

**Healing From Colonial Trauma: An Autoethnographic Approach to Reconciling Multicultural Identity  
Through Traditional Art-Making**

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### **Abstract**

Identity theories of development have long excluded people from multiracial backgrounds and complex life situations. This lack of knowledge has a negative impact on individuals and communities, as practitioners struggle to understand the intricacies required to best serve these populations during identity formation. Artistic practices are easily accessible forms of culture. Art helps us see into the lives of others and connect with individuals that feel like us. This is particularly important when individuals have been divorced from a portion of their race and/or ethnicity and have felt discrimination because of the intersectional nature of their identity. Through arts engagement, people can find direct links to their culture, allowing them full ownership and reconciliation with their previously fragmented identity.

This study explored the concept of engagement with heritage arts as healing. I was the singular participant, a 42-year-old female who identifies as Korean, Caucasian, and Native American. I was raised distanced from Korean culture and did not engage in Korean cultural activities until late adulthood. The Aspects of Identity Questionnaire IV (AIQ-IV) was taken as a pre- and post-test. 5 Korean traditional art practices were completed over ten weeks. Video was taken of each artistic process. Biweekly reflections and sijos were created after completing each artistic practice. Biweekly meetings were held between participant and faculty to discuss findings.

Word choice in the biweekly sijos indicated growth from sadness to joy and happiness. Social identity orientation decreased by 20%, relational identity orientation increased by 16.67%, and collective identity orientation increased by 14.29% between the pre- and post-AIQ-IV scores.

*Keywords:* identity theory of development, heritage crafts, healing, belonging

## **Healing From Colonial Trauma: An Autoethnographic Approach to Reconciling Multicultural Identity Through Traditional Art-Making**

Identity theories of development have long excluded people from multiracial backgrounds as individuals with complex races and ethnicities are not a one-size-fits-all monolith. This lack of knowledge negatively impacts individuals and communities, as practitioners struggle to understand the intricacies required to best serve this population during initial identity formation as children and adolescents and again, as adults reclaiming their various identities.

Artistic practices, be it writing, painting, ceramics, and everything in between, are easily accessible forms of culture. Art helps us see into the lives of others and connect with individuals that feel like us. This is particularly important when individuals have been divorced, either through force or choice, from a portion of their race and/or ethnicity and have experienced discrimination because of the intersectional nature of their identity. Through arts engagement, people find direct links to their culture, allowing them full ownership and reconciliation with their previously fragmented identity.

In this paper, I will provide a literature review of various identity theories. I will explore the intersection of heritage culture and craft, and their tie to healing individual and collective colonial trauma, the multigenerational trauma experienced by groups because of their oppressed status (Administration for Children & Families, n.d.). Additionally, I will outline the autoethnographic study completed on healing colonial trauma using heritage art, and the results of engaging with traditional arts from my own heritage for potential healing, the implications, and possible directions for future investigation.

### **Identity Theory**

Researchers Jones and McEwen (2000) and Wijeyesinghe (2001) argue that one's identity is not fixed. It is a sense of self in constant flux due to one's experiences and interactions with others (Wijeyesinghe, 2012). Positive sense of ethnic or racial identity improves well-being and is associated

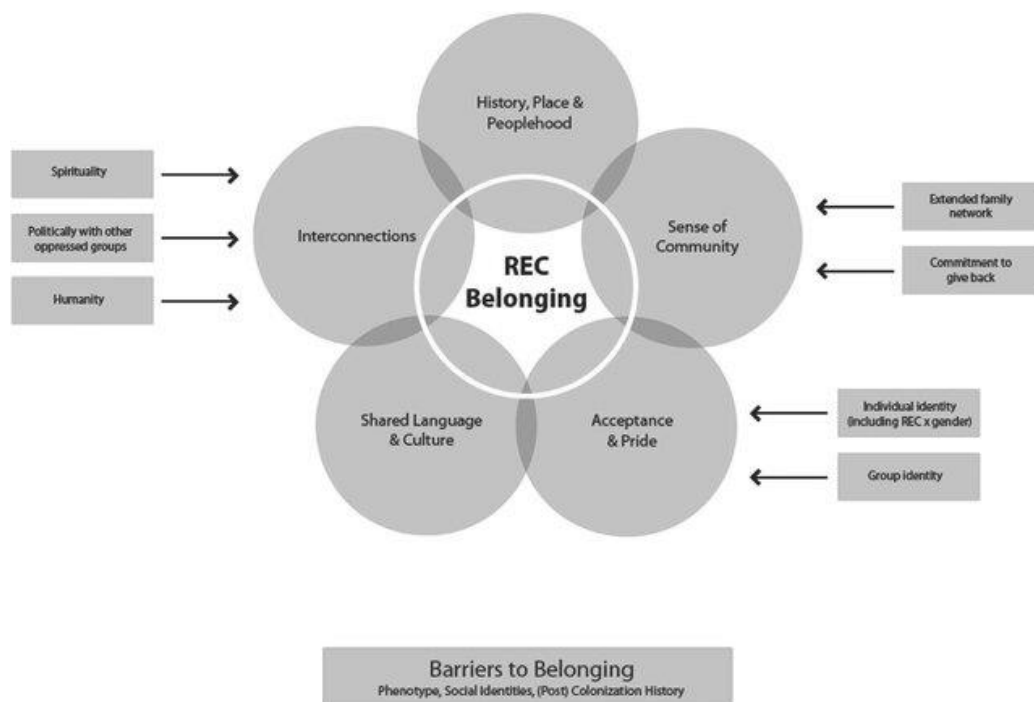
with decreased psychological distress in global majority and ethnic minority groups (Lee et al., 2010). Ultimately, however, ethnic and racial identity is a choice for which there are at least 8 influencing factors: racial ancestry, early experience & socialization, cultural attachment, physical appearance, social and historical context, political awareness and orientation, spirituality, and other social identities. Additionally, region, marginality, social privilege, and the intersections between all aspects of the self, play a role in overall identity development (Wijeyesinghe, 2012).

Previous identity theories of development focused primarily on White, European populations. Early work highlighted a hierarchy of identities and behavior based on value assumptions (Stets & Burke, 2014). The main psychologist studying these theories, Charles E. Osgood, worked out of University of Chicago in the 1960s, a time when it was virtually impossible for people of color to attend college. Upon his death in 1991, he had yet to finish work interpreting data on cross-cultural research that he had begun in the 60s (Brewer, 1994), showing the lack of representation of people of color in the theories previously developed. These theories were not made for, nor have they been validated for, people of other ethnic backgrounds such as Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Yoo (2021) argues that “Asian American unity, interracial solidarity, and transnational critical consciousness are at the core of Asian American racial identity” (pp. 319-320), thus making identity theories moot if said theories do not take these aspects into consideration.

An alternative to ethnic-identity theories is diasporic identity theory that focuses on the multinational requirements of migration. This theory argues that navigating between what is considered “homeland” and the country in which one currently resides is inherently tied to identity development (Kim et al., 2021). Kim and colleagues (2021) argues that those who are part of a country’s diaspora and are physically displaced are often done so through traumatic means. However, through that trauma, “people maintain an enduring cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral attachment to the homeland that may be real, imagined, or otherwise unobtainable because of socio-historical forces. They also maintain

a sense of ingroup connection and solidarity” (p. 305). These three elements of homeland, displacement, and ingroup solidarity make up diasporic identity.

Multiple researchers argue that those who have experienced transnational and/or transracial adoption have more complicated identity development because of their separation from cultural relatives, knowledge, language, and exclusion from other diasporic ingroups (Kim et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2010). I argue, however, that between the Western culture of assimilation, loss and separation from cultural knowledge, and exclusion from diasporic ingroups occurs for many individuals, not just those that experienced transnational adoption. It is not a rare occurrence for children of immigrants to have no access to their ancestral language or culture, as the desire for children to properly assimilate within Western culture pressures immigrant parents to avoid teaching this cultural knowledge to their children. This lack of connection to cultural heritage has led to a pandemic of non-belonging that needs healing, as the sense of belonging is inherently tied to identity development in a complex way. As shown in Figure 1, the 5 rings of belonging all encompass a person’s identity; to know your history, where you are from and where you are, who is part of your community, the language, culture, and your connections with others and the world, all are equally important to a sense of belonging

**Figure 1.****Barriers to Belonging**

*Note:* This figure was taken from Neville, H., Oyama, K. E., Odunewu, L. O., & Huggins, J. G. Dimensions of belonging as an aspect of racial-ethnic-cultural identity: An exploration of Indigenous Australians.

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As Yenedit Valencia states, “Once we know where we come from, where our parents come from, what languages we speak, what are our cultural practices, our values, there is not going back...once you know who you are, there’s just no going back” (Bissell, 2019, pp. 8-9). In the next section, I will discuss the re-connection with ancestral knowledge through access to heritage crafts.

### **Heritage Crafts**

Historically, crafts have been described as women’s work and considered low-brow art. Sigourney Jacks (2024), registrar at Artbank in Melbourne, states that craft “has been dismissed as a hobby, a pastime, fancywork.” Crafting is not an activity of value but an activity of a laborer. With the



changing times, crafts, ritual, and tradition are “rapidly losing value in a modern globalized and technology-based world. In India, the core symbolism and metaphor within creative practices are being lost to commodification while maintaining a stigma of inferiority and backwardness” (Jhaveri, 2021, p. 119). However, as we move toward a technology-based world, it will be imperative to ensure craft traditions are retained, as research shows that craft is particularly important because of its “transmission of cultural and intra-family traditions and skills as well as values and memories” (Pollanen, 2015, p. 67). It is the connection with tradition, ancestors, and ethnic culture that make participating in crafts of particular importance (Le Lagadec, et al., 2024, p. 1107). Shoesmith and colleagues (2025) found that by simply engaging in crafts connected to ancestral heritage, people can then discuss their connection to a greater cultural tradition.

Crafts, even more so than high-end art, has a low barrier to entry. Anyone can approach a piece of craft, because these art forms “circumvent traditional rubrics of expertise” (Bissell, 2019, p. 18), allowing any individual access to the traditions, processes, and meanings that may be difficult to understand from other cultural traditions. Because of this, Bissell (2019) states, “artists frequently act as alternative historians in compelling and transformative ways that create space for learning” (p. 16). Personally, I have seen the power of art as historian, when taking my partner to the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. This man, a burly welder by day, typically has no interest in art of any kind. However, traversing the halls of the Bishop Museum allowed him to engage with the stories of his Hawaiian ancestors, and has since led him to consider engaging in activism for the rights of Native Hawaiians. It is this narrative storytelling, through the use of heritage intervention that helps people build empathy, increase appreciation for societies and cultures, “bridge interpersonal divides” (Bissell, 2019, p. 20), and, ultimately, build a sense of belonging and community (Bissell, 2019; Shoesmith, 2025).

History and heritage are tied to public health using 3 frameworks: cognitive health, physiological health, and social concerns (Orthel, 2022). Within these frameworks are 4 themes that include mental

wellbeing, social connection (sense of value; belonging), sense of purpose, and self-identity (family, culture, and legacy) (Le Lagadec et al., 2024, p. 1099). Physically, interacting with heritage can relieve chronic pain, lower blood pressure, and help change negative and self-harming behavior (Le Lagadec, et al., 2024). Cognitively, engagement in heritage crafts is used to help older individuals feel a sense of community and purpose while helping to stimulate the brain (Orthel, 2022). “Survivors of the Great Japanese Earthquake who participated in a knitting program had a significantly higher subjective happiness score and quality of life score” (Le Lagadec, et al., 2024, p. 1100) demonstrating the mental and social impact of heritage craft engagement.

The act of creating crafts can attribute to feelings of belonging while also alleviating emotional stress by improving relaxation (Shoesmith, et al., 2025, p. 2). Batorowicz & Palmer (2024) found that by reclaiming a traditional craft, people report feeling a sense of “reclaiming of self” (p. 6). There are multiple reasons for this reclamation. Crafts have meaning and symbolism that when re-engaged gets passed between generations (Pollanen, 2015, p. 61). Engaging in crafts can help people feel a sense of cultural heritage that they may not otherwise have (Le Lagadec, et al., 2024) and “art made with slow craft provides the time and space to consider the source of old fibres and the history they embody. It opens up new relationships with the past” (Batorowicz & Palmer, 2024, p. 6). This connection with ancestors and traditional or heritage art is of particular importance to those who have been historically repressed and may have been afraid or unable to engage in heritage arts in the past. Even the act of replicating a traditionally-made item can create “ties to minority culture” (Pollanen, 2015, p. 67). These are ties that perhaps had been completely severed previously.

Researchers have found that “the recovery of tradition itself may be viewed as healing, both at the individual and collective levels” (Archibald & Deward, 2010, p. 2). When talking about colonial trauma, this trauma is compounded not simply by the trauma experienced on the individual level, but also on the whole of an individual’s people and community. Part of the healing process for an individual

experiencing trauma is the same process that the community needs to participate in: “learning about, mourning the loss of, and reconnecting with family, community and traditions” (Archibald & Deward, 2010, p. 12). A simple way for both individuals and communities to heal and reconnect is through arts engagement. As a more accessible art form, crafts “can be sensitively adopted...to help restore relationships to our common Indigenous and healing roots” (Jhaveri, 2021, p. 119).

### **Present Study**

The purpose of the present study was to determine if engagement with traditional arts from my own heritage could lead to healing. In this study, I took the Aspects of Identity Questionnaire IV (AIQ-IV) approximately 15 weeks prior to the start of engaging with traditional Korean artistic practices. I then completed 5 artistic practices over the course of 10 weeks. Each artistic practice included 1 week of planning and 1 week of creating. Upon the completion of each week, I created a reflective writing and a video of my work. At the end of each 2-week unit, I completed a *sijo*, a traditional Korean poem, based on my reflective writing. In addition, at the end of each unit, I met with Dr. Maria Kim, my faculty for this study, who specializes in expressive therapies and has extensive experience and knowledge of Korean culture.

I hypothesized that upon completion of the study, the post-AIQ-IV score would increase in the social and relational identity orientation constructs. I also hypothesized that I would feel a heightened sense of connection to Korean culture after completing the artistic practices.

### **Method**

#### ***Participants***

As an autoethnographic study, I am the singular participant. I am a 42-year-old female. During the course of this study, I relocated from Phoenix, Arizona to Waianae, Hawaii. My ethnicity is Korean, Caucasian, and Native American. I was raised distanced from Korean culture and did not engage with any Korea cultural activities until late in my adulthood.

### ***Design***

Cheek, Smith, and Tropp's (2022) ASQ-IV was used as a pre- and post-test.

I engaged with five traditional Korean artistic practices. Reflections were written after each week. Upon the completion of an artistic practice, I wrote a poem in sijo form. A video was created each week to show the creative process.

### ***Materials***

45 questions were taken from the AIQ-IV (Cheek, Smith, & Tropp, 2022) and scored using the appropriate method outlined in the study. The questions are shown in Appendix A. Reflections from the final weeks of each artistic practice are shown in Appendix B. Biweekly sijos are shown in Appendix C.

### ***Procedure***

Each artistic practice required research into the history and creation methods, followed by locating the required materials to create the art using traditional supplies or using modernized materials. Artistic Practice 1 was inlay. Instead of using traditional mother of pearl, I chose to create a modern inlay using glue that I pigmented after carving wood block. The wood block I sourced from Amazon along with the wood-working tools, while I sourced the pigment from local art stores. Artistic Practice 2 was joomchi and Artistic Practice 4 was ji-ho. For these practices, I sourced Korean hanji from a local art store and Gogam Hanji, a hanji manufacturer in Korea that sells traditional hanji using innovative creation approaches. Artistic Practice 3 was embroidery for which I sourced 100% natural mulberry silk thread from Mingguxiuyi, a manufacturer of Asian embroidery supplies and products. Artistic Practice 5 was hanbok. I used the silk thread from embroidery and sourced fabric and notions from my local art store.

### ***Results***

Qualitatively, I can report that the process of spending hours each week with only my thoughts and the movements of my hands was cathartic. My biweekly reflections (Appendix B) were intended to

be reflective notes that did not have a required structure. Each artistic practice, however, surfaced thoughts and feelings related to someone in my life, and the reflections then culminated in free-flowing letters to those individuals. The word choice in my biweekly sijos (Appendix C) often began with themes of sadness in the first half and progressed through growth to hope in the final half of each poem. During biweekly meetings with Dr. Maria Kim, we discussed the themes and potential opportunities based on the videos created for each process as well as the reflections I wrote. These conversations were pivotal to my understanding of the process of both engaging with the heritage art and the themes and ideas that were appearing in my writing.

Pre- and post-test AIQ-IV scores did not initially appear to change drastically based on individual scores for each orientation as shown in Figure 2. However, I calculated the percent change for each orientation and found the following: Personal identity orientation decreased by 1.82%, social identity orientation decreased by 20%, relational identity orientation increased by 16.67%, and collective identity orientation increased by 14.29%.

**Figure 2.**

AIQ-IV Pre-Score vs AIQ-IV Post-Score

	Pre-Test Score (November, 2024)	Post-Test Score (June, 2025)	Percent Change
Personal Identity Orientation	55/75 (73.3%)	54/75 (72%)	-1.82%
Relational Identity Orientation	36/50 (72%)	42/50 (84%)	16.67%
Social Identity Orientation	20/40 (50%)	16/40 (40%)	-20%
Collective Identity Orientation	21/60 (35%)	24/60 (40%)	14.29%

### Conclusions

As hypothesized my post-ASQ IV score increased in relational identity orientation by 16.67%. Although I did not anticipate such a dramatic percent change over time, the nature of this study may

have skewed the relational identity orientation increase as the sijos and reflections authentically led to an increase in sharing of thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The drastic decrease in social identity orientation could have been skewed by a significant move to a new culture and community, as well as separating from employment that required significant masking to find success. I am most interested in the 14.29% increase in collective identity orientation. As this study progressed, I was proud of the traditions and heritage that I was learning about and wanted to share it with others. It has felt important for others to know that my Korean-ness isn't just something I wear on my skin, but also something I embody in my life. That being said, my physical relocation to a place with a higher population of Korean Americans may have contributed to my comfort in feeling that sense of pride, something that I have historically found difficult.

It is hard to quantify the concept of being "healed" to determine if the purpose of this study was fulfilled; the ability to heal colonial trauma using heritage art. However, I can say that there are several aspects of my life, including parts of my intersectional identities that feel more reconciled. I do not feel I must choose between being Korean, American, or White. I can be them all, something I have historically struggled with, and I'm sure will still find difficult in certain situations in the future. For me, however, I believe that the true healing came from the nexus of learning, planning, and creating 5 Korean traditional art forms, writing my reflections and sijos, watching my engagement with the arts through videos I recorded, and talking about it all in my faculty biweekly meetings. There were several discussion points and metaphors between the heritage art engagement and my life that were brought to my attention in those meetings, that I would not have noticed individually.

Based on this autoethnographic study, I have the following recommendations for future research:

1. Similar studies with a larger sample size – It is impossible to know if this approach will work for people in general without further testing.

2. Use of craft-making from various heritages – It is difficult for any one person to be an expert in all things craft for any one culture let alone multiple, however, it is important that this be tested on people of all backgrounds using craft from their heritages, as well as from others, to see if the same effect can be replicated.
3. Group vs individual – Could healing for individuals and communities using heritage art occur while receiving these services in both individual and group settings?
4. Randomize treatment groups – Creating studies randomizing the types and number of treatments that will be used will help future researchers and practitioners learn the most effective method for treating identity development issues in adults who have experienced colonial trauma.

There are significant implications if similar results can be found in larger sample sizes. Psychology has taught us that identity reconciliation and healing from trauma should be treated with a multi-pronged approach and the utmost care. Every individual will heal differently, however, there is the potential for art therapists and community healers to provide services utilizing heritage arts and see significant healing. This is especially important for displaced individuals and those with complex identities that are difficult to reconcile.

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## Appendix A

### AIQ-IV Questions and Scoring

INSTRUCTIONS: These items describe different aspects of identity. Please read each item carefully and consider how it applies to you. Fill in the blank next to each item by choosing a number from the scale below:

- 1 = Not important to my sense of who I am
- 2 = Slightly important to my sense of who I am
- 3 = Somewhat important to my sense of who I am
- 4 = Very important to my sense of who I am
- 5 = Extremely important to my sense of who I am

1. The things I own, my possessions
2. My personal values and moral standards
3. My popularity with other people
4. Being a part of the many generations of my family
5. My dreams and imagination
6. The ways in which other people react to what I say and do
7. My race or ethnic background
8. My personal goals and hopes for the future
9. My physical appearance: my height, my weight, and the shape of my body
10. My religion
11. My emotions and feelings
12. My reputation, what others think of me
13. Places where I live or where I was raised
14. My thoughts and ideas

15. My attractiveness to other people
16. My age, belonging to my age group or being part of my generation
17. My gestures and mannerisms, the impression I make on others
18. The ways I deal with my fears and anxieties
19. My sex, being a male or a female
20. My social behavior, such as the way I act when meeting people
21. My feeling of being a unique person, being distinct from others
22. My relationships with the people I feel close to
23. My social class, the economic group I belong to whether lower, middle, or upper class
24. My feeling of belonging to my community
25. Knowing that I continue to be essentially the same inside even though life involves many external changes
26. Being a good friend to those I really care about
27. My self-knowledge, my ideas about what kind of person I really am
28. My commitment to being a concerned relationship partner
29. My feeling of pride in my country, being proud to be a citizen
30. My physical abilities, being coordinated and good at athletic activities
31. Sharing significant experiences with my close friends
32. My personal self-evaluation, the private opinion I have of myself
33. Being a sports fan, identifying with a sports team
34. Having mutually satisfying personal relationships
35. Connecting on an intimate level with another person
36. My occupational choice and career plans
37. Developing caring relationships with others

- 38. My commitments on political issues or my political activities
- 39. My desire to understand the true thoughts and feelings of my best friend or romantic partner
- 40. My academic ability and performance, such as the grades I earn and comments I get from teachers
- 41. Having close bonds with other people
- 42. My language, such as my regional accent or dialect or a second language that I know
- 43. My feeling of connectedness with those I am close to
- 44. My role of being a student in college
- 45. My sexual orientation, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual

#### SCORING FOR AIQ-IV

PI = Personal Identity Orientation

RI = Relational Identity Orientation

SI = Social Identity Orientation

CI = Collective Identity Orientation

Each of the scale scores is the sum of the answers (1-5) given to those items.

For AIQ-IV 45 items, the scoring numbering is:

PI= 2 5 8 11 14 18 21 25 27 32 [10 items]

RI = 22 26 28 31 34 35 37 39 41 43 [10 items]

SI=3 6 9 12 15 17 20 [7 items]

CI = 4 7 10 13 24 29 38 42 [8 items]

Note: The questions and scoring are taken from Cheek, J., Smith, S., & Tropp, L. (2002, February).

*Relational identity orientation: A fourth scale for the AIQ (aspects of identity questionnaire)* [Conference

presentation]. Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Meeting, Savannah, GA, United States. <https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.1643.7763>

## Appendix B

## Biweekly Reflections

Figure B1.

## Week 2 Reflection

Dear Sister,

Today, as I was chipping away at wood and pulling the shapes I created with shimmering colors, I realized I was making the two of us. From afar, your brightness can be blinding, but upon closer inspection, the colors become muddled and messy. Your outline is filled with rough edges, waiting to cut, happy to cut anyone that gets too close. Even me.

My flower is different. Its shape is more formed with only a few rough spots that have been filed down with age. Although far from perfect, each of my petals are distinct and although not perfect, the colors can be clearly distinguished. But you, as always try to eclipse me, as if life is a race and we all have the same destination.

I fear as you age, your petals will wilt, becoming brown and brittle relying on the elements to shield you from harm. I fear you will never know the joy of life when all you seek is the thrill of a win.

I was never your competitor but your sponsor, we're you on to always do

your personal best. I would have always been your safe haven, keeping your colors bright and your petals from tearing.

But you chose another way. Like our mother before you, you chose to focus on the short game, how could you get ahead? How could you get everything you thought you wanted and needed?

I've pulled my sponsorship. Your colors, although beautiful, are toxic. Too toxic for my worn edges.

I hope one day you learn how to help yourself thrive. I hope one day, you can stand on your own while surrounded by other joyful flowers.

But I will never see that.

And for that I grieve.

-AP

Figure B2.

## Week 4 Reflection

Dear Nana,

I've been missing you lately and everything is reminding me of you. The other day someone named Pat scrolled past my screen followed quickly by someone named Nana. Are you asking the universe to tell me something?

I'm leaving on a new adventure soon. Do you know that I do that because of you? Do you remember us dreaming about going to far off places and looking at them in the atlas? I remember. I hope those are the memories that remain for you.

I keep wanting to call... but I know your number is different. I know you aren't at home where you belong. Do you know I still love you more? That that love is why I can't bring myself to pick up the phone.

Do you remember our last call? You said I didn't sound like your Angie; that I was all grown up so it couldn't be me. I cried that day as you longed for the younger version of me when the older version still needs your love too. I can't call because you remember her and I'm left remembering at all.

You said I'm always with you, that day when you came out of your delusion. But that's a different me and thus I miss the old you.

I love you more.  
 I'm sorry I can't be with you - any version of me that you are missing.

Angela



Figure B3

## Week 6 Reflection

Dear Mom,

I thought moving to Hawaii, I would be able to leave you behind. But you are everywhere here. Interesting that I thought I could escape by moving to the place that you left me for; the place I swore I would never visit or go to because of you.

I'm already happier here. I feel the stress of my past life slowly melting away as I adjust to island time. It's like I'm finally learning how to relax.

When I was packing, I found all the old pictures I have of you. Of the two of us. I still wonder how you could have made the decisions that you did. I still wonder how life would have been different if you had stayed in my life. But I do find my wonderings coming less and less as time goes by. Each interaction with you and my siblings tell me what it would have been like.

Maybe I would have ended up with even more psychological problems like Jimmy, in and out of jail and halfway houses, refusing to take the medicine that would literally make me sane.

Maybe I would have been like Trisha, the substitute mom at age 10, taking a baby around as if I were a child bride, Reddled with torn feelings of love, hate, resentment, and obligation, all bleeding into every subsequent relationship.

As the eldest, I'm positive I wouldn't have been like Donny, so entitled and spoiled, believing everyone owes me and that I'm the best thing to ever exist.

Do you wonder what life would have been like to?

I just wanted to tell you, once and for all, thank you for leaving me. With the struggles of dealing with your departure, I was also given a chance to be someone else. I know I had to mold myself in ways my dad wanted, but ultimately, it wasn't a mold based on his need to be a nanny or a friend, something a daughter shouldn't have to be to their mother.

Thank you for leaving me, so now I have the knowledge of what a mother shouldn't be as I embark on a new journey as a step-mom. I hope you know I will never forget those lessons.

Your daughter,  
Angela 윤영

Figure B4

## Week 8 Reflection

Dear Dad,

I'm mostly settled in Hawaii now. Kenny and his family have fully adopted me. It's the first time that he ever felt like I'm a member of a family that wants to care for me. But I know that isn't really what you want to hear...

When I told you I was moving, your exact words were "Best of luck to you." It feels like I am having the best luck here. Or rather, all my hard work and care is paying off. I haven't ever believed that my life has been lucky, even though you've always attributed all of my successes to luck. "You're the luckiest person I know," you've said to me. What he always wanted to say back and finally will is: NO! I'm not the luckiest person. I'm the **HARDEST** working person you know.

Do you know how hard I have worked for everything? I wasn't born to be an automatic success. You've told me yourself that I was a difficult baby that wasn't easy to birth and required an emergency trip to a hospital in the middle of a terrible snowstorm. You told me I almost died of a fever when I was a few months old. I was

kidnapped by Mom and then by you when I was 9 months old. I wasn't supposed to be successful. You and mom gave birth to me as a victim. I am a success because I refused to be the victim you all made me to be.

Do you remember telling me that I would never be happy until I acknowledged that I was just like you and I wouldn't be happy until I decided to be alone? Well I'm not alone now. I am the least alone I have ever been and I'm the happiest and healthiest, mentally and physically, than I have ever been in my life. I didn't know that the way I am living here in Hawaii was what I needed to find my true happiness. I've married a man who loves me fiercely and appreciates the hardwork I put into everything. He has given me a family. He has given me the opportunity to be a man, something that, because of you, I was deathly afraid of becoming.

I have picked up the shreds of my life that you gave me and made it into a masterpiece. I don't need your good luck wishes and avoidance. So, I wish the best of luck to you. I wish you the healing that you need and the ability to see how your life is the result of the choices you have made.

Angela

Figure B5

## Week 10 Reflection

Dear Kenny,

Some days I wake up wondering how I ended up here, living in Hawaii, with the mountain to my back and the wide expanse of the ocean sparkling below me; with a husband who actually cares about my wellbeing and a family that treats me the way I should be treated. I'm so happy we found each other now instead of when we were young and dumb, acting to impress instead of just being.

How I said thank you yet for what you've given me?

1. For rescuing me from a place that only brought me trauma and a job that took my soul
2. For accepting all parts of me including my anxiety and fears, my creativity and constant analysis, my drive and my loneliness, my incessant search for meaning.
3. For making me a mother, the one thing I had given up hoping for but always secretly wanted
4. For fiercely protecting me when I need it most and when you think I need it most
5. For giving me a man that loves me the way I should be loved.

6. For knowing when I need you to be gentle with me.
7. For knowing when to push me harder
8. For showing me the safety I need to finally be able to sleep
9. For making sure I eat when I forget and that we always will have a home
10. For loving me and showing me that love through your words, actions, and presence.
11. For making me laugh when I need it most

As we work to build our future, build our home and our life together, I hope I provide all this and more to you as well. I hope you feel the love that I give you as much as I feel what you give me.

Love always,  
Angie

P.S. Don't forget: this is my best marriage. You're the only one who changed my name for so you're stuck with this girl for life. ♡

## Appendix C

## Biweekly Sijo

Figure C1

Week 2 Sijo

From high above the meadow  
 your beauty radiates like the sun  
 Your color fill me with joy  
 driving me to quickly near  
 But your noxious toxins  
 make me mown and yet I heal

Figure C2

Week 4 Sijo

Of you, drawn to you, like bees  
 hovering over the brightest bulbs  
 Missing you, missing me  
 Who is the one really gone  
 he's shed our current selves  
 Returning to the same time

Figure C3

Week 6 Sijo

Painful memories weigh me down  
 Scoured shell seeking still solace  
 Yet with rain comes rainbows  
 Glimmering through the hazy fog  
 Appreciation abounds  
 At the soul's fulfillment

Figure C4

Week 8 Sijo

Recomposing ripped slick strips  
 Blending, merging making beauty  
 The shredded self emerging  
 Metamorphosing victim  
 Magical emergence  
 Making me my own hero

Figure C5

Week 10 Sijo

The past, present, and future  
 Embodied in a single form  
 Erupting conflicts of self  
 Molding like sand into glass  
 A stronger shape made from nothing  
 Sparkling in the breezy sun