Love for a Lifetime: Exploring Long-term Intense Romantic Relationships

Among Filipino Couples

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May 2016

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Love is a biological imperative (Fisher, Aron & Brown, 2006). For the longest time, researchers have assumed that romantic love follows the pattern of an early passionate stage and a later companionate one (Diamond, 2004; Reik, 1944) and indeed, time is seen to have a corrosive effect not only on the passionate love of a couple, as is typically known, but also on their companionate love (Hatfield, Pillemer, O'Brien, & Lee, 2008). However, the landmark neuroimaging study by Acevedo, Aron, Fisher & Brown (2012) has confirmed that long-term intense romantic love does exist, and they share largely similar neural correlates with that of early-stage passionate love. This love, including its intensity, engagement and corresponding sexual interest, can last although obsession (which is a significant component of short-term passionate love) is minimized or insubstantial in long-term intense romantic relationships (Acevedo & Aron, 2009)

The literature on relationships is seen to be saturated, and romantic relationships can be studied through a complex roster of variables (for a review see Caughlin & Huston, 2010) these studies include initial attraction, conflict management, relationship maintenance and other various constructs and correlates. However in tackling processes that prolong relationships, one robust relational model that can be used is Aron's model of self-expansion (Aron, Norman, McKenny & Heyman, 2000; Aron A., Aron E. N., & Norman, 2001). Here he conceptualizes love as rapid self-expansion or "the inclusion of another into the self" that causes exhilaration and physiological arousal commonly associated with romantic love. As the relationship progresses and the couple get to know each other deeply, it is said that the opportunities to know each other diminishes. However the same effect has been empirically proven to be activated when couples try novel and stimulating activities together (Aron et al., 2000). This model is speculated to be the mechanism through which romantic love is sustained (Acevedo et al., 2012) however Girmé, Overall & Faingataa (2014) asserts that shared relationship activities regardless of excitement or novelty can still boost relationship quality to the extent that those activities facilitate closeness and intimacy.

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We can see that despite the momentous literature about romantic relationships only a few tackle long-term intense romantic love. Previous studies about long-term marriages usually focus on marital satisfaction and likelihood of divorce (Gottman, & Levenson 2000; Gottman, Coan, Carrere & Swanson, 1998) and do not discriminate as to whether the couples experience passionate love or companionate love. Current studies that tackle long-term romantic intense love meanwhile, focus on their neural correlates, existence of the phenomena, incidence and association with well-being (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Acevedo et al., 2012; O'leary et al., 2012) which also tend to be quantitative and confirmatory. However, the field lacks a general study that seeks to characterize these long-term intensely romantic relationships (and the couples who experience them), and that explores their lived experiences, and other facets of their life as a couple. Additionally, there is scant published research about romantic relationships and the study of psychological constructs associated with romance in the Philippines. To help address these gaps in the literature, the authors are undertaking this exploratory study, with the aims of: (1) making global assessments and characterizations of the long-term intense romantic relationships (including how the couples attribute the duration and quality of their relationship) and (2) seeing how Western models match up to the relationships' characteristics (including what self-expansion techniques are explicitly or implicitly undergone by the couple).

METHODS

Materials

The researchers used the Passionate and Companionate Love Scale (PLS and CLS) by Hathfield and Rapson (2013) to have an objective measure if the participants are still passionately in love. The researchers also translated the PLS-CLS scales to Filipino to aid participants in answering the scale. Written and online versions of these scales were made and given to potential participants. In computing the scores, the researchers did not include the obsession items (Item 2 and 11) because obsession wanes with time in romantic relationships, as the literature strongly supports (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Acevedo et al.,

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2012). Couples who scored 69 or higher for the Passionate Love Scale were then scheduled for an interview. Another scale used in this study was the non-verbal, 1-item Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS) scale (Aron & Aron, 1992). Interview guides were also used for the semi-structured interview.

Participants

Six opposite-sex couples were initially interviewed for the study. Purposive sampling was employed where couples who have been together for 20 years or more were recruited through recommendations of contact persons, mostly friends and family of the couples. The 20 years include the time they were dating (or had a series of romantic interactions) up to the present. Both members of the couple were made to answer the Passionate Love Scale (PLS) and Companionate Love Scale (CLS) (Hatfield & Rapson, 2013) in order to be selected for the in-depth interview.

One couple's data were excluded from analysis due to the wife scoring only 66 in the PLS. Among the five couples who were selected, two of them have been together for 20-30 years. Meanwhile, the other two have been together for 40-50 years and one couple have been together for 60 years. All of the couples are Roman Catholic except for the Mercados who are Baptists.

Lolo and Lola de los Santos, aged 73 and 75, have been together for 45 years. They have 6 children and are living together in a blue-collar neighborhood where many residents are informal settlers. Both are already retired although Lolo worked as a personnel in a nearby health institution, and Lola previously worked as a seamstress.

Tatay and Nanay Leon, aged 47 and 51, have been together for 29 years. They live with their son's family in the same neighborhood as the de los Santos'. Tatay works as a driver for administrators of a nearby educational institution and Nanay is currently a housewife.

Mr. and Mrs. Tan, both aged 48 years old, have been together 24 years. They live in an exclusive, well-developed subdivision with their 3 children. Mr. Tan is a contractor and Mrs. Tan manages a cafe and a restaurant.

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The fourth couple, Tatay and Nanay Mercado, aged 50 and 48, has four children and have been together for 23 years. They also live in a blue-collar community, both working as vendors in their food stall, although Tatay Mercado also works as a tricycle driver during the weekend.

Lolo and Lola Guinto, 77 and 74, have been together for 60 years and have four children. Because their interview was conducted away from their residence, their living condition is not ascertained. Both are already retired, although Lolo still does consulting work for the government agency he previously worked for. Lola previously worked as a teacher.

Procedure

Candidate participants were either handed out hard copies or online copies of the research kit which composed of the consent form and PLS and CLS (Hatfield & Rapson, 2013), which included Filipino translations of all the materials. Those who passed the criteria were then scheduled for a semi-structured interview session.

The husband and wife were interviewed separately and outside of each other's earshot. The husband was interviewed by the male author while the wife was interviewed by the two female authors. Language used for the interview depended on what language the interviewee was comfortable with. During the course of the interview, the participants were asked to answer the IOS scale. Before the interview started, the purpose of the research was first explained to them and confidentiality was emphasized again. They were also assured that measures to keep their data safe would be done.

The interview was recorded by the researchers after they have secured permission from the participants. The interview sessions generally lasted for about 30 minutes to an hour and a half, and most took place at the interviewees' homes. After the interview, the researchers gave each couple a small token of appreciation.

Ethics

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Consent was acquired from the participants before interviews. It was explained to them that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the interview at any time, should they wish. The researchers also acquired the interviewee's permission for recording. Pseudonyms are used for the manuscript

Method of analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data gathered. Pre-created umbrella codes (Identity Change, Relationship Change, Relationship Maintenance, Conflict Management, and Sex) were used to organize the more specific codes, which were both influenced by the literature cited throughout the manuscript, as well as organically from the data gathered (self-expansion, self-pruning, self-contraction, *pag-iintindi*, *bigayan*, communication/*pag-uusap*, etc). Additional codes, both umbrella and specific were made as the analysis progressed and were only added after group consensus (*Asawa* Change, Beliefs and Religion, Relationship Assessment and Future).

RESULTS

Passionate Love Scale (PLS), Companionate Love Scale (CLS) and Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS) Scale

Couples recruited for the study have been together for an average of 35 years. The Guinto couple has been together the longest (60 years) while the Mercado couple has been together the shortest (23 years). Mean age of the participants is 59 years old with a standard deviation of 14 years. All the couples have children. Table 1 presents the general descriptives of the participants.

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Table 1

Descriptives

Item	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Children	10	4.2	1.13529	3	6
Duration	10	35.4	14.7362	23	60
Age	10	59.4	13.94593	47	77
CLS Total	10	69.6	3.09839	65	72
PLS Total	10	105.7	10.7295	85	117

Table 2 shows the scores of the couples on the Passionate and Companionate Love Scales. For the PLS, all of the couples obtained a score of above 69 (with 117 being the “perfect” score of all keyed items). The couples were made to answer the entire 15-item test but items 2 and 11 were excluded when computing for the Total PLS Score.

Table 2

Passionate and Companionate Love Scale Scores of Couples

Couple		Passionate Love Scale Score	Companionate Love Scale Score
delos Santos	Female	99	71
	Male	106	72
Leon	Female	111	69
	Male	107	72
Tan	Female	108	65
	Male	85	65
Mercado	Female	92	66
	Male	117	72
Guinto	Female	116	72
	Male	116	72

A one-tailed t-test was performed to compare the means of the obsession and the non-obsession items. As shown in table 2, the scores on the obsession items ($M=7.45$, $SD=2.91$) and non- obsession items ($M= 8.13$, $SD=0.24$) are significantly different ($t=1.82$ $p=-0.0459$); participants generally gave lower scores

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for the obsession items. Comparison of PLS scores between genders was also performed. No significant difference was found between the scores of males ($M=106.20$, $SD=12.87$) versus females ($M=105.20$, $SD=9.63$), although the males obtained a slightly greater PLS score mean, $t(10) = -.139$, $p=.893$

Table 3

One-tailed t-test of Obsession Items vs. Non-obsession Items of the Passionate Love Scale

Item	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Obsession Items	2	7.45	2.91	1.82	0.045926
Non-Obsession Items	13	8.13	0.24		

Minimal correlation was found between the IOS and PLS scores, $r=.097$, $p=.395$. Similarly, correlation between duration of the relationship and PLS scores were moderate but not significant, $r=.441$, $p=.101$. These low correlation values are to be expected given the restricted range. [Insert confidence intervals]

Love Stories

The participants' love stories were decidedly diverse and unique. In the case of the de los Santos' they met through Lolo de los Santos' sister who were friends with the then single Lola de los Santos. In that fateful night, they met, shared stories, and with their retinue of relatives, slept in Lola de los Santos' house. The weeks and months after that saw them being more intimate. Lolo de los Santos recalls, “. . . kami [ay] nag-ikot ikot hanggang abot kami ng Pasay sa pinsan ko, ta's huli sa Sta. Ana sa tiyahin ko. Tapos balik kami ng presko sa bahay nila.” They decided to marry two years later in a nearby chapel, after which they bore and raised 4 children, settling in the neighborhood they currently reside in.

The Mercados also met in a similar manner. Tatay and Nanay Mercado met through their siblings –Tatay Mercado's brother was married to Nanay Mercado's sister –and were in-laws before they became

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husband and wife. But it was through the local church, recalls Tatay Mercado, that they started to develop feelings for each other.

Dito sa loob ng [community]. Dito ako naninirahan sa kapatid ko kaya talaga nagkikita kami [ni Nanay Mercado] pag-uuwi niya galing sa trabaho. Nahiya naman ako sa kanya kaya noon wala pa sa isip ko yung ligaw-ligaw. Magkasama sa church kaya nagkadevelop. Nung nagstart kami magkasamahan sa church dun nagstart feelings ko.

The Tans on the other hand, met each other while living in the same apartment complex. They didn't start dating right away because they were seeing other people. It took 3 notes artfully placed in the pocket of Miss Tan to get them going. Mr. Tan recalls,

Medyo kakaiba ha, wag mo gagayahin. At that time wala pa naman cellphone, telephone pa lang diba. Beeper nga wala eh. So yung ano naming – yung apartment is a A, B, C, D. Tapos yung sampayan in front. Yung sampayan ng A, B, C, nadiyadyan sa front lang. So ang ginawa kong style, every time na magsasampay siya, magsasampay siya sa morning ta's papasok siya [sa] office. Ako naman gumagawa ng love letter hinuhulog ko dun sa shorts niya. Ayan.

Lolo and Lola Guinto's love story started very young as both were each other's high school sweethearts, although Lolo reports having a crush on Lola since elementary. Lolo won her heart by their late high school days by writing countless love letters to Lola, a tradition he kept doing long after they were official. Lola Guinto says,

Eh, niligawan ako 2nd year kami eh [high school]. pero nung elementary, malagkit na raw yung tingin niya sa akin... Tapos nung 2nd year ako, dun na ako niligawan. Syempre ang uso noon sulat, wala pa namang mga gadgets noon. Tapos after more than 1 year sinagot ko siya pero di naman ako nag oo. [edi naging kayo bigla?] Hindi, sulat kasi magkano lang naman yung mail noon, 5 centavos edi panay ang sulat. 3rd year kami, 4th year sila. Tapos siya, pag galing sa baryo, naka-

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bisikleta yan. Doon sa tapat namin, doon niya tinatapat yung bisikleta niya. Eh ako naman, nandoon, sinisilip ko siya.

The relationship was short-lived as Lolo had to leave for college. It was around this time that Lola decided to break up with Lolo because “*walang magawa*”. Lolo Guinto recalls, “*ang payo niya sa akin ‘study hard and forget me’ sabi niya.*” They still continued to write letters though and, after 2 long years, were back together and were never separated since. 58 years later, they are still happily married. In fact, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last December.

While the Guintos started very young, the Leon’s met much later in life, after a failed first marriage. It wasn’t smooth sailing for these two lovers because of their situation, she was 10 years older and already had a child on her first marriage. His mother didn’t approve of their relationship.

Kasi bata siya ako mas matanda pero ang isip niya parang mas matanda siya sa akin. Kasi lumaki kami sa wala eh. Nagsama kami sa wala. Lumaki rin siya sa wala. Lumaki rin ako sa wala. Wala akong magulang siya meron, pero di niya ako tinuring na parang kawawa. Yung pamilya niya noong una, galit sila sa akin noong bago kami. [Inisip ko] di sila ang pakikisamahan [ko]. Galit sila dati. Hindi nila ako matanggap kasi may past life. Pero noong habang tumatagal, nagkaroon kami ng baby. Naging ok sila. Lalo na ngayon na napagtapos na mga anak ko, close na kami. Kasi di naman sa pagmamayabang, alam niya yung napuntahan ng pamilya namin. Di kagaya ng ibang mag-asawa walang pakialam sa anak nila. Kaya marami, broken family. -Nanay Leon, 51

Couples’ Shared Activities

The couples frequently cite errands and enjoying a meal (whether in eating out, or having a meal in the house) as their shared activity. Errands include doing grocery shopping, cooking and preparing a meal together (“*Lumalabas kami, kami magkasama. Pag namamalengke ako. Pag nagrogrocery ako minsan dalaga ko yung kasama ko. Minsan tatlo kami*” Nanay Leon). One couple (Tatay and Nanay

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Mercado) spend practically the whole day together because both husband and wife work at their stall, and both go home to their children together. Many of the couples also mention that going to church is an activity that they do with their spouse.

Other couples structure their week so as to spend quality time with each other. For Mr. and Mrs. Tan, their “day” is on Thursdays, where Mr. Tan takes a day off from his work. The two of them go to the mall, have facial care, eat out, enjoy coffee together, travel and do other activities. Lolo and Lola Guinto, meanwhile play Mahjong but unlike the previous couple this weekly excursion isn’t an exclusive date, and they play with friends and peers.

Interestingly only one couple (Mr. and Mrs. Tan) report doing “traditionally” exciting activities on a regular basis –this is having a trip to a location they haven’t been in before –and the couple cite doing this around four times a year. Lola de los Santos and Nanay Mercado remembers going on a trip with their husband and family, but these trips are sporadic. Other couples meanwhile (reported by Nanay Leon, Nanay Mercado and Lolo Guinto) already find it exciting to be eating out or attending the birthday parties of relatives.

Conflict and Conflict Management

Some of the participants admitted that they do face challenges in their relationship. For Tatay Leon, he said that their problems centered on finances. But he also said that they always resolve such relational problems through *bigayan* (And resolve the financial problem itself through *diskarte*). His wife, on the other hand claimed that they do not have any problems. But when misunderstandings do arise, her spouse would use humor to diffuse the negative atmosphere. She mentions,

Pag galit ako lalayo yan. Maya-maya babalik tapos tawatawanan niya nalang ako. Kasi ang ano namin, kapag nagtanim ka ng galit sa isa't-isa, malas yun

Only one couple reported having serious fights before. Mr. Tan stated that he and his wife had two serious fights caused by mistrust and lack of time spent together due to work and time with friends

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rather than with the partner. Mr. Tan also said how he almost fell in love with another girl, a client from work. This was all in the past though. Through giving, understanding, priority change and most importantly religion, they now have very infrequent fights.

Lolo Guinto said that before, his wife would disapprove of his drinking habit, but because he reduced his drinking, now Lola Guinto says that they would have disagreements because of Lolo's inordinate conscientiousness and teasing. Despite these disagreements they claimed to have no actual conflicts.

This was echoed by another couple (de los Santos) who claimed to have no conflicts even when probed deeply and in various ways by the interviewers. They explained that it was because they just try to understand their partner or they just let them do what their partner wants.

Like Tatay Leon, Lolo Guinto and Mr. Tan also believe that the key to successful conflict management is *bigayan*. Mr. Tan succinctly encapsulates this when he says,

Oo, kung meron hindi pagkakaintindihan kailangan merong mag give-up. Merong mag slow down. Minsan siya, minsan ako. Pagminsan narerealize ko mali ako, ako na yung lumalapit sa kanya. Minsan ganun din naman siya pag na realize na na siya yung mali, siya rin naman yung nag-aapproach first.

There is a recognized give and take among the couples that actually encapsulates many of the constructs to be discussed (*pag-uusap*, forgiveness, *pag-iintindi* and accountability) but with a clear pattern of expectations for both partners.

Pag-uusap, as expected, is seen to be highly important in resolving conflicts with the partner. Interestingly, another salient theme that emerges among their answers is that of an immediacy to resolve conflicts ("*Hindi na pinapaumaga ang away*," Nanay Mercado) and not allowing it to prolong, worsen and escalate. As such, *pag-iintindi (ng ugali)* and taking accountability for one's actions (as well as restructuring one's priorities) are also compelling pathways to reduce and resolve conflicts.

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While forgiveness is, unsurprisingly seen as important, couples also cite that for other problems *wag patulan* and one should learn to let go (*palampasin*) of the problems. Mr. Tan states “*papakinggan ko nalang tapos ilalabas ko nalang sa kabila* *gestures from one ear to the other*” he further says, “*anyway wala namang mangyayari kung papatula’t papatulan, diba? So ganun nalang.*”

We also see an interesting (if infrequent) conflict management technique in Mr. Tan. He appears to externalize the perceived negative behavior of his wife (“*Yung pagiging strikta niya nakuha niya sa panganay nila na kapatid*”). Instead of attributing her strictness, which is a chronic source of conflict in their relationship, as an internal attribute, he believes that this strictness was acquired from his wife’s sister.

Relationship maintenance

Throughout the interview process, relationship maintenance techniques have surfaced. One very prominent means of relational maintenance is captured by Lolo de los Santos when he says, “*wag mo siyang bibigyan ng kunsumisyon,*” or otherwise not to give the wife any cause for anger or vexation, or acting in a way that their wives would not like. Four of the five husband participants agree with this. Lolo Guinto (who, as discussed above, claims never to have marital fights) says,

Pagkanasabi na sa akin yung, ano halimbawa, hindi ko na uulitin. Hindi na iuulit. Kaya ibig sabihin hindi na kami nagbabangayan, wala nang paulit-ulit na ano eh. Pag sinabi nang ganun na ayaw, eh [di wag mo na gawin].

Another relational maintenance technique with a gender skew is what would be termed by Lola de los Santos as *pagsisilbi*. Nanay Mercado says of this, “*yung sa paglilingkod sa kanya. Pag-aalaga. Sinusunod mo din yung gusto niya. Pagmaysakit siya namromproblema ka kung ano papakain sa kanya . Yung pagbibigay ng gamot sa kanya.*” *Pagsisilbi* is also one of the ways Lolo de los Santos reports his wife shows her love towards him.

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It is also worthy to note that for many, God, religion and/or the spiritual community is seen to be highly important for the health of their relationship. Mrs. Tan says,

Unlike now, for the past years mula nang na-belong kami sa couple's ministry and we serve together in a couple's ministry, we know na kelangan na Christ is always the center of your relationship. So kaya pag may problema, madali nalang siyang mag-vanish o napag-uusapan siya ng maayos because there's always God in between our relationship and it always reminds us of the talk, of the seminar, of the experiences of other couples so that makes us inspired na kung paano mo i-handle them.

In fact, it would be this brand of religiosity that sees some of the couples seeing their marriage not only as a personal relationship, but as a vow to God.

Relationship techniques also include *kamustahan* and *pag-aalala* (“*sinasamahan ko yan kasi hindi na man pwede magbuhat ng mabigat. Ayoko nung bumubuhay [ng] mabigat. Kelangan talaga inaalalayan mo na siya kasi ilang taon na siya, 57 na siya,*” Tatay Mercado). Some couples also place a premium on the acceptance of the other despite their faults and in understanding and trusting them. This is seen when Lolo Guinto says, “*ang totoo niyan, alam ko na hindi siya marunong magluto. Lumaki yan sa may kaluwagan ba ng buhay. Dalawa silang magkapatid, kami ay walo.*” he would further go on to say that he’s the one who sews but he understands Lola Guinto.

Other infrequently mentioned relationship maintenance techniques are: weekly dates (as previously discussed, was done by Mr. and Mrs. Tan), gift-giving (done by Lolo Guinto and Mr. Tan), teasing (Leon couple; “*pag kaming dalawa lang, nagkukulitan kami*”) and *pag-uusap* (Nanay Leon and Mr. Tan). It will be noticed that *pag-uusap* in general is seen more in the context of conflict management rather than in non-conflict relationship maintenance setting.

Identity and Relationship Change

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Majority of the participants said that ever since their relationship with their partners started until present, they perceived no change with their identity as well as in the dynamics of their relationship. There were some though who saw change in themselves due to profession. This is seen in Tatay Leon and Lolo de los Santos, the latter saying, "*wala isang ordinaryong [may]bahay na lamang ako ngayon. [Wala] na akong trabaho, retired na ako*", in fact this identity as anchored to their profession is a very salient theme, but seems to be skewed towards the male gender of the lower socio economic class. Meanwhile, individuals also cite their and change in social role (Tatay Leon and Mr. Tan).

Self-pruning, defined by Mattingly et al. (2014) as the positive change of identity through reduction of negative attributes was seen in the case of Mr. Tan and Tatay Mercado. Mr. Tan reported that the time he spends on drinking and hanging out with friends diminished. Through this, he was able to give more focus on his work, his family and his wife. Similarly, Tatay Mercado also lessened his drinking habits for the sake of his family.

Others like Tatay Leon and Mr. Tan think that being in a relationship strengthened their bonds with their partners. Lolo Guinto, especially sees his relationship with Lola Guinto as a never-ending chance to get to know each other.

Tuloy-tuloy kasi ang pagkakakilala hindi naman ano yan [static]. We are still in the go of knowing each other. Kaya nga kung nawala na yan nagsawa na siguro. Always on the go ang pagkakilala.

Sex

All participants, not surprisingly, report of the decrease of the frequency of their sexual intercourse as compared from the beginning of the relationship, with many citing age as the reason for this decrease. Two couples have completely stopped having sex (de los Santos and Leons), while the Guinto couple only do it "once in a blue moon". The Tans currently do it once a week or once in ten days

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(from the previous three times a week rigor of their early days) while the Mercado's estimate to do it around once or twice a week from the previous everyday schedule they had.

When asked how they try to maintain their sex lives, Mr. Tan responds that he takes vitamins and "*palakasin ang katawan*" and that it helps in thinking that he does these things not only for him but for his wife. It is also seen that he focuses on the aspect of health and vigor and not on the sexual acts themselves.

The role of sex for their relationships differs across the couples and individuals. For Lola de los Santos, sex is primarily for procreation. For others like Nanay Mercado, Lolo Guinto (and to some extent, Mr. Tan) sex is seen to be a marital obligation, "*...responsibilidad mo bilang asawa.*" The Tan couple meanwhile says that while sex when they were younger may have just been because of youth and the physical urge, sex is now seen to be done to be close and show intimacy to the partner (as well as pride for being still able to do it).

Sex is also seen as not very important by some individuals like Nanay Leon. She would say with some humor:

Ok lang sa kanya na wala man o meron. Wala, okay lang sa kanya kasi ang inaano ko lang sa kanya bata pa siya. Kung sakali gusto niya maghanap ng bata-bata sa akin pwede kayong gumawa sa labas. Ayaw naman niya kasi dagdag pa raw yun sa problema. Sa akin nga lang daw kulang na yung pera niya eh, ibibigay niya pa ulit sa iba.

Tatay Leon, still having a strong sex drive, negotiates this seeming conflict of interest by emphasizing the need to understand his wife. He reasons that sex is best when both are really into it.

Another interesting finding is the difference of the couples in finding opportunities for sex once they have children. For the lower SES couples who, by necessity, share a room with their children, they find it harder to find a time and place to have sex, either doing it when their children are not in the house,

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doing it in the wee hours of the morning when the children are asleep or just sleeping the urges off. The high SES couple (Tan) do not have this problem as their children have their own rooms, and they can just easily lock their room when they want to do it.

Attitudes towards love and romantic relationships

Two participants associate the definition of love to their partners. Tatay Mercado described love as taking care of his spouse. Meanwhile, Nanay Leon said that all the love is with Tatay Leon.

Tatay Leon believes that sometimes the verbal expression of love is not sincere. Love is something that you should make one feel and that you show.

Bakit kelangan mo pang malaman, hindi mo ba nararamdaman? Mas mabuti pa yung aksyon keysa yung sasabihin ko sayo. Sasabihin ko sayo, yun pala hindi totoo. Mas mabuti pa yung nararamdaman mo na talagang hindi kita pababayaan. kasi kaya kita sinamahan, kaya ka sumama sa akin, ibig sabihin tiwala.

Love given to one's partner should be unconditional, according to Ms. Tan. It is understanding (Lola de los Santos), acceptance and sacrifice (Nanay Mercado). On the other hand, Lolo de los Santos thinks that the word love is vague and can refer to many things.

Most of the couples still physically show their love towards their partners (Nanay Leon, Mr. Tan, Ms. Tan, Tatay Mercado, Nanay Mercado, Lola Guinto). They kiss, hug, hold hands. Nanay and Tatay Mercado usually give these love expressions in private but they do hold hands in public. Meanwhile, Lolo Guinto supports Lola Guinto whenever she's going down from the jeepney.

On the contrary, Lola and Lolo de los Santos do not show these physical manifestations anymore. Lola de los Santos admits though that she sometimes gives Lolo some playful touches.

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Relationship Assessment and Future

Some individuals assessed their relationship as not being perfect. They have their struggles and misunderstandings but they see their relationship as being worthwhile. Nanay Mercado especially expresses this when she said,

Di naman kami ganoon kaperpekto. Pero sa aming paraan ok yung relasyon namin kumpara sa iba. Nag-aaway, nagmumurahan, sa amin wala yun. Di ganoon kagulo

This is interesting to compare with her husband's views, Tatay Mercado, who highly idealizes his wife ("*wala akong masasabing masama [sa kanya]*") and in fact does realize that he can be the source of trouble. It can also be noted that there is asymmetry in their conceptualizations, with Tatay Mercado being highly idealizing of Nanay Mercado. This can also be seen in the difference of their PLS scores (further analyzed in the Discussion). Despite this, both believe that their relationship will still stay strong in the years to come.

Future of the relationship was either expected by the couples as going to heaven, going stronger or staying the same. For going to heaven, participants believe that they will be together until death separates them from each other (Lolo de los Santos, Tatay Leon, Lolo Guinto, and Lola Guinto which the latter says, "*edi til death do us part. Wala na akong ibang nakitang lalaki kundi siya.*") Nanay Leon and Lolo de los Santos think that their relationship with their partners will grow stronger.

DISCUSSION

If couples maintain their love through the mechanism of Aron's model of self-expansion (Aron, Norman, McKenny & Heyman, 2000; Aron A., Aron E. N., & Norman, 2001) then the model, in the context of this research, should predict two things about long-term intense romantic relationships: (1) couples should be constantly changing and 'rediscovering' their spouse. Thus this change should also reflect in how they think about their own and their spouse's identity; (2) that couples should be doing exciting things with some measure of regularity to keep the passion alive. This is in contrast to the assertion of

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Girme et al. (2014) that shared activities need not be exciting to boost or maintain relationship quality as long as they facilitate intimacy and closeness.

We can see from the foregoing results that the current study's findings do not give weight to any of the predictions made from the model of self-expansion. Much to the researchers' surprise, only one of all the participant couples interviewed recall doing traditionally exciting activities (as opposed to merely pleasant activities, described in Aron et al., 2000). In fact, for the lower SES couple, it can be pieced from the interview that thrill-seeking and doing novel activities with their partner isn't a priority in their relationship. It can even be asserted that exciting shared activities is biased for the well off and those with disposable income, "attending musical concerts, plays, and lectures" is simply unfeasible for their income class. These set of findings more particularly favor Girme et al. (2014) hypothesis. While many activities mentioned are routine and therefore, not by itself facilitative of closeness, other activities seem more so, like the act of eating and attending religious service.

Further, many participants believe that neither they nor their spouse have changed over the course of their relationship. This may or may not be factually true, but it can be seen that there is a constancy to how they see themselves - which is opposite to what would be expected from Aron's model. Additionally, and because of this, they are unable to be plotted whether positively valenced or negatively valenced in dimensions of self-change of Mattingly et al. (2014). For future research directions, one path that may validate Aron's model of self-expansion is to check whether the couples self-expand not by doing exciting activities, nor changing their core identity but by the new social roles conferred upon them as they start a family ("*mapagmahal na tatay*" etc.) especially taking into account the importance of family in the Philippine context.

As expected, many of the codes and constructs seen in the relationships—especially in relationship maintenance and conflict management—correspond with previous literature (all following citations reviewed in Caughlin & Huston, 2010). These include forgiveness (McCullough & vanOyen Witvliet, 2005),

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teasing done by the Leon couple (Driver & Gottman, 2004, which says that strong relationships are predicted by playfulness and enthusiasm in marital interaction) and *bigayan* which seem to correspond with Kelley's (1979) construct of responsiveness (demonstrated by accommodation and acting in ways one wouldn't necessarily do without the influence of the other). Further, there is one piece of qualitative evidence to validate Miller, Caughlin, and Huston's (2003) assertion that idealizing one's partner enhances the satisfaction in relationships (and we see, may also be the reason for increased passionate love). We see that Tatay Mercado idealizes his wife, a finding not reciprocated in the interview answers of Nanay Mercado –this is reflected in his very positive descriptions of his relationship and through his total PLS score (111 compared to Nanay's 107; statistically different with scale reliability $\alpha=0.91$, diff. crit $=2.0436$; although note that despite the asymmetry both are highly passionately in love with each other). Lastly, while it is popularly believed that conflict is a normal part of a relationship (Gottman & Silver, 1995) two couples, even with persistent follow-ups, claim that they never have any actual conflicts in the relationship. Thus, it seems passionate love can be maintained even without marital conflicts.

The trends in the experiences of the couples also give mixed validation for Mattingly and colleague's (2014) dimensions of self-change. While positive changes like self-expansion (Mr. Tan) and self-pruning (Tatay Mercado & Mr. Tan) were seen in the individuals. Most of them purport not to have changed during their tenure as a romantic couple. If we take their words at face-value, and assume that they indeed, have not particularly changed over their relationships, then positive self-change may not be necessary nor especially significant as a predictor for maintaining passionate love across decades. However, one contribution of this study to their model of self-change would be how the variable of *pag-iintindi* may mediate the shift from negatively valenced self-contraction to the positively valenced self-pruning. We see this in the data of the Tan couple where Mr. Tan says,

*Basta ayun, pala inom ako dati, palakaibigan, palabarkada, hindi naman siguro nawawala
yun. Yun ang nawala – barkada. Kaibigan siyempre nandiyan pa rin, pero hindi yung –yung*

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buhay mo hindi mo nilalaan sa kaibigan mo, sa barkada. Dati ganun ako, talagang barkada. Ngayon nilalaan ko yung oras ko sa trabaho, sa pamilya, sa asawa ko.

He further confirms that this current state is what is ideal. His wife though says in an independent interview that this was not always the case, and that it took him a long time to adjust to a married life. *Pag-iintindi* and the acceptance of a new social role then, may mediate this shift, and attribution of self-change (and consequently, its implications about relationship quality and individual satisfaction).

To explain some of these surprising and novel findings, especially those with great discrepancy with Western models (lack of conflict, lack of regular exciting shared activities) the authors speculate that instead of couples staying together because they are in love, it may also be bidirectional; that is, the couples are in love because they are staying together. It can be seen in the couples that they either have extramarital reasons for staying together and making their marriage work (i.e vow to God and the spiritual community) or have not seriously explored the option of leaving the other (which may be due to socio-economic conditions). While this, of course, does not answer so many issues regarding relationship break-ups, it may be a worthwhile future research direction to empirically test.

Results from the Passionate Love Scale also gives weight to the characterization by Acevedo et al. (2012) of long-term intense romantic couples as having lowered or minimal obsession with their current partner (as opposed to early stage love) with the average score for obsession items statistically lower than for non-obsession items.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONTINUATION OF PROJECT

The authors reiterate the discussion of an ethical issue presented by any study of long-term intense romantic love, that is, given the existence of long-term intense romantic love, what does it mean for any couple entering or maintaining a relationship? The knowledge that it is possible for couples to still be passionately in love even after so many decades put what may be an undue pressure for couples who may be perfectly content with their current (and not-so passionate) relationship, especially with the

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premium society gives to passion and romance. In fact (and despite the benefits associated with long-term intense romantic love seen in O'leary et al., 2012) the question should be asked, is long-term intense romantic love a desirable goal? Or is a strong companionate love a better objective? On the other hand, the knowledge that love can live for a lifetime can also be the inspiration for individuals to pursue committed relationships, and to be thoughtful in how they maintain the relationships they form.

This study is phase 1 of the planned research about long-term intense romantic love. Phase 2 would involve more closely answering the question "How have they maintained passionate love, and not turned to companionate love?" a relative or individuals close to the couple would be interviewed, and the couples themselves would be interviewed together with some questions coming from the synthesis integrated here. Further battery of tests in relevant domains would be given to them to answer this penultimate research question.

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