like, 'That was not how I was brought up' so <confused look> 'Making their bed or making sure their shoes are in the closet or make sure that they remember to put their socks on I'm going to tell them good job?' But she's right, it's encouragement, the kids love it, and it's empowering, so then why not! So we feed off of each other… with that we are raising these children. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> Earlier I was talking to my brother and his kid would just like scream and would say like 'Hey I want to do this and I want to do that' and they would just argue with each other and I'm like 'Told you they need your attention!' 'Is that what they're doing?', and I was like 'Most likely…'. I told my brother in this country

> you have to use a few things you have to give them a specific plan, different things they can or cannot do and then use complementary ways to encourage them to do better versus how we do it back home which is, it's know, if an adult says no, well you don't ask questions about it... (Tigray, Individual interview)

Consistently, parents expressed a desire to be better, whether it was to provide more for their children than they had when they were growing up, specific challenges that they identified within themselves, or choices to be different from their own parents. Because the sample included a disproportionate number of foreign-born male partners, the male partners provided a significant narrative around their evolving ideas about fatherhood. Many of the fathers in this study expressed a parenting goal of being more accessible and more adept at meeting their children's emotional needs while they shared that their fathers were not as warm and attentive as they would like to be with their children. US-born female partners also noted that their partners were different from their partner's fathers.

Both anecdotal and scholarly sources have proposed a 'Contemporary Fathering' movement where men have generated and infused their conceptions of masculinity with caregiving roles and thus have chosen to be more nurturing (Featherstone, 2009). While this may apply in the larger society, positionality may play a role with the fathers in this study. Their route, purpose, and manner of entry into the US was diverse, some fleeing civil war and terrorism, some choosing to migrate to pursue and education, and all viewing their migration as providing them with greater opportunity. Some research has proposed that stressful pre- and post-settlement experiences can exert considerable pressures on immigrant parents that may result in less parental flexibility and responsiveness (Azar & Cote, 2002; Center for Community Child Health, 2004). In

addition, mediating features to positive resettlement experiences are availability of resources, employment, parenting support, and connection to cultural groups. Applied to this sample of immigrant parents who have formed a family with US-born partners, and have a measure of social support, resources, educational attainment, and steady employment, they may be more able to pivot their parental focus towards attentive parenting.

> Uh, as a parent I know nothing about parenting <chuckles> and I often struggle calming him down, I find it very challenging and I often meet many single parents, especially in the United States, and I think that the single parent, single parenting is a very difficult. Yes, I am still learning and I hope I am going to be a good one eventually. (Nate, Individual interview)

> I feel like I could also improve and be more nurturing towards him, and just taking care of his needs, I guess being around more, or doing more things around the house when I'm here, spending more, more quality time with him, but sometimes when I come home and it's been a crazy day at work, you know 'How's that patient doing?', sometimes I notice that I'm like wondering off, and she sometimes will tell me 'Hey, I need you to be here right now instead of you know thinking about what's going on in the hospital, you know somebody is covering for you, like you need to be home' but it's easier said than done. (Grayson, Individual interview)

> His dad is not an easy man to get along with and from what I've heard, more from his siblings than from him was that his dad would often outburst and get angry and not communicate properly …my husband says its more learning what not to do than learning what to do, you know but, like his sisters talk about it like being a very male-dominated house where the males could kind of do anything they wanted and the girls were slaved away…when I see my husband with our son and daughter I don't see that preference with males or anything. He is very equal with both of them, he dotes on our daughter incessantly, like he just adores her and makes her feel so special… some people think that my daughter is definitely a daddy's girl and she's got him wrapped around her finger because her pre-school did say that once to me, which, which she does, it's actually true. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> Oh that's a loaded question. Yeah so, my dad, he was around but he wasn't around a whole lot, you know, and so he had a little bit of a temper and that's one thing that I've been trying to watch from an early age, that way, he doesn't experience that from me. So every time I'm upset with him, or disagree, when I correct him, I want to make sure that I don't come off as harsh and like how my dad came off at times, you know like, being able to correct him, and teach him without coming off being that harsh, so that's one thing I've been really trying to watch, in how I speak to him, to not be like a softie but to not come off as like, I don't know, too harsh and, so that's one thing you know, I've been trying to do different. (Grayson, Individual interview)

The ways in which partners storied their parenting was dynamic and flexible, their roles constantly evolving in a delicate balance of discerning between their own intersecting identities, their partners, and the cultural and religious values that they subscribe to and want to preserve. Ultimately, the couples described that having children unexpectedly confused and clarified their values, culture, roles, and societal perceptions.

The internal working processes that the couples describe is complex, including the intersections between their past and present selves, navigating the intersections of both partners, and the navigation and intersections of being parents.

External intersections: Navigating and building resilience as a couple, as they interface with families, communities, and the larger society.

The second emergent theme that described how partners navigated other systems and spheres as a couple is best understood as the external intersections. The external processes the couples describe are their discerning of who were welcoming and who were adversarial, who they were able to draw support from, and ways of protecting themselves when it came to their families of origin, community and cultural groups, and the larger society. This section on the external workings of the couples will be discussed by first

exploring how the couples talk about their interactions with their families of origins, then with their communities, and finally with the larger society. Naturally, there is considerable overlap between these systems, often families are embedded within a cultural communities or a cultural group reflects the values of the larger society, thus these narratives will be discussed as such.

The intersections between couples and their families of origin. All couples gravitated towards talking about navigating their connection and interactions with their and their partner's family of origin, noting that part and much of who they had become could be attributed to their families. The intersections between them and their families consisted of four aspects: that their families had cultural expectations of them, their partner, and their parenting which at times led to frustrations, that family ties differed in terms of closeness, they described their families as a source of support, and that they maintained boundaries with their families.

Families had cultural expectations of them, their partner, and their parenting which at times led to frustrations. A significant topic that arose was how both US-born and foreign-born partners' families' had cultural expectations for their partner, themselves, and their parenting. Often 'American values' or 'American culture' is in some ways obscure and indeterminate mostly due to the fact that many subscribe and accept it as the norm without questioning or determining what it means. In the scholarly field, American values tend to be connected with Individualism, capitalism, and meritocracy, and in society, the themes of freedom, liberty, and independence tend to be understood as American ideals. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine how these larger philosophies operate in society however there are ways in which it is

operationalized in families and relationships. From the narratives of the couples themselves, familial values such as egalitarianism was connected to American values. For some couples, attending to the children, and in essence supporting their autonomy and individuality was also connected to American individualistic values. For US-born partners, their families, often their mothers wanted their children's partners to subscribe to their values.

> Nate: So, I think she um, grew to dislike me more as she spent more time with me…I don't think she judged people based on their race but she, she's very conservative and she very familiar with, she's very comfortable with the culture that, only the culture she knows…so, um, so she doesn't really like any other ethnicities, well certain ethnicities.
> Melissa: Well, she likes people okay as long as they conform with her expectations, her cultural expectations, it doesn't matter what they look like but she wants them to celebrate the same holidays she does and kind of do the same things she does, you know she's Christian and conservative so she kind of wants people to, to um, have those same values I guess.
> (Mr. & Mrs. Hamada, Couple interview)

> I think that, I mean, I guess, one piece of parenting cultural-wise that comes into play that, that I think my mother is like pretty soft in her parenting and not very rule oriented generally speaking and also likes to give lots of room to have the children give opinions about things, and so that's why I've seen them kind of butt heads it's like when my mom is, she's more concerned about one individual kid's opinion than like the cohesiveness of the family and so that, I think like she has judgements on Tigray of like being cold or too harsh, or you know strict with the kids because like, she's just looking at that one moment like maybe the kids don't have a voice. (Ladybug, Couple interview)

For a few of the couples the expectation from family was not framed as cultural but religious. The majority of the couples in this study identified as Christian or Catholic and half of them talked about how their families expected and were then relieved to find that the partner they chose was Christian, the same went for the Muslim couple. When

cross-referenced with the internal dynamics in the couple relationship, religiosity and religious identity appears to be a salient part of the narrative for couples consistent with their families. Religion and religious institutions can be a unifying force because they often contain core tenets that people subscribe to and internalize regardless of their location and context globally. Some of the recent literature about religion and immigration has provided evidence that religious institutions often play a role in the production and maintenance of an ethnic identity, and may be both and agent in the incorporation of immigrants into American society and a mechanism for immigrants to maintain ties with their home communities and country of origin (Ebaugh, 2003). Religious identity as a way to stay connected with their families appear to be true for over half of the couples in this study.

> Culture has never been an issue in my family, I remember I used to ask my mom ‘is there any ethnicity that if I brought home someone, that it would be frowned upon?’ and she kind of joked and said 'don't bring home a French person' so, they didn't care at all whether the person was divorced or had kids or it didn't seem to make a difference, the only thing I think my parents would have been a little apprehensive about is if I would met someone who was a convert which is interesting because my mom’s a convert. I think they would have been a little apprehensive about that. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> Uh, her, my wife's grandma, and she's great <smiled> she's old-school. Uh, you know she just turned 80, uh, in any case. She's like "I don't care who you marry as long as you're Catholic". (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> So, it’s funny because, like my mom you know, her main thing was 'Make sure she's a Christian, make sure you both have the same religion' that’s how she raised us… But they knew about her, because I always talk to my parents, and you know they were excited about it, that she was Christian. (Grayson, Individual interview)

For some of the couples, the expectations about conduct came prior to meeting a partner's family, and for others they were expected to know and given no concessions for their missteps. Many of the foreign-born partners identified language as a potential barrier to communication between their partner and their families of origin, and for some families it was an expectation for them to teach their partner the language and for others it was a frustration as well. A wealth of research has been conducted on language, bilingualism, and ethnic-linguistic identity in immigrant populations (Portes and Hao 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 2001) but little has been noted about the possibility that families who remain in their country of origin may desire their children to transmit their language to their partners.

> …So I'm familiar with that area of Japan, um, his family is actually from the southernmost part of Japan, Kyushu and that's a little bit more of a conservative area so I found when I met his family, they were a little more traditional and um, and my husband, he was, he would tell me things like 'Well, don't say this, say this because, you know', just telling me a more formal way to talk with his parents than I was used, 'like don't say Bye, say Sayonara' and those kinds of things, you know, so you know, in a way there was a cultural adjustment just coming from the main island of Japan down to the southernmost island, which was more rural and conservative. (Melissa, Couple interview)

> It's like there's no public kissing at all, so like those things would be kind of like, out of the picture for example, and you know when we get to that, I'm sure there'll be a few pointers that I'll be chit-chatting with Ladybug, but you know we're not yet planning to travel anytime soon to Ethiopia but when it starts to get closer they'll be pointers. I'll be talking about the cultural differences that I have to be mindful (of) and give her a heads up you know, what those cultural differences are. (Tigray, Couple interview)

> Esposa: Concessions…I don't think so at all, I wish there was! <laughs>
> Workhorse: It's the other way around, I wish uh, I mean her dad probably wishes that I could speak Arabic and understand the Arabic language and um,

my parents they uh, they probably wish that she spoke Urdu or Punjabi or something, so that way they could communicate more readily with her because their English is not that great, you know oftentimes my dad will start speaking to her in Punjabi and just look at her blankly and just wait for a response and then he's like 'Oh I'm sorry I was speaking Punjabi, I totally forgot'.

Esposa: Yeah, and but there's also some cultural misunderstanding that occur where feelings do get hurt and I wish I was extended that excuse of not knowing because I sincerely don't know, but that doesn't happen, I'm kind of expected to learn and pick it up quickly and vice versa, him too, he's kind of expected to.

Workhorse: Yeah, because to them it's almost a no-brainer, uh 'What do you mean you don't- you're supposed to say excuse me after you burp?' So for them they're always like, they just kind of think that 'you just kind of should know these things' but they're not, they're still, you just kind of pick up by watching.

Esposa: Yeah

(Mr. & Mrs. Electric Fire, Couple interview)

My family back in Ethiopia would say 'Hey you know, are you teaching your wife or your kids how to speak our language?' because you know, none of them speak English so, but the perceptions in their mind is like, when they meet the kids, well my older, when they met her but they haven't met (Ladybug's son from previous relationship) they haven't met the little one and they haven't met Ladybug of course, so their mindset is like, gosh I'm going to be stuck with only translating, 'Him translating for us', or is there a possibility, in their mind they're thinking it should be pretty easy for me to teach everybody here how to speak the language. (Tigray, Couple interview)

Differences, well, there's a lot of like little things that they, that their family does in their culture that, you know, I think I've accidentally stepped on some toes not really realizing, you know. (Esposa, Individual interview)

Family ties differed in terms of closeness. Another facet of their families that bared upon the couple was how close or not close their own or their partner's families were. It may be a norm within US culture that emphasizes independence and the life stage of 'launching' their children into adulthood, and this was reflected in the

assumptions that the participants made of American families. More than half of the couples conceptualized American families as having boundaried familial relationships, coldness and a lack of close connection, and separate individual interest. Of course, descriptions of closeness and connection in families are not simplistic or one-dimensional, and the partners do not talk about family dynamics linearly either. Consistently, the foreign-born partners described their families as very close and some talked about the idea of adulthood having different meanings and implications in their country of origin.

> I kind of see it is more like, my family is very American in like that way, like very formal…his whole family is so loving and embracing. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> So seeing these things and being around her and seeing how her parents interacted, I felt like her, her you know, parents had a good relationship, and overall she had a good family structure, and to me that was surprising because we're told in Brazil 'Well you know Americans are so cold, they are very distant, they don't really engage' and that was very different. (Grayson, Individual interview)

> I would say they're very warm, and they're very friendly, and they're very open, so sometimes, you know, I feel like there's more defined boundaries between Americans as far as boundaries with time and boundaries with family, as far as things you discuss, and things you don't discuss, uh in Brazil I feel like it's a lot more fluid, like those boundaries are not as rigid um, so sometimes things aren't planned out all the way, not as much as they are here, it's not a big deal or um, I guess people are a lot more in each other's lives and each other's business than they are here. So that took a little bit of getting used to. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

> To this day I have a lot of, in fact 99% of my siblings are still in Ethiopia, uh, you know she would hear me often like, on the phone joking with them, talking with them and so you know, the connection, you know, it's so good that you know, sometimes it brings emotions to me (gets choked up)…going back to the

> connection you know, it's like I can't describe the connection and how much, how much it hurts, when you're so like, bonded, you're so connected to your family, you don't get to see them, you don't get to hug them, like on a regular basis. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> And I think with him, he always grew up with family being more, more cohesive than I did, and uh, I think in some ways, uh, he would like it to be less that way, maybe that's the American thing, it's like 'Okay guys' <laughs> um. But sometimes, I think he might miss that. That's a difference, I don't know if that's an argument… (Elise, Individual interview)

> Uh, with my father, uh, he did not want me to leave, at first. So, um, so the first time we tried to leave, he put a stop to it. He stopped us at the airport, um, I was very angry at him and uh, that made him realize that he, uh, he had to let me go, if he wanted me to have a better future. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> I feel like, like I grew up in a supportive environment and they always listened to my wishes and career goals and things like that …They weren't really a fan of me coming here but they knew I wanted to, for education and to further career goals, and they were supportive of that. (Grayson, Individual interview)

> I felt like if it wasn't civil war, if it wasn't poverty, like I, you know, I would never, you know, be outside of my, you know, my birth place country and then, and then on the other hand like, I'm grateful and appreciative of coming to this country, and becoming a citizen, and pursuing an education like, for example where nobody in my family has ever had that opportunity to go to school because that's just, you know, because I was born on a farm and all we knew is like, how to farm. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> …when we visited there you know, the nucleus of the family, the importance of the family, it is a very common thing, from the culture that I was brought up, you know, Peru. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

Families as a source of support. Not surprisingly, many partners talked about how their families were accepting and supportive of the family that they have made. While frustrations were often about cultural differences and language barriers, families tended to support their children's decision in choosing a partner, or at least come around

to it eventually. The partners had an awareness and even anticipated not being readily accepted because of their racial, ethnic, cultural, and native identity, however, they talked about feeling welcomed by their partner's family and at times even not expecting the reception that they got. For families that expressed concerns about partners choosing someone from a different race or culture, the partners reported that they did not strongly oppose their decision but choose instead to provide advice, and give support.

> I never have felt her family in Nebraska or her dad, like they saw me as an outsider, you know they've been very welcoming, I think, well, like, for the family in Nebraska. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> Like with her side of the family, like her grandmother who passed away a few years ago, she was very loving, adoring, she just loved the kids. I think I was having a perception that she was, might have been uncomfortable because I'm a, I'm black and it was totally the opposite of it, I was more wrong, pre judging her than what she actually turned out to be, and it was wonderful that I was blessed to not only know her and meet her but also to, to know the kind of person that she was, and it was just really amazing to me, because she just had a pure heart you know, like every time I went over and hung out with her and Ladybug's mom and the kids it's like, you feel like, they're your family and you don't have to worry about the color of your skin. (Tigray, Couple interview)

> Her mom started calling me son even before we were dating and you know, they'd come by campus, bring us things and pick us and, and take us to do things, and to me that was really different from what I expected. So that showed me a facet of American culture that I wasn't really expecting or knew, that existed. (Grayson, Individual interview)

> Uh, I was a little nervous, because I didn't want to be viewed like the guy who stole their daughter, and I don't speak Korean either so that was an issue, um, I was kind of worried the whole time, I was just, you know, I grew up with a watered down, sort of the dramatic Asian culture, there were specifics to Korean that I didn't want to, I was worried about breaking, being wrong and upsetting anybody, so I was a little nervous but it was uh, they had uh, they'd done a lot of different things to make me feel welcome. There was a, there was little symbols

> and tokens that uh, they were very touching because they uh, I didn't know what they meant at the time, it wasn't like 'Oh this is a big deal' but it was, uh, they really made an effort, and by the end I just didn't feel so nervous. (Ravenson, Couple interview)

> I've been advised by my family to make sure the choice in the decisions that I've been making are the right ones in get(ting) into a relationship that is of a different race, but as far as opposing it, or approving it, or disagreeing with it, you know, even in my own family being so conservative…You know my sister in Seattle at the beginning would say you know, 'slow down, be careful, just in relationships and make sure I'm getting myself into something that I'm going to be happy with and comfortable with' but other than that I would say they're very supportive… in fact it ended up being more you know, they keep saying you know, you seem like you're so much happier now and this is actually happier than what you (were) when you were married to someone who was just the same as you. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> …But everybody is super supportive, as far as with both cultures, even my mom is very nurturing of the Brazilian culture, she even tried to learn Portuguese, and it was a mess, she knows, she'll try to use it, so I feel everyone has been supportive on both sides. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

They maintained boundaries with their families. If and when partners inevitably are faced with situations in which their family of origin expresses opposition, are in disagreement, or even are overbearing, the couples talk about have boundaries with their families to protect their relationship. Couples also report that they don't always agree to how close they should be with their families, whether it be including their advice and influence in decision-making or the length of visit for family from country of origin, that came up for multiple couples in this study.

> The only thing we have disagreements around is, and this is kind of a big one, and I would say the only time we ever argue, and its only once or twice a year, is because his parents want to visit and when they visit they visit for such a long time, and that's a cultural difference. My parents believe that it's our home and their visit should be during the day, and they leave, they don't believe they should

come stay with us, whereas my husband's family they probably would love to come stay with us for months on end but I think, I think they pick up on the vibe a little bit, which I don't mind them picking up on the vibe a little bit, (chuckles) I really don't want them there for more than two or three weeks… I think that my husband tries to be very understanding about it, but at the same time he, he, he gets very hurt that I don't just embrace them coming every time…I would say that's probably at the top of our arguments. (Esposa, Individual interview)

My family and most of them stay in the same town as us, they don't, we kind of keep them at a distance, and uh, I think their frustrations, I feel like is uh, 'she keeps me away from them'. I'm kinda 'She's my wife, so she's first, I don't understand how-' But I keep them, uh, for example my sister, she has far out expectations of relationships, she has a weird sense of reality and um, so she was jealous of Rian, but then that's their frustration, in a weird kind of perception of everything, (it) keeps me away from my sister, I keep away from (them) with her. (Ravenson, Couple interview)

If you have friends and families that are very negative about your relationship about your family, about your environment, then they're not the right people…if somebody you know, in my family or my friends are going to disrespect my relationship or my family, then I would definitely be patient with them, work with them to make sure they understand it, but in the end of that, just dismiss, unfortunately that's not the environment that I wanted to have near my family. (Tigray, Couple interview)

Before anything, parents are so important, they're the most dear people in our lives but you know what, I have to have my husband's back first before anybody, you know because if my sister is rude to him, he's understanding at how they are, but in the end of the day, its him that I'm going to support, I'm not going to choose, you know, I don't know, you know thankfully we haven't been in that situation which we've had to choose, but if we did, I think that you know, we'd have to choose each other, we have children, we're a family now... (Esposa, Couple interview)

Jennifer: My parents love Grayson, so they've never ever said anything, had any frustrations and they, even if they did, I mean that's a boundary that I would keep, I don't discuss our issues with our parents, so that's just a boundary that I have, but they've never voiced any. My previous boyfriend, they didn't like at all, so they love Grayson.

> Grayson: Yeah, same thing you know, I don't, we try to keep our business private so we don't just go out, if I'm upset with something Jennifer did I don't just call my mom and vent and say 'Can you believe she did this' because nothing goods gonna come out of that, and they really, as far as, they've told me, you know they're happy with her.
> (Mr. & Mrs. Volleyball, Couple interview)

The couples explicitly noted that they place boundaries in their relationship with others who may be critical about their partner, in addition to prioritizing their couple relationship over family of origin or others extended family.

The intersections of couples and their communities. In many ways, those in a partner's community or cultural group was an extension of the partner's families. The partners talked of being connected to the foreign-born partners own ethnic communities in the US, or ethnic communities back in their country of origin, being a part of a religious community, having other social networks such as other parents or a group of co-workers or long-time friends. These communities tended to be the groups in which the partners had the most interaction with or which partners tended to be familiar with in terms of their perceptions. At times, couples talked about similar sentiments from their family and direct community interchangeably, or when talking about their family's ideas indicated their community's influence. The main aspect that couples described about their interface with their communities were that opposition to their relationship, and that assumptions and expectations were more saliently felt from their communities.

Opposition, assumptions and expectations more salient in communities. The most common sentiments that couples identified in their communities were the ideals of homogamy, the ideals of gender and patriarchal family structures, and for a few, the preference for a partner that was White or Caucasian. Homogamy speaks to the

assumption that homogenous relationships, where two people hail from the same ethnic, racial, or cultural group, among others, are more compatible. Some in the couple's community indicated that being with someone from a different racial or cultural group may cause more conflict in a relationship. Communities also made assumptions or voiced expectations about gender roles. There were also messages that were specific to the intersections of race and gender, for example being with an Asian woman meant that someone had a fetish, or that marrying an Egyptian-American woman might mean that a man has lost some of his power in a household, or feeling the need to ask a white woman if she really wanted to be with a black man. Skin color preference, along with the preference for Eurocentric facial features, was also expressed by families and communities, where foreign-born partner's families and communities expressed that is was desirable to marry or have children with someone who was white.

> Gosh, I don't know, um, I mean, I, maybe people who are 100% Pakistani, Pakistani families, maybe they look at our family and think there is something wrong with it. I know they probably assume that my husband is not eating Pakistani food all of the time, you know, <chuckles>, and they probably assume that he's not the patriarch of the family, you know because I think in a Pakistani culture, a lot of the men are very much the leaders and rule-implementers but that could be my perception. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> One thing that kind of bothers me, and I know I just gotta deal with it, is that 'white-men-Asian-woman' thing, fetish, that she's my fantasy you know kind of thing. Yeah there were people, there were people when we first got together, that were kind of upset like they were 'why didn't he choose me? Why didn't he choose me? why is he with her?' like the first thing they noticed is that she's got the kid, and then 'Oh it's because she's Korean, he likes Asian women'. I'm going to have to get used to that…Oddly enough it's been a lot of detractors that were Asian. (Ravenson, Individual interview)

I did not have my parents' permission, when I tell my parents about him they said 'If you marry him you will not be our daughter anymore' but anyway, I married him. So it's been 2 years, I could talk to my mum about my husband, still my mum feel(s) a little bit uncomfortable because in Korea, it's not a common thing. …they try to talk with him but the language barrier is kind of big as well, and they get nervous talking with my husband, so in Korea it's not really common to talk with a foreigner much, Korean people they always just are with Korean people. (Rian, Individual interview)

So, you can say race-wise, we're both the same race, but ethnicity-wise we're different. And like you said, the differences, I have not felt like from her family, like, if anything, it's more my family. But like my grandma, on my dad's side, I mean she's, <chuckles>, I mean it's just so funny, it's just a generation thing, some of the things that she would say, like uh, as long as you like uh, you've got to marry White… So then, uh, of course like the US, has always been looked up upon, it's the place of opportunity, it's the place where people come. My generation <emphatic>, you know, migrated to the US because of the conditions in the country. You know, seeking a better life. So, uh definitely, not from my direct family like my dad, you know, my stepmom, and things like that but definitely like my more removed cousins and others like that "Oh, good for you uh, married a White girl, an American White girl"… Um, but there's a lot of that, still over there in Peru, where uh, you know, you 'look down'. And you know it's a cultural thing that goes back to the Spanish, coming in and you know, making the whole charts of the different like types of people, like you know, if you go to a museum there, you can see, like you know, I don't know if it's like a painting or something, it's like a document that they had, that the Spanish wrote where they separated the different types of races, like if this race married this race their children would be considered this 'label'. (Mr. X, Individual interview)

Like my friends who are African American are more biased against Tigray then my friends who are white, well, they might be more… but my friends who are African-American are more straightforward in saying that 'Are you sure you want to date a black guy?' (Ladybug, Couple interview)

…And my dad, he used to joke and say 'Marry someone who is blonde so you can whiten up the family', as a joke you know. (Grayson, Couple interview)

And then, with Mr. X family and group, I think that they think he's American and they, not his parents, but maybe like his extended family in Peru, uh, and maybe

> he moved to America and 'they marry uh, whoever they want there', and I think they like it, that I'm a white girl, I think that it would be a problem if, he married somebody of a different color, because there, I find that racism is more evident there, at least more than it is here in the West, I think that in the South it could be different, because you see and hear so much stuff. (Elise, Individual interview)

Like prejudice, colorism is linked to the drive for obtaining and maintaining power over others (Hochschild & Weaver, 2007). While not immediately apparent, colorism is a colonial value system that has been perpetuated in many countries under the influence of colonization (Baluner, 1972; Hunter, 2002). Even with efforts to reposition whiteness and Eurocentric culture away from the center, the effects of colonialism are present in all corners of the earth often perceivable by exploring social stratification. In this study, the evidence of Eurocentric influence, via colorism, was in the racial preference that many of the partner's families and communities held. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the history of governing and colonialization of each foreign-born partner's country, however it is my contention that the effects of colonialism connect to how families and communities perceive intermarrying and social mobility. This was similar to how the couples navigated the larger societal perceptions as well.

Intersections between couple and society. All of the couples had a sense of whether they were accepted or opposed in society. The larger society was described as either bigger groups that the couples were acquainted with, segments of populations that they either had direct or indirect contact with, or strangers that the couples met in their daily life. At times, partners hearkened to societal perceptions and assumptions in their country of origin as well. The couples identified three main aspects of their interactions with the larger society: they talked about how skin color, appearances and visibility plays

a role in public perceptions, that their parenting and socialization efforts with their children were affected by societal perceptions, and they developed awareness and resiliencies as a couple to protect their family.

Skin color, appearances and visibility plays a role in public perceptions. There is much evidence that indicates that immigrants can be a despised group of people (Yakushko, 2008). However, not all experiences of xenophobia are created equally, and often examining a person's intersecting identities allows for a clearer understanding of complex experiences. In this study, race, skin color, visibility, gender, and language interconnected to engender experiences that were different across every couple. In this study, both the participants own experiences and their observation of others experiences led them to note that partners who had darker skin or appeared significantly different from each other were effected atypically, a recognition that visibility and racial appearance play a large role in public perception. Correspondingly, couples talked about how their skin color and appearance was not so divergent and thus protected them in some way, others noted that Black-White relationships were perceived differently in society, and one partner noted that even his job as an advocate for minority populations would be more difficult if he was African American. Furthermore, for the one partner in this study who identified as Black, his description of experiences in society was markedly different from the other partners.

> Not really, but maybe if she, she was blue eyed or blonde haired then we would be perceived a little bit more as having a big difference. (Workhorse, Couple interview)

> I think it's a lot more, like I've experienced discrimination going out with my step dad, like he is black, when it's just he and I, people think that we are a couple and

> that he's much older than I am, and, I've had, we've actually gotten mistreated when we go out if it's just the 2 of us, but with Grayson and I, we haven't noticed anything, I still think it's because people are a lot more negative when it's Black and White, when it's a black person and a white person. As far as Grayson and I, when it's a White and a Hispanic, I, we haven't noticed as much. (Jennifer, Couple interview)

> My sister was dating a Black guy for a while, American, um, and we were all fine with it, and I think his family which were all from the south, and a little more old fashion, was kind of weirded out that he was dating a white girl, so it can go other ways. (Elise, Individual interview)

> He was saying, was, uh 'I don't like what you represent, how we have like ESL kids and what they represent'…Just 'how these little kids don't deserve to get the services they do, they need to learn English, bla bla'…I had to like fight to not confront it. I mean how can you be, how can you help anybody with that kind of mentality?" You know it could be worse, I could be Black! (Mr. X, Individual interview)

> I think you know, I think there's also like, 'That is what it is' and that's the culture and society that we live in, and you know, we can't, you know, we can't really like, be defined by some self-centered or selfish individual who looks down at a person of color or minority and you know, and I think it does um, um, like, what she said, I'm always on guard and I think that to an extent I feel like I'm very approachable and very appropriate and exceptionally a well-spoken person, but you know at times when I do see those inappropriate receptions because of my skin color or anyone else that I see (experiencing it) for that matter… I'm never afraid to speak up but that doesn't mean it wouldn't create more stress and concerns …as well and oftentimes it's like you have no evidence when somebody says something like 'I'm not racist'. (Tigray, Couple interview)

A harmful assumption that people make about African American individuals is that they are intellectually inferior to white individuals (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Blacks have been, and continue to be, "associated with terms such as poverty, ignorance, shiftless, immoral, inferior, and an overall general nuisance" (McGee & Martin, 2011, p. 1353).

> Yea, well, I think unfortunately there have been a lot of experiences of racism um…but I've definitely seen examples of racism against Tigray while I was with him, and also with his family members, I think because I think there's also this added layer of being male and Black in this country that people sometimes feel like young black men need to be put in their place or they need to be educated, I've seen it usually I would say, it's in more subtle things, like in assumptions that people make about what he may or may not be able to afford, or what his intentions are, I've definitely seen that like, um, in like maybe shopping for a car for example, um, some people don't, you know, you can really see them actively ignoring him when he's trying to get someone's attention, it's difficult to witness. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

> There is a perception of society that if you are African American, African born in America the perception is different, that they somehow think that you would excel better than black Americans and it's a really bad, bad stereotype because at the end of the day, I think that if everybody is given a chance, if everybody is training for something, they can be given a little hand, I think we are all unique people but we can be better in our society. (Tigray, Individual interview)

While racism and xenophobia can be related, they are distinct. Xenophobia focuses specifically on individuals who are identified as 'foreigners' who are perceived as fundamentally 'un-American' and 'un-assimilable'. Tigray experiences the added dimension of being black and being an immigrant and therefor even more marginalized. For Rian her gender, race and transnational identity intersects in a way that increases her visibility as a foreigner compared to some of the other partners in this study. Outside of Hawai'i, she was commonly seen as an unwelcomed guest.

> They don't want me to be in their circle. My son's friend's parents, in the morning they gather to have coffee and talk… so they never ask me, I want to join them but they never let me in. They assume that I'm a nanny or some kid, not the mother. I introduced myself, my son is John and I'm the mother. They still didn't let me in. They just passed me with a disgusted look, like 'How dare you' like the kind of look. (Rian, Couple interview)

The couples were aware of perceptions others had of them as a couple due to their intersecting identities, and a few of them identified that thankfully, some of the stronger anti-miscegenation ideas were less evident in this time and age.

> Yeah, they were Korean but there were also White people who were upset and made some comments, not uh, not as overt, that you would think. Whether they were overt or not there were people that were pretty upset, it was pretty awkward. (Ravenson, Couple interview)

> I think if, I'm trying to think, I remember saying to Mr. X one time, "I wonder if years ago we could have even dated", you know, just because, our, I don't know if anyone would have been okay with it or it would have been a weird thing. (Elise, Individual interview)

> So the tradition in Korea, International marriage is not really welcome, you know, so I never thought "Oh I'm going to marry somebody not Korean", yeah (chuckles)…Here, people said that I am their nanny, or uh babysitter…their assumptions are that I am uneducated, they think there's no way I could be my husband's wife, I had to explain he's my husband, and if they didn't like it they can- And in Hawaii, funny thing, they assume I am (a) 'picture bride', like when people send a picture for Caucasian men to marry them, a picture bride. They assume that I also am one of them. And they ask my husband when am I going to bring all of my family to America? We laugh. (Rian, Individual interview)

> I think if this (interracial marriage) was fifteen, twenty years ago it would probably be a huge difference because they would have seen it like 'How dare you?' But I think with the influence worldwide now... (Tigray, Couple interview)

> Yeah, yeah like sometimes we'll see, or we'll hear that they've said something where it'll be like anti-immigrant or something…I've seen worse things from people that are kind of friends, that I'm acquaintances with. (Mr. X, Couple interview)

Their parenting and socialization efforts with their children were affected by societal perceptions. Race, skin color, and visibility also affected the couple's roles as parents. The couples talked about how their parenting was impacted by social and public

perceptions of their appearance and expectations of their parenting practices. At times, these perceptions made them feel supported, and other times they felt forced to make parenting decisions based on how others in society may treat them or their children.

> Yes! Yes, like physically, yeah… are you Hispanic-White or are you Caucasian-White? And that is really weird to me, like something that I wasn't expecting to think about, you know, but, just in our little family unit, we just never talk about, it never comes up, like you know, and when we were naming [8 month old], I was concerned about, I didn't want to pick a name that sounded too Hispanic because I didn't want [3 year old] to be the White kid and then if [8 month old] came out looking really dark, I didn't want him to be <chuckle> singled out, I didn't want them to be so separate, you know, because the name that we picked for the first kid was so Anglo, even though kind of not, in Peru they call him [Latin version of name]…So, we tried to be sensitive to that, so they wouldn't, they wouldn't end up, you know, 'You're the brown kid and you're the white kid'. But it turns out they're both pretty white <chuckles>. (Elise, Individual interview)

> …So a white middle-aged man kid yelling at his kids in public, he would be less criticized and viewed as like, not as a threat to his kids than someone like me, with a stern eye or voice, my concern is that, (at) the back of my head, is I know that it will irritate certain people and so to be honest with you, I have to be mindful of that and therefore, I just have to like, choose my words of communication with my kids, and watch what I say…so that's another thing that I can think of, for me, it's that because of how our society is structured, (I am) more ultra-careful about certain things should I say in the general public. (Tigray, Couple interview)

An additional facet that racial minority parents may have to consider that other parents do not, is socializing their children for self-protection against racial discrimination. Researchers have proposed that minority parents' efforts at cultural maintenance is intertwined with helping their children interpret and cope with the negative stereotypes to mitigate direct experiences of prejudice and discrimination (Barnes, 1980; Spencer, 1983; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). Underlying parents' efforts to

racially socialize their children is parents' own race-related values and perceptions that have been shaped by their experiences of racial discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Parents tend to transmit race-related messages to their children in one of four ways: 1) help children understand and value their history, heritage, and culture; 2) help children see racial barriers and discrimination; 3) promote cultural pluralism and acceptance; 4) de-emphasize race-related messages in favor of a color-blind approach (Hughes and Chen, 1997). In this study, parents tended to speak about cultural maintenance and instilling a sense of pride in their ethnicity and country. Race-related protective messages may have not been as apparent due to the fact that many of the children were younger aged and thus parents were not as focused on socializing their children against prejudice and discrimination.

> I want our kids to know that being a mixed race, like you know, our little one being mixed race you know, she should be proud of herself and not feel like different, because people start to ask you know, like, oh, when she's with me, like 'Oh, what's her mom?', or vice versa, or you know, soon people are going to ask if she mixed with Native American or Indian or whatnot it's like, you know, she's, you know, half-black-half-white. (Tigray, Individual interview)

> I mean, so when we filled out, when we filled out the social security, it says what race is on there and we put 'White', because he looks so, uh, <chuckles> I don't know what to put, it's weird, it's weird, like if they would have expressed more Hispanic, would we have put Hispanic down?...So I guess the looks stuff does play into it. But it's something that we considered, it seemed like, it seemed like, it was just because (of what) other people were thinking that was annoying us, because we just wanted him to be whoever he wanted, and we didn't want to think that anybody else's perception of what they should be should affect them, but we know how it is. (Elise, Individual interview)

> …Try and teach them about, you know, where they came from, they're side of the family, and language, so just having a sense of awareness…you know, where the family came from and the culture. (Grayson, Couple interview)

Some research has found that ethnic minority parents place greater emphasis on education and scholastic achievement (Julian, McKenry & McKelvey, 1994). However, this is not evident across all ethnic minority immigrant populations and also appears to be connected to socioeconomic class (Fuligni, 1997). Some scholars have suggested that education is a mechanism for social mobility (Hao & Bornstead-Bruns, 1998). Given how multiple marginalized identities place individuals low on the social hierarchy, engendering an unequal power differential, education can be viewed as a means to gain power. Asians have been consistently portrayed by the popular press and media as a successful minority group, often having extraordinary achievements in education, and gaining high income levels. Three of the couples in which one partner identified as Asian (Pakistani, Korean, or Japanese), spoke of other people's perspective of their parenting connected to their children's scholastic achievement. They noted that their children performed well in school; some people believed that because they were Asians, they were pushing their children to do well, even when they weren't. They were aware and tuned-in to how they were being perceived as part of the 'model minority'.

> My daughter who's 3 is very intelligent, talks, you know, very well with a great vocabulary…so I think that people think that we speak that way, which <chuckles> I mean, you know, that's an entertaining conversation right there. Um, they probably think that we don't allow her tv and read to her constantly because she's so intelligent but she's really self-taught, you know. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> Um, I'm not sure, but people who don't know us well but they only know that my son is doing well and that I'm Korean, they think that 'You need to let your child play more' and I tell them 'I do'. (Rian, Individual interview)

> (When asked about parenting perceptions based on Japanese race) I might experience something like that later, as he grows up because when he grows up and goes to actual school, and he, people may think that we must be doing something strict to keep his grades good. (Nate, Individual interview)

Finally, some partners were able to compare the culture and social values around parenting between their or their partner's native culture and the US. They described a sense of support for specific parenting practices, such as extended breast-feeding, having a close-knit large group of caregivers that directly invest in parenting a child, and just a general embracing of the parenting journey. They talked about their partner accepting and supporting them because of their culture around parenting and also how this support had bearing on how they felt parenting.

> I breastfed my daughter for like a really long time, till she was almost 3, and that was one thing that was nice about Tigray, because that's how they do it everywhere else, so he didn't have any negative feelings about that. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

> I mean all the extended family, we had a birthday for my one and three-year-old, every person from his family we invited, attended, I couldn't believe it, they all attended, whereas my family, like one fourth of them attend, you know like, they just, my family, they just don't step up for one another, and um, I really love that, and I don't know if that's a culture thing but that's definitely a difference that I see. (Esposa, Individual interview)

> In Peru, I felt way more supported by the women and the moms than I do in America, like it's almost like a competition in America sometimes, you know. Like, "Wow, I don't really need to know about all this, you know, you don't have to lecture me on your parenting style, its fine what we're doing!" I think in some ways, our gen- I think it's our generation, that is overly concerned with how everyone else is doing their parenting and it kind of, ugh, it stresses me out! <chuckles> "Let's just chill out people!" (Elise, Individual interview)

They developed awareness and resiliencies as a couple to protect their family.

Being with someone who is different brings awareness of different experiences. Consistent with the concept of standpoint in feminist theory, one's social position informs one's perception of the world and one's reality. For partners of foreign-born individuals, the awareness of how others in society may perceive or respond to their loved one because of their appearance was sometimes a shock. Consistent with a meritocratic worldview, a White partner may view the world as essentially good and rewarding hard work, and coupled with their positive feelings towards their partner, may find it difficult or they may be unwilling to see racism in daily events (Killian, 2013). Given the messages, support, opposition, and discrimination that the couples received from their families, community and culture, and society, because of their decision to make a family that was transnational and interracial/interethnic, they talked about their different responses to them. At times, a foreign-born, racial minority partner may experience an interaction that could be labeled racial discrimination but their partner could minimize or deny the microaggression. In contrast, the US-born partners in this study all seemed to be knowledgeable about their partner's experiences od marginalization, and did not seem to question it or minimize it.

> I think people make a lot of assumptions about people from other cultures and think, 'Wow, it must be so different from here and so hard to get along' um, I, I and that just comes from conversations that I've had with acquaintances and friends that I know, who ask, I, I mean it's a good opportunity, but they, they ask questions that make me realize that they have assumptions about our, how different our cultures are and what tension that must cause. (Ladybug, Individual interview)

For example if I perceive that kind of (hostile) environment and I am with my kids or with her I wouldn't be aggressive with defending it, verses if it's just me, then I would, not that I don't care about myself, but for me, I have to be thinking at the back of my head, if I am confronting somebody because they are arrogant and my kids are with me, and she's with me, and that turns into something beyond verbal, and I don't want to be that person to be just perceived by my children 'Oh you know, Dad fights with people', or any of those things so, so then you just have to kind of weigh the options, the reward vs. the consequences. (Tigray, Individual interview)

Rian: California, there was a dominant, a lot of Caucasian people. But the way people see me, if I go to the shops by myself is way different from when I am with my husband. They're friendly to my husband..
Ravenson: Yeah. Especially what strikes me is how the parents at the school reacted to her and John, the looks she gets…
(Mr. & Mrs., Egg, Couple Interview)

Mr. X: Yeah, yeah like sometimes we'll see, or we'll hear that they've said something where it'll be like anti-immigrant or something.
Elise: Yeah, and that is so weird to us, or at least me to me anyways. Yeah
Mr. X: Yeah.
Elise: I'm like 'I don't even know you people'. And that's, really what it is, I don't really know them <chuckles>. <turns to Mr. X> I hope they don't make you feel bad>
Mr. X: no, no, I mean I've seen worse things...
Elise: Oh really, that's awful!
Mr. X: I'm like 'Really! <emphatic> You're an idiot!'
Elise: Yeah.
(Mr. & Mrs. Fringe, Couple interview)

…Where else other people are like 'Ugh it's such a shame that your children are not learning Punjabi or the culture the way we did', it's such a sad thing, you know, I think it's both extremes. My husband's very much a, 'To hell with what everyone else thinks", so it's kind of rubbed off on me too. (Esposa, Individual interview)

It's um, it's something that he has to always have in the front of his mind you know, is race because you just don't know what a person's um, background is or what they're thinking, so it just, um, it just causes a lot of stress, and just day-to-

> day interactions that, that something that you have to be, you don't have the privilege of not thinking about it, and so I think, not just for him, for other minorities as well, they just have to be, just like have their antenna up all the time, and reading into situations like 'Is this person treating me this way because they're a jerk or are they treating me this way because of my race?' and I feel that that does add stress to his, kind of the way he goes through life and that it's, you're always having to make that judgement call and it's hard to really truly know (looks over at partner). (Ladybug, Couple interview)

> Mr. X: Well, you know, I kind of like, joke about you know, I didn't realize how white, or I guess not White, I was till I had a kid.
> Elise: Yeah. Yeah, I guess, you see, it's a joke, he kept getting, but you know, he takes Jim to the airport and you know he's with his white son, you know, and something that never occurs to us at home but then you go outside and you have to think about it, it's so sad isn't it?
> (Mr. & Mrs. Fringe, Couple interview)

It was apparent that partners who were identified as being from the majority group (US-born or White or male) expressed empathy for their foreign-born partner's experiences of discrimination, through direct comforting responses, adding details to the stories, and reacting with indignance or anger on behalf of their partners. These supportive responses were evident during the interviews when partners turned towards each other when talking about these experiences. Some partners appeared to have constructed their own set of coping skills and resiliencies to manage these stressors together, such as laughing about it, having conversations about these experiences, and taking directs steps to distance themselves from these situations. Foreign-born and racial/ethnic minority partners also described having a process whereby they decided to either confront situations in which they felt discriminated, or walk away. The partners talked about responding to negative messages as if it was as an opportunity to educate

others or to confront their assumptions, and they also alluded to having conversations as a couple and deciding together to not let others perceptions affect them.

Another measure that was significant in the couples' narratives about how they responded to any form of opposition was to surround themselves with like-minded people or people who were supportive of their family. At times this connected with how they identified, within a religion, with other interracial couples, or in diverse communities.

> I feel like everyone else, at least who we surround ourselves with, they're very supportive, and if we didn't feel like they supported us, we probably wouldn't include them around us, but everybody is super supportive. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

> Elise: Yeah, um, I was saying this before, like a little bit, but living in Las Vegas, its, to me it's like a really culturally diverse, at least the part that we live in, uh, it's so diverse here compared to some other places that it's not unusual to see, uh, different ethnicities together, so, uh, I don't feel like I encounter much opposition or...
> Mr. X: I have quite a few friends that are the same, interracial.
> Elise: Yeah, we limit, I guess our circle to people that are like, going to be okay with it, so it's kind of hard to guess. I don't know, I haven't yet been in a situation that I've actually felt somebody like 'you shouldn't be with that guy because he's not American, or he's not White'
> (Mr. & Mrs. X, Couple interview)

> Um, so since we both had some education and background… and you know, our group of friends were so diverse that we met through, the, you know, we just formed our relationship through multiculturalism, so. (Elise, Individual interview)

> I mean we're from a very, like we're from the suburbs of Chicago, it's a fairly liberal area, so, I mean here you can see so many mixed couples and so on I don't think people even notice it, I think they don't say anything or even mention it, I don't feel anything like that. I don't… No, I don't think I have, uh you know, not so much, uh I think with our generation, like we're friends with (people in our) generation, and like you know, most of our generation are more educated than our parents were, so I think people are a whole lot more considerate about making

> those kinds of judgements, especially like in our community, I haven't, yeah, I haven't experienced that… in this area there's a lot of interracial couples so I don't think we stand out that much. (Workhorse, Couple interview)

> We haven't had like an issue that made us feel that much, super wildly like, uncomfortable, in this neighborhood for example like everybody is very loving and very respectful but, when you go out to, mostly like what I said before, some places, you'll see a little bit of the looks and certain things. In our neighborhood it's like kind of like, yeah, you saw where you parked, you haven't heard a single car passing by, it's mostly people who live here, the kids kind of, everybody knows everybody sort of thing... (Tigray, Individual interview)

> So I haven't, I haven't picked up on a lot of negativity as far as towards our relationship, um, and again I think it's, maybe it's because we don't surround ourselves with those kinds of people or we don't, we're not in those kinds of circles. (Jennifer, Individual interview)

Every couple reported that their choice to live in a diverse place or near a community with which they could identify provided some insulation from discrimination.

Through the couples' narratives, two processes emerged delineating how heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples experience their partner and parent roles as they are impacted by their racial/ethnic, national, and gender identities. An illustration of the internal and external process that emerged as themes is provided in Figure 1.

Comparison of within-case and across-case

The within-case analysis resulted in a total of 16 themes, 2 to 3 themes that were salient for each couple. In this dyadic-level data analysis, their narratives corresponded to produce shared meanings and realities that they had about their partnership, parenting and family. The across-case analysis produced 2 emergent themes or processes. The across-case analysis was conducted by examining the frequency with which all 12 partners

talked about a topic, and how they connected in a coherent way to describe their experiences which resulted in two intersecting processes delineating how partners internally navigate their roles and identities in their relationship and how couples externally navigate and interface with families, communities and society.

A comparison between the within-case and across-case findings demonstrated that what was salient for each couple connected with what emerged as salient processes for all the couples. In terms of country of origin, racial and ethnic identification, years in the US, first or second marriage, and number of children, there was much diversity within the group, however, in terms of thematic analysis, there was minimal within- and across-group variation. Themes that emerged for each couple connected with the two processes that arose from looking across all couples. Please see Figure 2 for a pictorial representation of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The epistemological lens used in this study is Social Constructionism, which assumes that the social world is socially manufactured through human interactions and language. Thus it is essential to consider history and context. The way people make meaning of the world will shape their response to it. Intersectionality Theory holds that an individual's intersecting identities, given how they are socially constructed, engender specific experiences of both privilege and oppression within a social stratification system. Hermeneutic Phenomenology Theory posits that a person's meanings and reality is situated and intertwined with their history, background, and culture, and that they are both constructing and being constructed by the world. Together Intersectionality and Hermeneutic Phenomenology provide a sound theoretical perspective for the discursive nature of experience and reality in the constituting of identities and roles.

A significant obscuring factor in research with heterogeneous or marginalized couples and families is the absence of a theoretical lens that is comprehensive enough to uncover the intricacies of each participant's experience. In contrast, the results of this study were rich in its complexities and spoke to the importance of utilizing an intersectionality approach to understanding real experiences of heterosexual transnational interracial/interethnic couples by exploring their individual and joint narratives. This study contributed new understandings of a type of family that is more common and increasing exponentially in America- the Transnational Interracial/Interethnic Family.

First, it is important to understand how individuals and couples intersecting identities contribute to dynamic shifts in the nature of their couple relationships over

time. Shifts in gender, and parenting, played out in unique ways. Studies have found that shifts towards a more egalitarian relationship actually contributed to couples' resilience, similar to the positive evaluation expressed by couples in this study when speaking about shifts in gender roles (Ataca & Berry, 2001; Cheung, 2004). Some research has indicated that the length of residence, higher SES, language proficiency, and wives working outside of the home is connected with changes in gendered power in immigrant couple relationships which matched the sample characteristics in this study (Marshall, 2010; Kim, Laroche, and Tomiuk, 2004). Other studies indicate that the transition to parenthood may bring about a return to traditional gender roles (Hochschild & Machung, 2012), and this was not consistent with the findings in this study. While division of labor negotiation may become differentiated when a couple has a child, these couples described a more intentional process of sharing the burden and the tasks involved. Becoming parents heightened their awareness of their identity intersections and they turned towards mutually supporting each other. As for their parenting styles and practices, each partner brought their own ideas rooted in their cultural expectations and also evidenced shifts in their parenting towards becoming more emotionally attuned. Research indicates that social class impacts how parents socialize their children opting for more of an independent model of parenting versus an authoritarian style (Kohn, Slomcynski, & Schoenbach 1986; Kohn & Slomcynski, 1990; Yi, Chang, & Chang, 2004). The findings in this study is consistent with research on parenting themes in populations that are more resourced, higher educated, and higher SES. In some ways it can be inferred that these couples have a unique relationship resilience that may be different from other couples.

Both partners appear accustomed and adept at shifting and being flexible in their relationship that is facilitated by their positive framework.

Secondly, it is a point of importance to acknowledge the connection that foreign-born partners maintain with their families who may remain in their country of origin. They can have an ideal for their relationship with their families but have to consider their partner's as well especially when their point of contact involves preparing and receiving their families from another part of the world. The couples talk about this relational stress brought about by their contrasting ideas about closeness and connection and also the separation and reunion process being taxing, which is consistent with research findings on immigrant experiences (Falicov, 2007).

Third, the influence and impact of the people that have contact with these couples, even the larger society, presents challenges to each partner differently depending of the unique intersections of their identities. As they face prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination, and expectations, based on their visibility in society, they are able to seek support from each other and take steps to shield their children and themselves. This building of resiliencies and self-protective measures corroborates with the literature (Sabatier & Berry, 2008). Some of these efforts appeared to be indirect, as they described transmitting their culture and language to their children, and thus wanting them to have pride in their cultural heritage. Some studies do show that immigrant and minority parents often emphasize ethnicity, and culture in their socialization process with their children (Biafora, Warheit, Zimmerman, Gilm Aspori, Taylor, & Vega. 1993; Phinney & Chavira, 1995).

Finally, a significant resilience of these couples seemed simple but held a lot of meaning for them- and that was in how the foreign-born partner included the US-born partner in their customs and cultural practices, and the US-born partner was invested in learning and embracing the foreign-born partner's culture. This is an area that has only started being explored in the literature and there is evidence that the resettlement of immigrants in this country is aided by efforts to embrace their culture of origin, and for them to be given opportunities to join with their own ethnic group and practice their heritage (Scholten, 2011; Simich, Beiser, & Mawani, 2003). The foreign-born partner not only feels connected with parts of their former home culture but also feels safe to construct a new home with their partner who is willing to provide support and appreciation, and to further sustain these traditions with their children.

Implications

For future research. As noted in the beginning of the study, I aimed to contribute a comprehensive view of both challenges and resiliencies of interracial/interethnic couples parenting instead of the common linear, tokenized perception of their relationship. In addition, I wanted to raise awareness of the societal pressures rooted in the dominant discourse that these couples face. Finally, I wanted to explore plausible clinical considerations and applications to support these couples from the wisdom in their experiences. If I could re-visit these couples when their children were older, I would like to see how they have had conversations about cultural identities with their children.

The intersectionality between identities (race/ethnicity, nativity, gender) and roles (partner and parent) and other salient contextual variables needs to be addressed in future

studies by exploring the experiences of transnational families. Researchers should particularly explore the experiences of same-sex couples as they may have different experiences given their additional marginalized identity. Social location along with power and subjugation, needs to be a centralized concept in family research because it allows for the deconstructing of hegemonic discourses that often obscures true understandings of families.

My recommendations for future research designs in order to advance understandings of marginalized families in the US is to 1) make all efforts to recruit from diverse populations, 2) conduct in-depth interviews with each individual from the family separately and then together, and 3) explicitly utilize an intersectionality framework.

Recruiting diverse populations in terms of race, ethnicity, SES, LGBTQIA, nativity, etc. can be challenging and often the best methods may include snowball or stratified sampling. Conducting interviews both separately and together allows a richness of understanding and joint meanings to emerge in ways that either approaches alone does not. As family scholars it is beneficial to be able to accumulate dyadic- or group-level data to explore the intersubjectivity and interrelatedness of how families function because it uncovers their unique cultures and their resiliencies. There has been a real lack of research that samples both partners within a relationship, specifically with diverse populations. Eliciting data from multiple reporters allows researchers to gain intersubjective meanings shared by multiple family members.

Clinical considerations. As Hardy (2008) stated, it is easier for us to ignore others' experiences of oppression when we are in positions of power in relation to them. To be able to effectively work with transnational families, I propose a list of best

practices, in terms of assessments, awareness of variability due to intersections, building relationships, and avoiding missteps. Many of these recommendations arise from the couples themselves when I asked them at the end of the couple interview how couples and family therapist may best be able to support them.

Similar to how therapist conduct initial assessments with every couple or family that they meet, working with a transnational family is similar. The couples highlighted not taking sides, and balancing the alliance between the two partners because it would be easy for the foreign-born partner to feel like they were the cause of the presenting concerns, or internalize the message that they aren't well versed in the dominant culture and thus their point of view is less important. In addition, spending more time aligning with the US-born partner perpetuates the expectation that the foreign-born partner is expected to assimilate and even conform to the communication style encouraged within the room (which can be culturally different). Early assessments should include the couples' resiliencies and possibly an inquiry as to what external pressures the couple as a team experience.

In terms of mere bandwidth, the couples in this study spent more time talking about the foreign born partner's familial expectations, reception, and dynamics even when they weren't directly asked about it in the interview. When I asked about how therapists may best understand and assist transnationally interracial/intercultural couples, over half spoke at length about considering extended family dynamics. As a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher believing that participants words are already interpreted knowledge, it was fairly obvious that these couples found the relationships with the foreign born partner's family to be of importance. The therapist then needs to thread

carefully in how they elicit an understanding of the connections with the foreign-born partner's family and the US-born partner's family.

An awareness that in different spheres and contexts each partner may experience oppression or privilege that may not be mirrored in their relationship is important, and thus the therapist task is to be able to hold and synthesize these realities. For example, a Black male transnational husband and father who migrated from the Virgin Islands when he was 18 and is hard of hearing, who is married to a White American woman, where both of them practice Catholicism, have 3 teenagers, 1 of which is a daughter, and are within the middle income bracket are referred to a therapist because the daughter has been skipping school. The therapist quickly becomes aware that the father has an authoritarian parenting style and a possible power differential, where he holds more influence in the decision-making with his wife. Not asking about each partner's identities and how it connects with their roles as partner and parent will obscure an understanding of the complexities of contextual power and privilege.

One of the missteps that the couples identified was a therapist or family members prematurely declaring their relationship as not sustainable and even suggesting divorce. The couples talked about how their conception of what may constitute a 'deal-breaker' to them is different from others biases. Almost every couple underscored the importance of a therapist being cognizant of their biases, and also being open and accepting. Couples also talked about the importance of the therapist having some awareness of the country of origin and the culture of the foreign-born partner. Many couples attended to the intersections of identities and how that can shape migratory experiences and resettlement-they noted that where a transnational partner is from, the historical context of their nation

and the US, and the manner in which they entered the US are all important to understand before assuming that one immigrant's experience is the same as another's. Not surprisingly the couples overwhelmingly expressed the importance of helping the couple find their own unique solutions and ways of being. Finally, this research highlights the flaws in drawing simplistic explanations of the success or failure of intermarriages.

Finally, the questions used in this study that I constructed to explore identity and role intersections can be a starting point of a culturally aware assessment that therapists can use with their client systems.

Limitations

To accurately consider the transferability of findings to other populations, it is important to examine and compare the characteristics of the sample and then the population to which the findings may be applied to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A thorough description of the participants has been provided throughout chapter four.

For example, it is important to keep in mind that this sample includes participants who are college educated, having earned bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees, and who use the English language well. Furthermore, they all come from an upper middle to higher socio-economic bracket. Despite their route of entry to the US, all the foreign-born participants are in this country legally. The findings may only be transferable to a segment of immigrant populations who have been able to pursue academe and have financial security. The US-born partners all identified as White, and similarly had college and graduate-level degrees. Important differences in terms of 'acculturation', language acquisition, exposure to a larger and more diverse marriage pool, and social support may prevent these findings from being transferable to other transnational couples.

Foreign-born participants, however, had a high degree of variability in terms of country of origin, race, ethnicity, age of entry to the US, and route of entry whether as asylees or with student visas. Both partners were also diverse in terms of number and ages of children, whether it was their first or second marriage, and their field or profession. Contextual variables that contribute towards the homogeneity of the sample is all the couples being between the ages of 30 and 43 years old, all the couples having entered into their long-term relationship with each other 5-9 years ago, and more than half the couples identified with a Christian faith. In addition, while it was the inclusion criteria for this study, in the rationale that I wanted to explore socially constructed gendered narratives, all the couples identified as heterosexual.

Final Considerations

Around 1.25 million people migrate to the United States every year; estimates suggest that much of future U.S. population increases will be attributable to immigration and their descendants (Card, 2001; US Census Bureau, 2011). Accompanying the cultural and racial diversification of the U.S. population due to immigration, is an increase in intermarriage or exogamous marriage, partner selection outside one's own racial, ethnic, or cultural group. Intermarriage is a fairly new phenomenon due to historic restrictions on U.S. immigrant populations.

This research study aimed to examine how identities (gender, race/ethnicity, nativity) and other contextual factors, influence and impact roles as partner and parent for heterosexual Transnational, Interracial/Interethnic, couples. All foreign-born partners were from different countries and entered the US is varying ways. All but one of the US-born partner was female and White. With the diversity of culture, race, ethnicity, reason for migrating, and country of

origin, there were still commonalities expressed through similar themes in the narratives across couples. The essence of the phenomenon under examination is that the ways in which each partner constructed their identities and roles were interlocked with their partner's identity and role construction process. As a couple, they made meanings through language and shared narratives from the ongoing interactions with their families, communities, and society. Their realities, shaped by their identities of race/ethnicity, gender, and nativity, and their roles of partner and parent were in constant flux as they developed individually, as a couple, and as a family. Essentially, the intersections of their internal process and intersections, and their external process and intersections, provide a picture of how these couples navigated the complexities of their daily lives.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in the
"Transnational Interracial/interethnic Parenting Experiences" study
Investigator: Blendine Hawkins, M.S.
Adult Consent Form—Signature Authorization

INTRODUCTION: You have been invited to participate in a research study. The main investigator of the study is Blendine Hawkins, MS, LAMFT, Doctoral Candidate in the Family Social Science Department at the University of Minnesota, and Visiting Instructor and Supervisor in the Couples and Family Therapy Program at the University of Oregon. You were chosen to participate in the study because of your experience as a partner and parent in a transnational, interracial/interethnic, heterosexual couple relationship. Up to 30 participants will be enrolled in this study, 15 couples. Participation should require about 30 minutes of your time for the individual interviews, in addition to approximately 15 minutes to complete two short questionnaires, and 60 minutes of your time for the couple interviews. Participation is entirely voluntary; you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the parenting experiences of transnational interracial/interethnic couples from each partner's perspectives and their joint perspective. Results of this study may be presented at community workshops, professional conferences, and/or in a manuscript for publication. You will not be identified in any of the results without your permission.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a face-to-face interview, completed in person or internet-mediated (using Skype), to discuss your experience being a parent and partner in a transnational, interracial/interethnic family. Specifically, this study will ask qualitative questions that pertain to your social self and relational identity, your perceptions of larger societal narratives, and how you have navigated these differences and challenges jointly. A necessary condition for participation is that the interviews will be audio and video recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS BEING IN THE STUDY: There are no known major risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient for you to take time to be interviewed. Since the topic of navigating societal pressures as a diverse family can be a sensitive topic, some of the questions in the interview may cause mild emotional discomfort. The interview may also increase your awareness of the need for professional support and referrals will be provided if needed.

BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY: There are no direct benefits to subjects.

PAYMENTS: A couple who completes the study will be provided with one $25 gift card. Partial compensation will be provided for completion of individual interviews, $5 for an individual interview ($10 for individual interviews with both you and your partner). After both the completion of the individual interviews and the couple interview, a $25 gift card will be handed to you or mailed to you.

COSTS: There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Interviews will either be in-person or internet-mediated. To ensure your confidentiality, in-person interviews will be conducted in a private setting like an office room or a secure place of your choice. For internet-mediated interviews, because you are selecting the location for which you participate, the researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality of the location. It is advised that you use a personal not public computer, be in a closed, private room during the length of the interview, and log off

of the program used to digitally communicated with the researcher after the completion of the interview. It is impossible to guarantee complete data security of transmissions from your computer to the researcher's server, and can be susceptible to interruption, corruption, third party hacking. Like other computer-mediated research, the researcher will make efforts to protect your confidentiality, through multiple ways. The researcher will be in a secure, private, locked office space. The recorded interviews will be saved onto a password protected drive. Information about the interviews and your identity will be kept confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked office. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. Since any data transferred online, including emails, are susceptible to interference from outside, you can take steps to protect your confidentiality such as using a personal computer, logging out of your email account and deleting email exchanges between you and the researcher. All electronic correspondence between you and the researcher, from the initial contact and exchanged throughout the course of the study, will be deleted from the researcher's email account at the completion of the study. Individual participants' data will be kept separate from identifying information and you will be able to choose your own "code name" to attach to the data (as opposed to your real name) to further protect your confidentiality. You will also be asked to choose a "couple code name" that will be attached to the data from the couple interviews. These name will be decided upon at the beginning of each interview. It is these names that all identifying materials (audio files, transcripts, observation notes, research documents) will be marked. Each interview will be audio taped and video recorded for later transcription and only be accessed by the primary investigator and the faculty advisor. The audiotapes and videotapes will be destroyed once the study is complete. Recording the interview is a requirement for participation in the study. The information collected as part of this study will not be used to identify you. Access to the records will be limited to the researcher; however, please note that the Institutional Review Board of the University of Minnesota/Oregon may review the research records. Finally, your records will be kept confidential with the exception of one circumstance: suspicion of harm to yourself, to children, or to others. The researcher within her professional ethical standards is required to report to the appropriate authorities, if there is any imminent risk or danger to yourself or others. As a mandated reporter according to Oregon state laws, the researcher is required by law to report alleged abuse of children under the age of 18 and vulnerable populations.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS: Information you share in the individual interviews will not be discussed in your partner's individual interview. Information you share in the individual interviews will or may be disclosed in the couple interview UNLESS you specifically state otherwise. Your responses in the individual interviews can be kept secret or private, and will not be brought up or disclosed by the interviewer in the couple interview if you would prefer it. Please initial below only if you would like parts or all of your individual interview to not be disclosed or shared in the couple interview. You may specify your preference at any point during and after this interview. You will be asked to confirm your preference again at the completion of your individual interview. Your preference to not share information from your individual interviews will not be disclosed to your partner.

i. *I prefer that specific information or parts of my individual interview not be shared in the couple interviews.* _____ (Initial here)

ii. *I prefer that all of my individual interview not be shared in the couple interviews.* _____ (Initial here)

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/WITHDRAWAL: Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the Universities. You are free to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason. There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not taking part or for stopping your participation. You have the right to refuse any questions proposed in the interview.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS: You are encouraged to ask any questions, at any time, that will help you

to understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact the principal investigator, Blendine Hawkins, MS, at (808)349-6649 or (541)346-7487 or blendine@uoregon.edu. You may also contact Blendine's faculty adviser, Dr. Catherine Solheim, at 612-625-1201 or csolheim@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650 or the Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon at (541) 346-2510; ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu

COPY OF CONSENT FORM: You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT: I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

SIGNATURE/DATES: Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

_____ _____
Study Participant/Print Name Date

_____ _____
Study Participant/Signature Date

_____
Selected Code Name

Contact Information to be completed by the interviewer:

_____
Email address Phone

Preferred way to be contacted? _____

If prefer to correspond via postal mail, please provide your mailing address:

Appendix B: Recruitment Flier

RESEARCH INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

PARENTING EXPERIENCES OF TRANSNATIONAL INTERMARRIED COUPLES

My name is Blendine Hawkins. I would like to invite you and your partner to participate in my dissertation research study about your transnational intermarried parenting experience. The purpose of this study is to explore the stories of parenting that couples share to learn from your knowledge and experiences.

Your participation will entail the completion of a short questionnaire, a 30-45 minute interview with each partner first, and a 60 minute interview with both partners together at a later date. These may be in person or through online video chat.

In appreciation of your time and wisdom shared, a small token, a $25 gift card will be sent to you at the end of the interviews.

The results of this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at professional conferences, however your name and identity will not be revealed and will remain anonymous. The compiled findings, without identifying information, will also be accessible to you and families that may find this useful. Your participation may benefit others in the knowledge gained about transnational intermarried parenting experiences in the US. There are minimal risks to you as participants; some questions may make you uncomfortable and you may choose not to answer, or withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you can call the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (612-626-5654) or the University of Oregon's Institutional Review Board (541-346-2510).

I would like to hear about your family stories.

To Participate In This Study, You and Your Partner:

- **Must be a heterosexual couple married for 5 or more years**
- **Where one of you identifies as foreign-born and from a racial minority group and the other identifies as a US-born individual**
- **Are residing in the US**
- **Have and are parenting one or more children together**
- **Speak and understand English**

BLENDINE HAWKINS
M.S., LAMFT
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
VISITING INSTRUCTOR
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
808-349-6649
hawki368@umn.edu
blendine@uoregon.edu
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blendine.hawkins

Appendix C: Demographic Survey

Transnational Interracial/interethnic Parenting Experiences

Demographic Survey

We ask that these questions be answered for yourself and from your perspective.

1. Your code name: _____
2. Your identified gender: _____
3. Your age: _____
4. Your country of birth: _____
5. What is your identified ethnicity? _____
6. What is your identified race? _____
7. What other languages do you speak besides English? _____
8. What is your religious affiliation (if any): _____
9. Years married to your current partner: _____
10. Children that you parent together with your partner and their ages:

Child 1, age _____
Child 2, age _____
Child 3, age _____
Child 4, age _____
Child 5, age _____
Child 6, age _____

11. Your level of education:

☐	☐	☐		☐
High School	Some College	BA or Associates	☐ Masters/other graduate	ABD/ or PhD

12. What is your occupation? _____

If you are foreign-born, please answer question 13 to 15

13. Reason for moving to the United States

□ Academic Study □ Family □ Other: _____ □ Prefer not to answer

14. If your reason for staying (if different from reason for moving to the US):

_____

15. Years resided in the US: _____

Appendix D: Individual Interview Script

Now that we have reviewed the confidentiality and consent paperwork, firstly, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me. Also, I appreciate you filling out those two questionnaires.

1. *Could you start by helping me get oriented to your early family situation? If you could tell me where you were born, and a little about your family structure. How you would describe your childhood? How would you describe your relationship with your parents?*

2. *Can we switch gears and focus on the family that you have made? You and your partner have been together for over 5 years and have children…if I were to ask you to choose five words or adjectives that reflects your relationship with your partner, what would they be? (question taken from the adult attachment interview protocol).*

3. *Now, I know a little about your background, I'd like to focus on your partner's. Can you tell me about how you have gotten to know about your partner's culture? Were there specific things that you recall learning?*

    a. *What are things in your culture that you have in common with your partner's culture? What things are different?*

    b. *Tell me about a time when those differences have played a role in the disagreements that you have had with your partner.*

4. *Next, I was hoping you could tell me about your experience being a parent. How would you describe yourself as a parent? How would you describe your partner as a parent?*

    a. *Can you tell me about a time where you both disagreed on a parenting decision?*

    b. *If you were to think back about your parents- how not alike or alike with them would you consider yourself? In what ways? Are these different from your partner's ways?*

5. *Often, people report that others in society and in their community make assumptions about their parenting. Have you ever experienced that, and if you have, can you tell me about it? Can you tell me about a time that you experienced this? What do you think their perception of you was? What were they expecting of you? What did you take from that experience? Was this a shared experience with your partner?*

6. *Do you perceive racial/gender differences between supporters and opponents of your relationship?*

    a. *Would you say that the differences in who supports or is critical of your relationship (whether they are male/female/White/person of color) depends on your and your partner's race/gender/nativity? For example, is it more likely for someone who is a White male to be encouraging of your marriage because you are _____ (a White American male who is married to a South East Asian foreign-born woman)? Why do you think that is?*

Appendix E: Couple Interview Script

After spending some time thinking about the questions that I asked you both individually, I was wondering if you had any additional ideas that you wanted to share.

1. *How did you both meet each other? What was your first impression of your partner and then, what attracted you to your partner?*

2. *How and why did you make the decision to marry?*

3. *When I interviewed you separately, you both told me about some of the perceptions from society that you face. I was wondering if you both have discussed these before. What assumptions do you think your partner faces as a ___(self-identified race/ethnicity) parent?*

4. *As an intermarried/interracial couple, how do you think others see you? Can you think of a time that that was apparent? Do you agree with your partner's assessment of your relationship? How is it different?*

5. *How do you think others see you in your role as parents, in regards to being interracial?*

6. *Are there ways that you parent in public different from in private? Why? Are there ways that you feel that you must present yourselves or your children in public due to your race and their biracialness? Are there impressions or stereotypes that you are aware of- how do you manage or respond?*

I would like to ask questions specific to each of you but I'd like if your partner gives his/her opinion as well of your experience.

7. *Being an immigrant and potentially isolated from your cultural group- how did this bear on the start and maintenance of your relationship?*

8. *For family members that remain in their country of origin- how have you (foreign-born partner) announced your union to them? Has there been multiple wedding receptions? If they have not met your partner- has his/her race been a factor in describing your partner? How had you anticipated their family's reaction- and what were their reactions?*

9. *Do you feel like you (native partner) are very familiar with your partner's culture? (Probe for if they had less knowledge and thus more willingness to further pursue the relationship?)*

10. *What are your (foreign-born partner) family's expectations/justifications/concessions/frustrations with your partner? And vice versa? (when it comes to parenting combined with gender roles specifically)*

11. *Are you (native partner) given much leeway to behave in ways that may be confusing? Are excuses like 'these Americans must just do things this way' given?*

12. *Do your (native partner) parents share confidences and concerns connected to your partner's race, gender or culture?*

13. *What advice do you have for other transnational intermarried couples in the US, especially those who are just starting their life together? What would you tell them about parenting?*

14. *Finally, what would you tell a couples, marriage and family therapist who works with intermarried couples? Are there things that they should not say or assume? How can they better help intermarried couples?*

Appendix G: University of Minnesota IRB protocol approval letter

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

Human Research Protection Program
Office of the Vice President for Research

D528 Mayo Memorial Building
420 Delaware Street S.E.
MMC 820
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Office: 612-626-5654
Fax: 612-626-6061
E-mail: irb@umn.edu or ibc@umn.edu
Website: http://research.umn.edu/subjects/

August 13, 2015

Blendine P. Hawkins
1885 Kingsley Road, Apt. 106
Eugene, OR 97401-1519

RE: "Transnational Intermarried Parenting Experiences" IRB Code Number: **1507P75301**

Dear Ms. Hawkins:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval at 45CFR46.111 and the requirements set by the IRB, final approval for the project is noted in our files. Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes the consent form and phone script/screener versions dated August 5, 2015 and recruitment material received July 2, 2015.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 30 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

On August 4, 2015, the IRB approved the referenced study through August 2, 2016, inclusive. The Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems or serious unexpected adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

Sincerely,

Clinton Dietrich, MA
Research Compliance Supervisor
CD/bw

CC: Catherine Solheim

Appendix H: University of Oregon IRB protocol approval letter

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

DATE: July 28, 2015 IRB Protocol Number: 07022015.002

TO: Blendine Hawkins, Principal Investigator
Department of Counseling, Family & Human Services

RE: Protocol entitled, "Intersections of Transnational Intermarried Parenting
Experiences"

Notice of IRB Review and Approval

Expedited Review as per Title 45 CFR Part 46 # 6, 7

The project identified above has been reviewed by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Research Compliance Services using an expedited review procedure. This is a minimal risk study. This approval is based on the assumption that the materials, including changes/clarifications that you submitted to the IRB contain a complete and accurate description of all the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research.

For this research, the following additional determinations have been made:

- The IRB has waived the requirement to obtain documentation of informed consent under 45 CFR 46.117 (c)(2) to allow for obtaining verbal consent from participants who participate in interviews via Skype.

Contingency: This approval is contingent upon the PI obtaining IRB approval from the University of Minnesota. Documentation of that approval must be sent to RCS as soon as possible.

This approval is given with the following standard conditions:

1. You are approved to conduct this research only during the period of approval cited below;
2. You will conduct the research according to the plans and protocol submitted (approved copy enclosed);
3. You will immediately inform Research Compliance Services of any injuries or adverse research events involving subjects;

4. You will immediately request approval from the IRB of any proposed changes in your research, and you will not initiate any changes until they have been reviewed and approved by the IRB;
5. You will only use the approved informed consent document(s) (enclosed);
6. You will give each research subject a copy of the informed consent document;
7. If your research is anticipated to continue beyond the IRB approval dates, you must submit a Continuing Review Request to the IRB approximately 60 days prior to the IRB approval expiration date. Without continuing approval the Protocol will automatically expire on July 27, 2016.

Additional Conditions: *Any research personnel that have not completed CITI certificates should be removed from the project until they have completed the training. When they have completed the training, you must submit a Protocol Amendment Application Form to add their names to the protocol, along with a copy of their CITI certificates.*

Approval period: July 28, 2015 - July 27, 2016

The University of Oregon and Research Compliance Services appreciate your efforts to conduct research in compliance with University of Oregon Policy and federal regulations that have been established to ensure the protection of human subjects in research. Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB process.

Sincerely,

Carolyn J. Craig, Ph.D.
Research Compliance Administrator

CC: Catherine Solheim, Co-Investigator

Figure 7. Illustration of internal and external process that emerged from the couples' narratives.

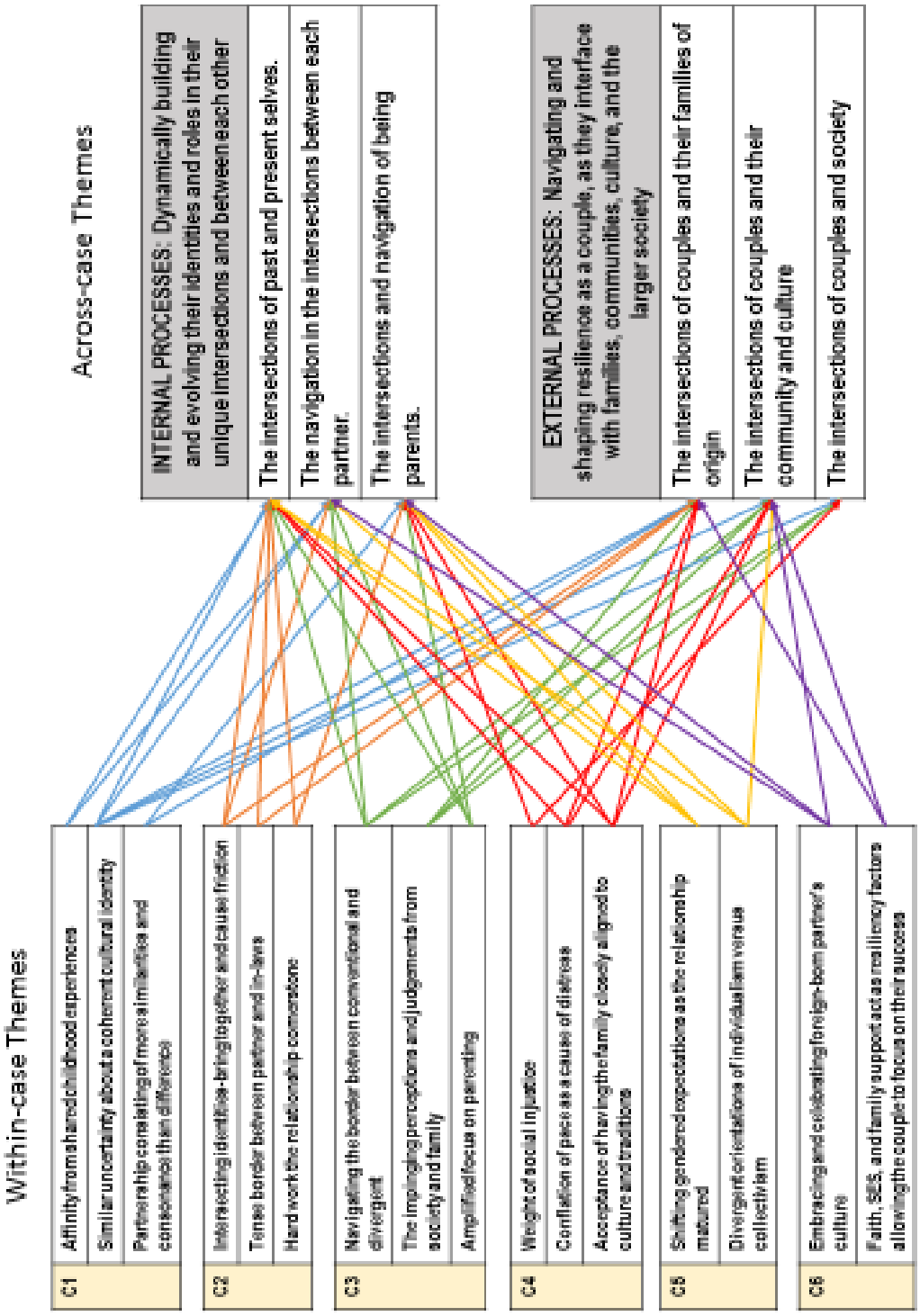

Figure 8. Results of comparison between within-case and across-case results